

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Battle for Our Beginnings

Genesis 1:1

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PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: What do you believe regarding beginnings? From where did you come? Not just a few generations ago, but all the way back. What is the source of your existence? Why does this creation we live in work the way it works? Why do we see babies die and people do much evil? Why does peace never take root and why do wars abound? How do we explain it? And is there hope or purpose in any of it? It all deals in the arena of truth. At the very beginning one creature asked another creator, “Did God really say....?” And from that point on everything changed.

I. Introduction.

- A. I have a clear agenda in this short series and I want to you to know what it is. I want to challenge each of you who claim Jesus Christ as your Lord as to what you really believe.
- B. Charles Spurgeon said this regarding the gospel, “The Gospel is like a caged lion. It does not need to be defended, it just needs to be let out of it cage.”
 1. The church has a way of caging the gospel and the Word of God in so many ways. Behind it all is a serious issue of trust and conviction.
 2. The apostle Paul said this about the gospel in Romans 1, “Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:15-16)
 3. Do we believe it? Do we believe that the gospel is capable to take a stony heart filled with rebellion and unbelief and convert it? Is it truly “the power of God?”
 4. One of the cages we build around the gospel is a critical split in how we think about truth today. There is in many minds the idea that there are two places of truth, one secular and one spiritual or sacred. The result is that Christianity is merely an issue of personal and private belief.

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5. This results in a split between values and reality. I can have my set of values and you can have yours. But over on the other side are what are accepted as facts and they need not mix together.
 6. The result is that religious claims are no longer accepted at the table of public reason and teaching.
 7. I recommend a book called *Total Truth* if you are wanting to begin to critically think about what is happening all around you.
- C. In 1925 there was a shift in American thinking that bore the fruit we now harvest in our nation and more importantly, the church.
1. This was when the infamous Scopes trial took place where a teacher was on trial for introducing evolution in the public classroom, which was illegal.
 2. This event sound ludicrous today and it sounds that way because of the way our nation thinks and understands truth.
 3. What happened after that trial and the public mood was that the church in America backed away. They began to abandon the public square and the separation began.
 4. Over the next several decades the wedge was pushed in deeper and deeper between religious faith (which was the Christian faith at that time) and what was acceptable in the public world.
 5. Today it is nearly impossible to bring into a public forum
- D. In the last few years we have seen a radical ramping up of challenges to just about anything you can imagine.
1. Today in our society we cannot define what is right and what is wrong.
 2. We cannot determine a girl from a boy and are not even allowed to try to make a distinction.
 3. We cannot determine what marriage is and how it is to function.
 4. When we think about authority there is really only one thing that is almost universally accepted, authority is to be resisted and scorned.
 5. Try to say that something is wrong and or that something is right and it will only take a short time before you are castigated in the virulent ways.

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6. And in all of this so-called enlightenment we see sex trafficking on the rise, STD's destroying the lives of more and more people, and the most twisted of activities viewed as acceptable and proper.
 7. A man is able to crack the skull of another in the name of Antifa and when he is brought to justice he is given a 1 dollar fine.
 8. Meanwhile yesterday 125,000 babies were aborted, scraped and suctioned from the womb. And today another 125,000 will die yet again.
 9. Various groups attack the police department when they use deadly force and then shrug without a care while citizens shoot and kill one another on a nightly basis.
 10. Barely a day goes by without reading of another killing of a police officer and our nation continues to shrug and shuffle along to the next supposed outrage.
 11. Our schools, our corporations, and our governments show a level of corruption and willful deception that boggles the mind.
- E. And in all of this sits the Church.
1. It reminds me of Lot, sitting in the midst of Sodom; who is described by Peter as having been worn down by the constant presence of sexual deviancy.
 2. What are we to do in these trying times? How are we to be a light that is on a hill, shining forth the truth of the glory of God.
 3. How do we stand for truth if we cannot define truth? How do we declare what God declares to be true if we cannot define truth?
 4. Jesus said bluntly and simply in John 17, the Word of God is truth. It is not merely the container of truth, it is in itself truth.
- F. The hard reality is that this is a slippery term though for the Church today. Truth.
1. Instead of being a solid bastion for what God declares men and women everywhere ought to believe, we mirror this age we live in.
 2. We have ignored the repeated warnings in the Scripture regarding the subtle wiles of Satan.

