

From the Start and In the End

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Preacher: Dr. Daniel Heeringa

- [0 : 0 0] Bibles, I want you to turn to Colossians chapter 1, Colossians chapter 1. We spent this year so far looking at Genesis 1 through 11, the very start of the creation of the world, following up with the inhabitants that came upon the earth.
- And I believe that we have not only explored significant events, but I really believe that Genesis 1 through 11 is a blueprint of what makes us who we are, what we are.
- To put it simply, we're a fallen people. As Scripture puts it, we are a spiritually fallen people. We were born into sin.
- We have sinned. We live in a world of sin. It didn't start that way. God made it right and pure, but it got that way quickly. It only took two of us to mess it up.
- And they got in a mess, and now we're all in a mess, and we've made it bigger. And that's the message of this series that we've been in, Genesis 1 through 11, from the start.
- [1 : 1 1] We've been messed up a long time, in other words. However, that, thank God, is just the beginning of a story. That's not it. There is hope as well. And there actually has been since the beginning.
- And the hope is even since the beginning. The hope is found in Christ. It's found in Christ. It's found in the virgin birth of Christ.
- It's found in the sinless life of Christ. It's found in the crucified death of Christ. It's found in the Sunday morning resurrection of Christ. It's found in the ascension of Christ.
- And it's found in the promises of Christ that are twofold. One is the Holy Spirit's faithfulness to empower us and to guide us until we see the Lord face to face.
- And number two, the imminent promised return of the Lord. That's our hope. Our hope is that Christ died for our salvation. And when we surrender our lives to him, he'll save us, his Holy Spirit will empower us, and thank God he'll come back to receive us.
- [2 : 1 8] That where he is, we may be also. It was seen from the beginning. And it is clarified much later. And I want to focus this morning, just for a moment, on the clarification.
- When we understand the clarification of what was happening with all of that, then you can see how it happened from the beginning. And then we're going to celebrate that around the table of the Lord.
- Colossians chapter 1, beginning in verse 15, says this. He, speaking of Christ, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
- For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him.
- And for him, and he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn of the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.
- [3 : 2 4] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

It didn't take long for the creation of Adam and Eve to see things go sideways. Satan, in the form of a snake, slithered his way into the garden of bliss and spoiled the matter when they listened to him.

And my friend, that's what happens when you listen to a snake like Satan. All of life grows harder due to sin. Roses have thorns and thistles.

Weeds grow in a garden and in a lawn, apparently. And pain is increased, even with blessings. As a matter of fact, especially with blessings sometimes.

[4 : 41] And sin will leave you legless and crawling around in the dust. That's what the curses tell us. For the first time in their lives, there was a strain and a shame that came in Adam and Eve's marriage.

For the first time, they covered their nakedness from each other with their hand-sewn efforts. But it was not enough. In the turmoil of their woes from their fall of sin, God in his grace, God in his mercy, provided a covering for their shame.

There had to be a sacrifice for that covering. Blood had to be shed for there to be an adequate covering. And God provided that.

Genesis chapter 3 verse 21 says, Even with the graciousness of God, the ramifications of a sin-stained society continued on.

Their son Cain killed their other son Abel over an envy of Abel's right relationship with God. Abel was right with God, not because he was perfect.

[6 : 00] But because he acknowledged his sin with his offering. It was a blood sacrifice that paid the price for his sin. That pattern had been carved out and shown through the loincloths that God had made for his parents.

Sin continued to grow, however. Until the Lord carried out the great reset, the flood. The earth was cleansed of their wrong ways.

Of its wrong ways. Peter compares that to a baptism of cleansing. And only one godly family remained.

And God made the first stated covenant with the promise of the rainbow. As I explained just a couple of weeks ago. God had hung his weapon, a bow, had hung his weapon of choice up in the sky.

Aimed away from a replenished earth. It would not be the last covenant that God made. As the earth repopulated, sin abounded more.

[7 : 10] You know why? Because we have a natural tendency to sin. We're born into sin. Our world is influenced by sin.

We are slaves to sin when we're outside of Christ. From the foundation of the earth, it's been obvious that we need a savior.

And I'm here today doing what I'm doing. Because we have a savior. I mean, listen, I would have no message to preach if it was all loincloths and rainbows and attempts to reach the stars.

There'd be no message to preach. But the hope that we see in Genesis is just a foreshadowing. Because the sacrifice of the animals to make the skins in the garden was followed by a full-blown sacrificial system.

Because after God had scattered people, after the Tower of Babel, he scattered and gathered people who had gathered for the wrong reasons. After that, when you turn a chapter, he chooses to raise up a people to do his work through.

[8 : 20] That people was led into slavery. And as Moses led God's people out of slavery, God instituted, through the leadership of Moses, laws and regulations to give them guidance in this sinful world.

