

Route 66

Genesis: The Journey Begins

Part 1 - March 1, 2009

Genesis gives us two thousand years worth of historical stories!



In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. - *Genesis 1:1 NIV*

His crowning act of creation was *Adam* (meaning "mankind"). Mankind was created in God's image in order to have a personal relationship with "them".

God said, "Let us make man in our image ..." - *Genesis 1:26a NIV*

This is the first allusion to the trinity! In verse *two* the Holy Spirit is even mentioned by name, "hovering" over the earth.

Because Adam was created in God's image, some speculate that he *originally* embodied both maleness *and* femaleness, and that God had to *separate* those distinct expressions to create Eve. This would explain why God formed *Adam* from the dust, yet put Him into a deep sleep to create *Eve* from *out of his side*.

Adam and Eve were given the ability to choose between good and evil so that they're relationship with God could be by *choice*.



The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. - *Genesis 2:25 NIV*

They walked with God in the Garden, and there was only one rule; but, apparently *one rule* too many!

Satan, disguised as a serpent, tempts Eve to doubt that God has their best interest in mind; and she and Adam put *there own will above* God's and they eat from the one and only forbidden tree. The root of disobedience is doubt in God's love. Then came the inevitable shame of sin. They try to cover their guilt with leaves, and attempt to hide from God. Long story short: God finds them; Adam blames Eve; Eve blames the snake!

The Holy Spirit is mentioned in verse two, and now we see the very first promise of a redeemer (when God rebukes the serpent):

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. - *Genesis 3:15 NIV*

He'll defeat the grip of sin and death over mankind: "he will crush your head", but it'll cost Him His life: "You will strike his heel".

God clothes them in animal skins (3:21). With this first sacrifice God *literally* covers the shame of sin with an innocent life. The first two chapters are all about creation. But, from here on the Bible is a story of redemption and restoration.

When Eve has her first son she probably expects the fulfillment of this promised Messiah to *undo* what she and Adam have done. But instead she gives birth to Cain, a wicked man who murders his righteous brother Abel – out of spite and envy – simply because Abel's trust and obedience pleases God.

Picture Cain as your great, great grandfather; now picture your great, great *grandson*. In *that* many generations the inclination of Adam's *entire* family "was *only* evil *all* the time." (6:5) The possibility of a Messiah was being snuffed out! Mankind had spiraled into violence, wickedness, and corruption *beyond* hope.

Everyone that is, except for *one* humble man:



Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. - *Genesis 6:9b NIV*

Noah is a picture of the Redeemer; his righteousness and purity qualified him to be an instrument of both judgment *and* salvation.

Noah *alone* trusted God's goodness and wisdom and love. Trust is the foundation of obedience. Noah obeyed God's instructions in spite of any scorn or ridicule he had to endure. Over 120 years, he and his sons built a four-story, floating warehouse, longer than a football field! They filled it with animals, and took their wives inside. Then God flooded the earth. He washed away the sin *and* the sinner, making way for the Messiah and giving mankind a fresh start.

But after only five generations, mankind is completely caught up in self-sufficiency, self-rule, and self-glorification. Some believe Adam and Eve had the genetic makeup for all races, and that their children were all colors, makes, and models.



But, we're told that they spoke only one language. (11:1)

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered ..." - *Genesis 11:4a NIV*

The base of the Tower of Babel would've been similar to this 4000-year-old, partially restored ziggurat near Baghdad in Iraq.

In order to save mankind, God breaks their self-important unity by confusing their speech. This confronts them with their own limitations and vulnerabilities, and scatters them into tribes.

But instead of turning to God and trusting Him, these tribes turn to false gods and idols that *they* can control. Many generations pass before a childless old man declares his belief in *one* true God. This is all the faith and trust God needs to build on.



But first He separates the man from the evil influences around him.

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you ..." - *Genesis 12:1-2a NAS*

Abram obeys God ... kind of. During a famine he moves to Egypt, says his wife is his sister (so he won't be killed for her), and learns a lesson about trusting God in spite of circumstances.

Abram and his nephew Lot travel together until their herds grow too large. They split up. Lot moves his family to a little place called Sodom, and God *promises* to give Abram the land of Canaan. This is why it is referred to as the "Promised Land".

Ten years after God's promise, Abram's 76-year-old wife, Sarah is tired of trusting God and she tells Abe to sleep with the maid (*as a surrogate*); not surprisingly Abram happily complies! Ishmael is born, but this is not *God's* chosen man or moment.

Thirteen years pass. God changes Abram's name to *Abraham* (Father of a multitude), institutes the covenant of circumcision, and reiterates his promise of a son. 99-year-old Abraham just laughs. Then the Lord shows up in camp with two angels! This time He reiterates his promise in person. 90-year-old Sarah just laughs.

The Lord warns Abraham about Sodom's impending doom, and Abraham pleads for his nephew, Lot, and those who still trust God, which amounts to Lot and his two daughters, who are spared.