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3. We apparently rolled our eyes when we read the words of Paul who commands us with the authority of God our Creator to not be conformed to this age.
 4. And so now the Church is mired in every possible debate, all of which end in cul-de-sacs of hopelessness and destruction.
 5. From where did all of this arise? And how do each of you decide what will be your final authority in these culture wars?
 6. My argument today is simple, I believe it comes from a rejection of the simple, yet utterly profound message of Genesis. Especially 1-11.
- G. What you believe regarding these first eleven chapters really do matter whether you like it or not.
1. What is sad is that many who claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ don't know what is even in these chapters.
 2. Some will quibble over the first two chapters. Others just shrug and sort of roll their eyes at the description of chapter 3. Many others will mentally check out in chapters 6-9 and the flood account. And if there are still takers by the time chapters 10-11 come around there is often found a bit of jeering and chuckling at the description of the Tower of Babel.
 3. But that is where it is common and popular to stop with many so-called Christians.
 - a. We will leave those tales alone and move into the "meat" of the biblical text and there we will find life. It doesn't really matter what you or I think on these things. Or to use a popular term today, "Matt, these are not gospel issues."
 - b. But the reality is that they are gospel issues. If you were to share the gospel like the bible does you would find yourself in those first 11 chapters.
 - c. You heard it at our celebration service. The story of the gospel.
 - (1) Not a story but THE story.
 - (2) Not opinion and not fanciful tales but sober, serious truth upon which one's soul literally hangs for all eternity.

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- d. But the Lord will not let us shrug off these chapters so easily. For the Lord, in His wisdom, did not stop with miraculous and sovereign interruptions in those first 11 chapters. Let me ask you some questions from the rest of the bible:
- (1) We are confronted in Genesis 12 with God speaking to a single man in the land of Ur. He will become a great man and maker of nations or is this merely fanciful ethnocentric silliness?
 - (2) Do we really believe God would destroy two cities with fire and brimstone because of their sexual proclivities? Does a woman really die and become a pillar of salt because she looked over her shoulder?
 - (3) Did God really commission a man to lead Israel out of Egypt by speaking to him from a bush that was on fire but would not be consumed?
 - (4) Or we must decide if there really were plagues as described in Exodus. Did a whole nation really walk dry through the Red Sea? Did God provide some sort of food out of heaven every day for the people and did He really cause water to come pouring from a rock? Tell me!
 - (5) Do walls really fall down when no one is doing something to them? Does God really tell people to kill everyone in a location regardless of their sex, age or position?
 - (6) Where shall we stop beloved? What else shall we cut away as false? Tell me if you know. Speak from your wisdom and knowledge if you do not believe what is written in Genesis 1-11.
 - (7) Shall we just quietly chuckle and shake our head when we read of fire coming from heaven devouring an altar made with rocks and surrounded by water? Or an oil that is constantly replaced? Or an axe head that is made to float on the surface of water?
 - (8) What do we do with the massive number of prophecies that supposedly were fulfilled? Do we just pretend that they were written after the prophesied event?

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- (9) Or should we just leave alone the Old Testament and unhitch ourselves from it like one popular pastor infamously uttered not too long ago?
 - (10) Where do we stop?
 - (11) Shall we listen to the ever growing crowd that says, “Let’s just talk about Jesus!”
- e. What about Jesus? What do you believe? Really, truly believe? It gets no easier for us there.
- (1) Do you believe he was born of a virgin. Or is that your little secret since that is silly and superstitious?
 - (2) Is He truly the incomprehensible, all-powerful, all-present holy God in human flesh or not? What do you believe?
 - (3) Can He and did He walk on water; silence storms, feed thousands with a little bread and fish; cast out demons or raise dead people with a simple word?
 - (4) Can He fast for 40 full days? Really?
 - (5) Doe He really touch the stub of an ear that was just cut off and cause it to regrow?
 - (6) How about dying in a radical and messy way on a cross and then rise from the dead bodily and show Himself to hundreds of witnesses?
 - (7) Or, silly me, is it also true that He literally and fully took upon Himself the totality of sin and guilt of those whom He redeemed and bore them away?
 - (8) Do you believe He is coming again? Really and truly? Do you show it in a sober mindedness and purity of life and heart?
 - (9) Do you chuckle at the words of Paul to the man Titus, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave

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Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (Titus 2:11-15)? Of do these words cause you to pause and consider your ways?

