

Series: Genesis: *Back to The Beginnings Again*

Sermon: *Two Reviews of Genesis 1-28*

Text: *Genesis 1-28*

RGJ/R/FBCCS/3-19-23 UNEDITED

- On November 21, 2021, I preached a sermon entitled, “*It’s Just ‘Anyplace’ Until You See God Is There.*” The text was *Genesis 28:10-22*.
- If I’ve remembered correctly, I preached that sermon nearly 2 years into the Covid-19 pandemic. It probably was *all* of 2 years. I think that deadly virus was already here by November of 2020.
- Then, just 9 weeks after preaching it, we did something that a church rarely chooses to do unless they have to do it. We moved from 5590 Nevada and began meeting on Sundays here in Coperni 3.
- Many things have happened. Many world-changing and life-changing events have taken place. So much is different since I preached that sermon—different in the life of FBC, different in my life and no doubt in different your life as well.
- However, in spite of all that has happened since that Sunday in 2021, I am certain that sermon was so memorable you could still tell me what it was all about after nearly 16 months have passed. **Right??**
- In case you cannot remember, I’ll remind you. The last half of *Genesis 28* finds *Jacob* on the run from his brother *Esau* after the scheming younger brother took the birthright and blessing from the carnal older brother.
- *Esau* was so carnal he didn’t care about things that really mattered until it was too late. *Jacob* was so crooked a cheater that the play on his name reminded everyone he would always try to trip them up.
- In chapter 28, *Jacob* awakens from a dream. He had spent the night camping in a place called *Luz*. Because of his dream, he renames the *Luz* as *Beth-El* that means “*House of God.*”
- Why “*House of God*”? Because, in his dream, *Yahweh*, the God of *Jacob*’s grandfather *Abraham* and father *Isaac*, had come to *Jacob*

and made wonderful promises now to Jacob, that he, God, would bring about.

- Interestingly, these promises that God said **he** would do relate to the very things Jacob was trying to do by his skills of deception. Therein lies the issue for the man Jacob.
- The ironic verse that captures the moment and the character of the man at this point in his life is 28:16. ***“When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.’”***
- It is a sad thing to discover that the LORD has been somewhere after he is gone—to miss God’s presence because of being *unaware*.
- All of the coming events in Jacob’s life described in *Genesis* happen to make it clear that God is there and God is working to keep the promises. Jacob will need to see God and trust him.
- Have we seen God in the events of our life together and our lives as apart since I preached this sermon 16 months ago? I Hope I would not have to say that, ***“Sadly, I was unaware.”*** How about you?
- Getting to chapter 28 of *Genesis*, we emphasized that the narratives were not about answering all the questions we might ask. An example was that the early chapters, although correct and historical, were not given as a proof in “scientific argument.” Even if might glean some scientific data from them, this was not their purpose.
- We *purposed* to read and understand *Genesis* with it’s Authorial purpose in mind. Rather than trying to make *Genesis* answer the questions we wanted to ask, we would seek to hear the questions and answers God designed it to address. It will be important for us to continue doing this as we move ahead from chapter 28.

Series: Genesis: *Back to The Beginnings Again*

Sermon: *Two Reviews of Genesis 1-28*

Text: *Genesis 1-28*

RGGJR/FBCCS/3-19-23 UNEDITED

- If you have forgotten my sermon of November 21, 2021, I suspect you may have forgotten some of the other truths we emphasized along the way.
- Since I am such a soft-hearted, kind and understanding teacher I will help you catch up.
- Let's start *Genesis* again by reading a one-page review of Genesis 1-28 from another source. Please listen carefully. There will be a quiz!
- [Read AI generated review of Genesis 1-28]

The book of Genesis starts with the creation story, where God creates the universe, the earth, and all living beings, including Adam and Eve. God places Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and instructs them not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

However, Satan deceives Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, and she convinces Adam to do the same. As a result, they are banished from the Garden of Eden, and God curses them and their descendants with death.

The story then follows the lineage of Adam and Eve, focusing on their son Cain, who becomes jealous of his brother Abel and murders him. God punishes Cain by making him a wanderer, but he also grants him protection from anyone who would harm him.

The narrative then shifts to the descendants of Adam and Eve, through their third son, Seth. The story highlights the long lives of people before the flood, with some living up to almost 1,000 years. The world becomes increasingly wicked, and God decides to flood the earth, saving only Noah and his family and pairs of animals.

After the flood, God makes a covenant with Noah, promising never to flood the earth again. The narrative then follows the descendants of Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The Tower of Babel story follows, where people attempt to build a tower to reach the heavens, and God confuses their languages, scattering them across the earth.

The focus then shifts to Abraham, whom God calls to leave his homeland and go to the land of Canaan. God promises Abraham that he will be the father of a great

Series: Genesis: *Back to The Beginnings Again*

Sermon: *Two Reviews of Genesis 1-28*

Text: *Genesis 1-28*

RGJR/FBCCS/3-19-23 **UNEDITED**

nation and will inherit the land. Abraham obeys and becomes a wealthy herdsman, and God makes a covenant with him, promising him a son and many descendants.

However, when Sarah, Abraham's wife, is unable to conceive, she gives her maidservant Hagar to Abraham, who bears him a son named Ishmael. Later, Sarah conceives and gives birth to Isaac, whom God chooses as the promised son.

God tests Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac, but just as he is about to do so, an angel stops him, and he offers a ram as a sacrifice instead. The narrative then follows the descendants of Isaac, including his sons Jacob and Esau, who become rivals.