But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. - *Genesis 19:26 NIV*

The whole area is rich in natural gas and salt. The language *could* mean she *returned* to Sodom and was buried in a shower of erupting salt deposits. Point is: She preferred Sodom over salvation.

Abraham journeys to the south, tells King Abimelech that Sarah is his sister (so he won't be killed for her), and learns, *AGAIN*, about trusting God in spite of circumstances.

So, Abraham laughed, Sarah laughed, and God had the last laugh! Sarah gives birth to Isaac (which means: "laughter"). Some time later, God puts Abraham's trust to the ultimate test ...



God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. [And] Sacrifice him there ..." - *Genesis 22:1-2 NIV*

And concluding that God is able to raise Isaac from the dead (*Heb 11:19*) Abraham trusts and obeys.

Satisfied that Abraham *finally* trusts Him, God intervenes and an angel stops Abraham from sacrificing his only begotten son. But, this helps us understand what God underwent with *His* only Son.

Isaac matures and marries Rebekah. Sarah and Abraham pass away. God repeats to Isaac/laughter the promise He made to his father Abraham (*Gen 26:3-4*), and Isaac lives a passive and peaceful life.

During a famine Isaac moves his tribe to Gerar, says Rebekah is his sister (so he won't be killed for her), and learns a lesson about trusting God in spite of circumstances. (*26:6-7*)



Rebekah is barren, but Isaac prays and she conceives twins: Esau (a rugged, hairy hunter), and Jacob (a smooth-skinned chef).

Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." - *Genesis 25:29-31 NIV*

Jacob was a conniver, and when his father Isaac was old and blind, he tricked him into giving him Esau's blessing. Then Jacob fled for his life to his Uncle Laban's farm.

On his way he has a dream, and God repeats the promise He made to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. (*28:13-15*). This is the last time God speaks the covenant directly. And this is why He's referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

On the farm, Jacob falls in love with Laban's youngest daughter, Rachel, and agrees to work for seven years if he can marry her. But seven years later, Laban connives the conniver and Jacob wakes up married to Laban's elder daughter, Leah! This suggests a lot of veils, low light, and a lot of wine! Laban allows Jacob to marry Rachel seven days later, if he agrees to work on the farm another seven *years*.

Jacob returns home terrified of Esau. But all is forgiven. Esau even *weeps* when he embraces Jacob. (He's not such a tough guy!)

Jacob wrestles with his faith until God appears to him as a man and *physically* wrestles with him all night. Jacob won't give in until God touches his hip socket and puts it out of joint. God changes Jacob's name to "Israel" ("he struggles with God").

His twelve sons become the twelve tribes of Israel. But his favorite is #11, who was born to his beloved *Rachel*.



Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. - *Genesis 37:3 NIV*

This made his older brothers very jealous. And it didn't help when he kept telling them his dreams where they all *bow* to him.

When they'd had enough, they threw Joseph into a pit, sold him to slave traders, and told Jacob/Israel wild animals ate him.

A much-humbled Joseph ends up in Egypt working for Potiphar (captain of the palace guard) until Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph, and fails, and accuses Joseph of attempted rape. Potiphar apparently sides with Joseph and puts him in prison instead of the customary execution. Despite suffering unjustly, Joseph steadfastly trusts God.

While in prison, Joseph interprets dreams for two recently jailed royal servants. Two years later, when the King has some troubling dreams his un-imprisoned servant remembers Joseph. Joseph sees the dream as a warning from God about an impending, drought and famine. The king is so impressed with Joseph that he puts him in charge of getting his kingdom properly prepared. And so, Joseph becomes the second most powerful man in Egypt.

When the famine hits Jacob/Israel's family he sends his sons, Joseph's brothers, unknowingly to Joseph for help. Joseph convinces the brothers to bring him Benjamin, the only other son of Jacob's beloved Rachel. Then Joseph accuses him of stealing and waits to see if the brothers will abandon him. But instead, they plead for Benjamin, and confess what they did to Benjamin's brother, and how it broke their father's heart.

It was Judah who talked them into selling Joseph, and now it's Judah who offers to take Benjamin's place in prison. Joseph can't take it any longer: "I am Joseph!" he cries. The brothers each faint and fall backward ... *not really, but kind of.*

The brothers rejoice and return home. And Jacob a.k.a. Israel is ecstatic that Joseph is alive. He moves his family to Egypt. And he doesn't tell *anyone* that his wife is his sister!

The people God chooses are *never* perfect. At times they are deeply flawed. They lie, deceive, rebel, and work hard just to trust in God's goodness. But this is who God chooses to use ... and to transform. Referring to *Jesus*, Paul wrote:

The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. - 1
Corinthians 15:45 NIV

Sin and death began with disobedience in the Garden of Eden, and ended with obedience in the Garden of Gethsemane. God's only begotten Son became the *final* sacrifice; the infinite innocent used by the Creator to cover the sin of all mankind.