- (10) Is there a place called the Lake of Fire? Are there demons and angels who are fully and constantly active even now? Do we have a great enemy known as the devil who seeks to devour us like a lion devours his prey?
- (11) Will God truly relegate to hell all who do to submit themselves to Jesus Christ alone? Or do we just softly dance around things such as this?
 - f. What do you believe? What do you tell each other to believe? What are you pouring into the souls of your children? What lies are you fighting with a holy hatred? What souls are you broken over as you see them sinking into a Christless eternity believing every thing but the Bible?
4. This is what is at stake beloved. This is what you are responsible to learn, know, believe and teach to your little ones without apology. This is what you are fighting for every day, if you are fighting.
5. This is what every person here who is a Christian is to stand for. Or to use the term we heard from Grayson last week in Jude, this is what we are to contend for.
 - a. When did you last fight for the Christian faith?
 - b. When did you last draw a clear, definite line in your life, your family and your home?
- H. Many in the American Church want to roll their eyes and shy away from the book of beginnings because it stands in stark contrast to the beliefs of this age.
 1. They want it to be about Jesus. But only the Jesus who is tightly controlled and defined.
 2. Not the Jesus who truly does hold all things in this universe together by His will and power.

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3. And not really the Jesus who created all things seen and unseen.
4. Not the Jesus who taught that the universe was made in 6 days and if He truly is the creator then He should know.
5. Just the Jesus who can forgive sin and make things all happy again. And this is a great evil in the Church.
6. I am saddened to watch people dive into every foolish belief and act simply because they want to. But I am never really surprised. The bible has said it over and over in every possible way that humanity is under the enslaving power of sin. Left to our own ways and we are nothing more than slaves to our desires.
7. But what about the Church? What about those who say they are saved from their sins? Those who say that believe the gospel message? Those who want to define themselves and faithful followers of Jesus Christ?

II. What do we do with the first eleven chapters of Genesis?

- A. If you did not know it, the first eleven chapters of Genesis are often referred to as “Primeval History.”
 1. One bible dictionary helpfully sums up the issues:

“Creation is a highly debated topic in biblical scholarship. Much of this debate centers on how we view the days of creation (as literal or metaphorical days) and how ancient cosmology relates to the narrative in Genesis. These discussions in turn inspire further debate about the historicity of the biblical narrative and its relationship to myths from other ancient Near Eastern cultures. . . .” (Rachel Klippenstein, “Genesis, Book Of, Critical Issues,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).
 2. And it does not stop at the historicity of the bible. It leads to questions on who wrote what in the bible. When something actually was written. The reality of people of the bible (i.e. did Noah, Moses, Abraham and even David really exist?)
 3. It is like finding that stray yarn in your sweater and you start to pull on it until the sweater is no longer in existence.
 4. Doctrine matters and the moment you claim to be a Christian it really, really matters.

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- a. No doctrine stands by itself though we all would probably find it much more comfortable if it could.
 - b. Biblical doctrines flows effortlessly from one specific doctrine to another. They each inform, clarify, enlarge and define each other.
 - c. And this is because sound doctrine is simply truth put into a systematic format to be learned, practiced and believed.
- B. It all begins with Truth. That is where the battle will always lie and it is where the battle began clear back in the beginning.
1. And here is where so many echo the words of Pilate when he hear Jesus utter these words at His trial, “You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37). To which Pilate says, “What is truth?”
 2. But it was Satan in that place so many professing Christians is merely a myth who said to Eve, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?” (Genesis 3:1).
 3. And this is what I want to do with each of you here. I want you to begin to decide what has God really said. And is what is said in the bible really of God and is it really true?
 4. I want moms and dads to gently and persistently ask their children what they believe happened in the beginning. I want to have home that are filled with serious conversation over truth.
 5. I want us to embrace the wisdom of God which is foolishness to this age.
 6. I want us to think about what the bible simply says about itself regarding our beginnings. I want Missio Dei Fellowship to be a church that is silly and simple enough to accept what is written.
- C. The boring but not boring doctrine of bibliology.
1. A point I have taught a lot on over the years. But a point that needs constant repeating for we all are prone to wander.
 2. Before I give you a few passages to consider I want to lay out a key presuppositions that are important to know and be aware of. There are two ways to approach this subject:

