



Genesis 1-11

Transcript

Introduction

00:00-00:33

The book of Genesis. It's the first book of the Bible, and its storyline divides into two main parts. There's chapters 1-11, which tell the story of God and the whole world, and then there's chapters 12-50, which zoom in and tell the story of God and just one man, Abraham, and then his family. And these two parts are connected by a hinge story at the beginning of chapter 12. And this design, it gives us a clue to how to understand the message of the book as a whole and how it introduces the story of the whole Bible.

Chapters 1-2

00:33-01:58

So the book begins with God taking the disorder and the darkness described in the second sentence of the Bible, and God brings out of it order and beauty and goodness, and he makes a world where life can flourish.

And God makes these creatures called humans, or *adam* in Hebrew. He makes them in his image, which has to do with their role and purpose in God's world. So the humans are made to be reflections of God's character out into the world. And they're appointed as God's representatives to rule his world on his behalf, which, in context, means to harness all of its potential, to care for it, and make it a place where even more life can flourish. God blesses the humans; it's a key word in this book. And he gives them a garden, it's like a place from which they begin starting to build this new world.

Now the key is that the humans have a choice about how they're going to go about building this world, and that's represented by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Up till now, God has provided and defined what is good and what is not good, but now God is giving the humans the dignity and the freedom of a choice.

Are they going to trust God's definition of good and evil, or are they going to seize autonomy and define good and evil for themselves? And the stakes are really high. To rebel against God is to embrace death because you're turning away from the giver of life himself. This is represented by the tree of life.

Chapter 3

01:59-04:25

And so in chapter 3, a mysterious figure, a snake, enters into the story. The snake's given no introduction other than it's a creature that God made. And it becomes clear that it's a creature in rebellion against God, and it wants to lead the humans into rebellion—and their death.

The snake tells a different story about the tree and the choice. It says that seizing the knowledge of good and evil are not going to bring death, that it's actually the way to life and becoming like God themselves. Now, the irony of this is tragic because we know the humans, they're already like God. They were made to reflect God's image. But instead of trusting God, the humans seize autonomy. They take the knowledge of good and evil for themselves, and, in an instant, the whole story spirals out of control.

The first casualty is human relationships. The man and the woman, they suddenly realize how vulnerable they are. Now they can't even trust each other, and so they make clothes, and they hide their bodies from one another.

The second casualty is that intimacy between God and the humans is lost. So they go and run and hide from God. And then when God finds them, they start this game of blame-shifting about who rebelled first.

Now right here this story stops, and there's a series of short poems where God declares to the snake and then to the humans the tragic consequences of their actions. God first tells the snake that despite its apparent victory, it is destined for defeat, to eat dust.

God promises that one day a seed, or a descendant, will come from the woman, who's going to deliver a lethal strike to the snake's head, which sounds like great news. But this victory is going to come with a cost because the snake, too, will deliver a lethal strike to the descendant's heel as it's being crushed.

It's a very mysterious promise of this wounded victor, but in the flow of the story so far, you see this is an act of God's grace. The humans, they've just rebelled, and what does God do? He promises to rescue them. But this doesn't erase the consequences of the humans' decision, so God informs them that now every aspect of their life together, at home and out in the field, it's going to be fraught with grief and pain because of the rebellion, all leading to their death.

From here, the story then spirals downward. Chapters 3-11, they trace the widening ripple effect of the rebellion and of human relationships fracturing at every level.

Chapters 4-11

04:26-06:43

So there's the story about two brothers, Cain and Abel. Cain's so jealous of his brother that he wants to murder him. And God warns him not to give in to the temptation, but he does anyway. He murders him in the field.

So Cain then goes on to build a city where violence and oppression reign. And this is all epitomized in the story of Lamech. He's the first man in the Bible to have more than one wife—he's accumulating them like property—and then he goes on to sing a short song about how he's more violent and vengeful than Cain ever was.

After this, we get an odd story about the "sons of God," which could refer to evil, angelic beings, or it could refer to ancient kings who claimed that they descended from the gods. And like Lamech, they acquired as many wives as they wanted, and they produced the Nephilim, these great warriors of old.

Whichever view is right, the point is that humans are building kingdoms that fill God's world with violence and even more corruption. In response, we're told that God is broken with grief. Humanity is ruining his good world, and they're ruining each other. And so, out of a passion to protect the goodness of his world, he washes it clean of humanity's evil with the great flood.

But he protects one blameless human, Noah, and his family. And he commissions him as a new Adam. He repeats the divine blessing and commissions him to go out into the world. And so our hopes are really high, but then Noah fails too, and also in a garden. He goes and he plants a vineyard, and he gets drunk out of his mind. And then one of his sons, Ham, does something shameful to his father in the tent. And so here we have our new Adam, naked and ashamed, just like the first. And the downward spiral begins again.

It all leads to the foundation of the city of Babylon. The people of ancient Mesopotamia, they come together around this new technology they have—the brick. And they can make cities and towers bigger and faster than anybody's ever done before. And they want to build a new kind of tower that will reach up to the gods, and they will make a great name for themselves. It's an image of human rebellion and arrogance. It's the garden rebellion now writ large. And so God humbles their pride and scatters them.

Conclusion

06:44-07:42

Now this is a diverse group of stories, but you can see they're all exploring the same basic point: God keeps giving humans the chance to do the right thing with his world, and humans keep ruining it. These stories are making a claim that we live in a good world that we have turned bad; that we've all chosen to define good and evil for ourselves, and so we all contribute to this world of broken relationships leading to conflict and violence and ultimately death.

But there's hope. God promised that one day a descendant would come—the wounded victor who will defeat evil at its source. And so despite humanity's evil, God is determined to bless and rescue his world. And so the big question, of course, is, what is God going to do? And the next story, the hinge, offers the answer. But for now, that's what Genesis 1-11 is all about.