To provide a temporary means for forgiveness. And that required sacrifice. And that required sacrifice would only come from a lamb without blemish.

We see the first sign of that at the Passover. When God gave instructions for the Hebrews to escape from Egypt. Only the blood of a spotless lamb would keep them from continued enslavement.

And provide them escape from the oppression that they suffered. But once they were freed and established as a people again.

Such an animal became an atoning sacrifice. That word atoning speaks of being at one.

[9 : 28] And what that means is that sacrifice was to make them at one with God again. It became a key part of the worship in the tabernacle. When they moved out of temporary circumstances and moved to Jerusalem, it became the standard of worship for the temple as well.

It's all a foreshadowing of what was to come. And the one that was to come was Jesus. Another covenant promised that. The new covenant promised that.

And Jesus came born of a virgin. He did not have, because he was born of a virgin, did not have that inborn nature of sin within him. As we're born with. Scripture tells us he was tempted in every way that we are.

Hebrews 4.15 says that. But he neither carried sin separation from birth as we do, because we're born into sin, nor did he have sin guilt from his own mistakes, which we do outside of Christ.

That spotless lamb of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was simply a forerunner of the spotless sacrificial lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

[10 : 41] The writer of Hebrews put it this way. He said in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 11, and every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting for that time until his enemy should be made a footstool for his feet.

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Which brings me back to my opening passage, and the key part of that passage, which is Colossians chapter 1, verse 21 and 22, when it says, and you, he's talking about me, he's talking about you, and you who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled you in his blood of flesh, body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

And my friend, that's what leads us to the Lord's supper table. The same Christ that was in creation is the same Christ that provided a way to new and eternal life.

He sacrificed his body, he shed his blood, and told us to proclaim his death until he comes again by taking part in this celebration around this table.

[12 : 24] But I want to be clear about something. I know this is not for everyone. It's not a blanket process that we just go through in a worship service. Not at all.

As a matter of fact, it is only for those who publicly have confessed the Lord Jesus, placed their faith in Christ Jesus, and proclaim that like these two young ladies did today, through baptism, by biblical baptism of immersion.

The private part of that is to be right when you take it. And I know you've heard this passage before, probably, but I want you to pay attention to it. 1 Corinthians 11, 28 through 30 says, let a person examine himself then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That's why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

I didn't say that. That's in scripture. But my friend, you need to have your heart right when you come before the Lord's table.

[13 : 38] It's time to get right. And so my question is this, just sincerely, do you know the Lord today? I've said many times, and many say, we've taken a break for the summer, but I meet on Tuesday mornings at 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock with men.

We read together a scripture, excuse me, we read together a book based on scripture, chapter a week, and then we discuss that together and pray together. I often tell them one of the greatest burdens I carry as a pastor is that somebody may be sitting in the congregation week after week after week, maybe a member of the church, might even be in leadership in the church, never has given his or her life to the Lord Jesus.

So I ask you today, do you know him? When's your first time here? Whether you're here every week, do you know the Lord? Have you ever surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus and asked him to forgive you of your sins and to cleanse you and to come into your life and empower you with the power of his Holy Spirit to help you to live for his cause and his kingdom?

Have you ever said, I don't want what I want, I want what you want. From this day forward, I want to live for you. I want you to know if you've never done that, today's the day of salvation.

That if there's any inkling within you to do that, it's not because you came up with it because you were born in sin and dead in sin. In fact, the Spirit of God has awakened you to realize your need of God.

[15 : 16] And you come today, I'd love to show you how you can give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you're here today and you've done that, but you've never publicly acknowledged that, it's been a private matter, then don't be concerned about this.

Let's be concerned about obedience. Let's get it right, in the right order. Let's make sure that we proudly proclaim the Lord Jesus through church membership, through baptism, as a believer.

Make that right. Maybe you're here this morning and you are a Christian and you know that, but if we got real about stuff, you don't need to be taking part.

There's sin in your life and you know that. God's revealed that to you, the Holy Spirit spoke to you about that and you've not dealt with it.

You've ignored it. And you're allowing that to manifest in your life, refusing to surrender that portion of the Lord, of your life, excuse me, surrender that portion of your life to the Lord.

[16 : 23] I'm going to tell you, if he's not Lord of all, he's not Lord of any. And so you need to get your heart right today. I purposely give an invitation and a time of meditation before we do this to give you the opportunity to privately confess your sins before the Lord and ask him to cleanse you.

Ask him to work and move in your life so that you can be right and do this right. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I want to pray for you. Lord Jesus, I ask today that you'll work and you'll move in our lives.

Help us to simply be obedient, to make things wrong, make things that are wrong right, dear God, to do exactly what you'd have us to do. Lead us right now, I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.