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3. Axiopistic—this is a person who brings in a great deal of outside thought, logic, and argumentation into the discussion of bibliology, specifically regarding the Bible’s self-statements regarding its truth, inerrancy, infallibility, authority and preservation.
4. Autopistic—this is a person who holds to the belief that the Scriptures themselves are sufficient to determine the truth, inerrancy, infallibility, authority and preservation of itself. It does not rely upon outside arguments to help buttress the Bible's own declarations about itself.
5. Notice that both positions carry presuppositions.
 - a. One assumes that the proof of the trustworthiness of the bible is found outside itself. It is found in the world of reason, logic, history and science.
 - b. The other assumes that the proof is found within the bible itself.
 - c. Some simply reject this second way by saying it is circular, but though true, it is also true of everything.
 - d. Example of evolution, in whatever form you wish, no proof, no ability to test its ultimate claims, and therefore it ends up in a circular argument that is built on an assumption.
 - e. This is not to say that external evidences regarding the Scripture are not helpful, but they cannot be the determining factor for what we believe.
6. In my earlier days there was a theologian named Clark Pinnock who was a well-known axiopist.
 - (1) Well known as a conservative theologian and champion of the Christian faith.
 - (2) In 60's he was a stalwart defender of the truthfulness of the bible. He was one of the early theologians that helped begin to move the SBC back to a solid, conservative theological position.
 - (3) But by the time the 70's came he began to doubt that the bible was accurate and true.

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- (a) The result was a reconsideration of almost every key doctrine of the Christian faith. Reconsideration that led to rejection.
 - (b) This led him to believe that the Holy Spirit was at work in other world religions.
 - (c) He taught that salvation was found in other religions but that it was because of Jesus Christ.
 - i) Essentially he said that people outside of faith in Jesus who show a measure of godliness will be given eternal life because God's love through the death of Christ has made forgiveness for everyone whether they knew it or not.
 - ii) This is very similar to the current position of the RCC.
 - (d) This then led to a rejection of eternal punishment, otherwise known as hell. Believed in annihilationism.
- (4) By the turn of the millennium he had moved into becoming an active advocate of the theory known as "Open Theism" that haunts the church today.
- (5) He died in 2010 and only the Lord knows his state.
- b. He is only one of many who started out in one place and ended in another.
- D. What does the bible say about itself?
1. 2 Timothy 3:15-17.
 - a. In vs. 15 we have the power of the scripture.
 - (1) Note how central the belief in the truthfulness of Scripture is when speaking of one's soul.
 - (2) Notice how the bible is described as the source, the place, of true wisdom.
 - (3) Notice then what that type of wisdom exists to do.

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- (4) And why? Because it ultimately points us to Jesus Christ where salvation is found and in Him alone.
- b. In 16 the product of the scripture.
 - (1) Because it is God-breathed it brings value and power into those who read it and believe it.
 - (2) It become “profitable.”
- c. In 17 the purpose of the scripture.
 - (1) Jesus prayed on behalf of us that we would be made holy and set apart for God. How this was done is in the word of God (John 17).
 - (2) The bible is effective. It accomplishes something. Here in vs 17 it says that the Christian, through the Word, because it is God-breathed, equips us for all that we are to be and do.
- 2. In John 17:17 Jesus says it as plainly as can be said, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”
 - a. Note it is not that in the bible is truth found.
 - b. It is that the Word of God is, itself, truth.
- 3. Why? Because it is God’s word to us.
 - a. It is written in Titus 1:1-2, “Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago” (Titus 1:1-2)
 - b. Note how God’s truthfulness is vitally connected to our salvation. You cannot separate them and have enduring hope.

III. Conclusion.

- A. And this is where we stop today. How and where is your hope? And how shall you endure when your world you live in turns against you?

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- B. The Apostle Paul writes much about enduring in faithfulness and in all of his words the driving force behind it is a settled conviction of the truthfulness of God and the Word of God.
- C. Will you rise up as men and women of God and shake off the fetters of this world that bind your conscience and your convictions? Will you stand and contend for the faith that was once delivered to us?

Small Group Questions

- This was a unique sermon in many ways, how did it impact you as you heard it? What are some of the things going through your mind?
- If it is possible, try to go through the first eleven chapters and think about foundational truths that are established and require decisions. Don't just pick the obvious, low hanging "fruit" but do some thinking and brainstorming. Pray for discernment. Look at 1:1; 1:2-25; 1:26-30; 2:7; 2:15-17; 2:18-26; 3:1-6; 3:9-13; 3:15; 4:4-11; all of chapter 5; 6:5; 6:8; 6:17; 7:18-20; 9:1-7; 9:9-13; 10:1; 11:1-9.