

Week 2: In the Beginning

God did it: *The Story*

I was asked in a university class to write out my spiritual autobiography. I'm older, so I ended up with 28 pages. What I discovered was that I began recalling God incidents. It opened my eyes from one event to another that God had been there more than I thought. So many incidents and events, I was stunned (28 pages worth). It is a great exercise. Now I won't expect a 28-page essay but maybe you could recall several events in your life that God may have directed to grow you and guide you. What are some of them?

There are several versions of ancient history. One is from Babylonia and another comes from Egypt. Each one of them are different, yet similar. The flood and creating of this earth are points of similarity. Where they tend to differ is in the story. The Bible story says one God made this universe from nothing. He made this place not for himself but for the creatures within it. Here are a series of questions you could talk about.

1. Since childhood what do you believe about how we came to be?
2. What is God to you?
3. What is spirituality to you?
4. Where you made by someone or just a random act of two amoebas?
5. Is there something more to who you are?

Those are just some of the questions you could ask. Maybe you have plenty more. After reading the first three chapters of Genesis what do you think? It's tough to change a mind with so little information. The Bible says God did it. The Bible says there was an Adam and Eve. There was a garden of Eden and a serpent. What is real? Write down things that look like God things to you (ex. Church or a priest).

I had a professor that said we just don't have enough data. The story of creation is really, really small. I read War and Peace and the book is 1396 pages. There is a ton of data. In anything we

do there is a leap of faith. The story of creation is about 750 words. It just might be a leap of faith to believe in God's creation account based on so little data.

Hebrews 11:1 *"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."*

The Bible is more than just a story. It is more than a boring book about rules and commandments. The Bible is a relationship between God and people. The stories talk about that relationship. The writer of Hebrews knows what faith is because he has experienced God's character. He wrote that verse because he knows something more than he did before.

The story of creation is small but it is like a Tee in golf. The rest of the Bible is the ball. It might be small but it carries a big role in the big picture. The first verse of the Bible is the lynch pin. If you don't believe in that one verse, then the whole Bible is useless. We hope for a good life. We assume more will go right than wrong. Most of what we experience from day to day is unclear until it happens. If God didn't do it then who or what did?

Gen 1:1 *"In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth."*

Romans 1:20 *"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."*

Reality is that life is good and bad. Somethings are great and others are hard. We choose to hope. That is where God steps in. To believe in hope or in God is to know he has our back. The story of the Bible is about victories and disappointments in life. Through it all is this God helping and teaching his creation. From this point forward is a door. Through it is another world. A world of spiritual truths. A world of miracles and mystery. The God on this side has a design for me and you to participate in the world he created. It's not by random chance or accident we are here. The stories in the Bible are tales of people like you and me finding their way with God. Next week's reading is stepping into life's reality with the God of the Bible.

Next week's reading: *Read Genesis 4-11. These are just some of the famous stories of the Bible. Think about these questions as you read:*

1. This thing called sin: what is it? Think about this verse below. The word sin has little meaning these days. I think eyes role and attentions turn away when sin is mentioned. In many ways, this whole world is sin. Maybe it always was. Where is holiness these days? It seems everything we hold dear to us like government, police, and churches have stories of sin and corruption. It's not like sin is not real. I think today it's more real than ever before.

Don't look at sin as an old word that has no meaning. Sin in the dictionary states *"an immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law."* It also says an offence or done wrong. There still is sin in this world. We call this the era of no truth or fake news. We call them those titles because we know there is truth and real news. This generation is just ignoring the facts. Scientists don't ignore facts unless they want to ignore the truth.

Gen 4:6-7 *"The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."*

2. Death is a certainty. God said Adam and Eve would die if they ate of the tree. Adam died. What does that mean to you? It's weird to think about death at age 17. Yes, 17-year-old kids die. 97-year-old kids die too. I have lost two dogs in my life and another is old. Most of my friends have lost their parents by age 50. That means they only knew their parents for 50 years. I personally don't think time was supposed to be this short.

The other day, a terrorist drove a van into a crowd and people died. Those people did not see that coming. The driver chose to die for a cause. Either way, we all will die. The average that people die is 1:1. There are none that are the exception. How you die is not always a choice. Yet, how we live until death is a choice.

Gen 5:5 *"Thus all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred thirty years; and he died."*

3. Noah is a famous story. In reading it do you see that story the same way you did as a child? The point of the first 11 chapters of the Bible is that God did it. Notice the last words "the Lord shut him in." This is by God and his plan. This story is very good. As a child, I loved this story. In reality the story spans over a hundred years. Yet, it has very little information. Many historians dislike the Noah account. There is not enough evidence. Yet, they all agree on one thing. There was a great flood. Was it local or worldwide? History in other cultures mention a great flood. Obviously, something happened wide enough that other cultures experienced it too. Was it God nature or both?

I find the most interesting part is the science. Science and archeology say a great flood happened. They both claim it was probably local. Think of the words hypothesis, probably, theory, and most likely. Are those words definitive? Both of these groups believe in a flood of some sort. The problem is the God account. They must find a way around God's flood and make it nature's flood. Either way science proves something happened just as science proves creation happened. It's a choice to believe in how it happened.

Gen 7:15-16 *"They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the Lord shut him in."*

4. The tower of Babel is a story you might have heard or not. In Christian circles, it is popular. There are many accounts of men trying to reach heaven. There are other stories about how the nations around the earth are formed. You must admit it was smart if God spread us out and confused our language. In the modern world we spend more time fighting than trying to be God. Seems to me this worked. Yet God says we were made for greatness. What does that mean?

There are certain laws of science we have not figured out. How to travel faster than light? How to travel great distances to other galaxies. Leaving earth is in reality leaving a way to live. Life in space might be possible but only on another world that looks like ours. You cannot escape earth easily. You can't breathe in space without help. Spreading out language seems so ridiculous. Leaving earth and surviving could seem ridiculous too. Space is not in itself livable. Why is that? Maybe there are more important things to worry about right where we live.

Gen 11:6 *"And the Lord said, 'Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.'"*

The Jesus connection

Sometimes we say Jesus is the answer. I personally hate that. Hate seems harsh and unchristian. I use the word hate because I feel that giving hollow answers is not the Jesus way. Genesis 4 through 11 are a span of history. Unfortunately, we have very little data to go on. This is very old and possibly ancient stuff. Is it myth, legend, or fable? Is it historical? The most amazing part is the historical. Archeology has not proven this stuff exists; however, it has not proven it does not exist either. Yet, we have a story.

In many ways, the Bible is a story that weaves throughout history. That story has a lesson to be learned from the people portrayed in it. Adam made mistakes. Noah did what he was told. The people of Babel were scattered. This is history and story. The Jesus connection is similar to Luke 10 17-20.

Luke 10:17-20 *“The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”*

Jesus sent out 72 disciples to spread the good news about God. They returned excited and full of power, glory, and inspiration. The problem was that they thought they did it. The Jesus connection to genesis 4-11 is the same. Jesus said he saw Satan fall from glory to this earth. He is warning the people to remember who is the power: God in heaven. Satan forgot that. Cain forgot that. The people in Babel forgot that. Jesus is saying that Satan, this world, and the message to this world by God, don't jive. They never have. That is the Jesus connection.