Jacob, through deceit, obtains Esau's birthright and blessing from their father Isaac. Jacob flees to his uncle Laban's house, where he works for him and marries his daughters Rachel and Leah. Jacob becomes wealthy and has many children, including twelve sons who become the twelve tribes of Israel.

The first twenty-eight chapters of Genesis focus on the creation of the world, the fall of man, the descendants of Adam and Eve, the flood, the Tower of Babel, and the story of Abraham and his descendants. These stories set the foundation for the rest of the Bible and establish the themes of sin, salvation, and God's covenant with His people.

- [QUIZ!! Ask if they found the one potential mistake “12 Sons of Jacob become Israel.” Given the use of the Hebrew for “son” it could include grandsons (i.e. Joseph’s sons Ephraim and Manasseh) but I think the writer made a mistake and probably didn’t understand this fine point.
- I have a confession to make about the review I just read. I may have signed up for the *newsletter of the Anti-Christ* to get this summary I made an account with *ChatGPT developed by OpenAI*.
- Have you heard of that? If you are younger or involved in digital stuff you certainly have. It is all the *rage* these days in both ways we use that word *rage*. It is strongly loved and hated and all the in-between.

- If you are a college professor teaching basic classes with hundreds of students you might *hate* it because it can write reasonable essays on most subjects that are as good as any other college student's work and can be passed off as such. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish machine, i.e., AI writing from boring college freshmen writing when grading 200 boring papers.
- On the other hand, if you are a socially busy college freshman, you might *love* ChaptGPT because you procrastinated too long and didn't get that short essay on *Shakespeare's Hairstyle* done by the deadline. ChatGPT will get it done in just a few keystrokes and a in a matter of seconds. For now at least, ChatGPT will even do that for free.
- However, as I alluded to with the idea of the Anti-Christ's newsletter, you may somehow end up paying later with your earthly soul. New things on the internet find ways to monetize everything and often the price we have already paid is very high in terms of control and loss of privacy without us even knowing it.
- So, ChatGPT, now *owns* a new person whose first name is "R." and last name is "G." See how cleverly I disguised myself? They will never be able to figure out my full name from my email address and my cell phone number that I had to use for two-step verification, RIGHT?!
- When I harp on us being "biblical" as a church, as I just did talking about it as an FBC value, people sometimes draw the wrong conclusion. They call it "bibliolatry." That is the worship of the words on a page or maybe even the ink on the page—I guess.
- But, that is not what we mean by "biblical." If it was, we could read the declarative facts I just read generated by the *AI preacher* and say we "know the Bible!" I would be out of this job.

- That's a real possibility. Ask the reporters and news writers. The estimate is that by just 2025 90% or more of the writing you read as "news" online will be AI generated. Maybe 90% of the sermons will be by then as well. They will likely be shorter and more straightforward.
- I appreciate how the computer that wrote the summary I read didn't even suggest that the contents of *Genesis* are just a **myth** some unscientific idiots still believe. However, there was still something missing that is part of my definition of being biblical.
- To say we understand Scripture requires that we have a foundational understanding of what *Gen 1-28* records in written language. The AI can give us that. But, there is something more to biblical meaning than just the bare, indicative facts that a computer can recite in a succinct summary.
- This is why the author of Hebrews wrote those words, ^{1Hebrews 4:12} ***For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.***
- When we approach the Word of God, as in *Genesis* as living truth that Word can discern things we cannot discern from ink on a page. There is a marvelous powerful thing that happens.
- For this to happen we must recognize God is not simply listing assorted facts. No, God is telling us: ***Who he is. What he does. Why he does what he does.*** THEN ***Who we are. And how we are involved with who he is and what he does.***
- To review *Genesis* in a big way, *The Book of Genesis* reveals the foundational answers to these questions in a Living Word that the Holy Spirit then uses in powerful ways to accomplish God's purposes.

- Yes, we need the words—the facts—what the ink on the page or the pixels on the screen tell us the Bible says but being biblical is much more.
- Can AI of ChatGPT do that. I doubt it but who knows? There was a Star Trek (the original series) episode entitled “The Apple” (get it??) in which humanoids worship a god that turned out to be a powerful talking AI computer. BUT, I doubt the Holy Spirit was much involved in the worship of those inhabitants of the planet Gamma Trianguli VI. They didn’t have the Word of God so they were not *biblical* in the way we long to be.
- Let’s review *Genesis* again...
- *Pastor AI* tells me “**The book of Genesis starts with the creation story, where God creates the universe, the earth, and all living beings, including Adam and Eve. God places Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and instructs them not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.**”
- Why did God create? Was there a power beyond him that forced him? No. Start with this: God created because, in his very nature, God is uniquely one who shares his life by creating
- Our God graciously shares LIFE not because he is compelled to do so but because our God is LIFE. By his very nature your God is The Life-Giving God.
- God created a universe, the earth, the Garden, the animals and human beings perfectly suited to sharing his LIFE.
- In this perfectly suited setting, God gave human beings a perfectly designed role—a purpose beyond what we might have expected for created beings. Our purpose? We were created to be his *icons*—his *images*—displaying him to all the creation.
- Within this perfect setting of a God who creates and shares life, God created a limit—eat this but not that. This limit, along with the

freedom to chose, was not created by a mean, angry God but rather by a gracious sharing God.

- ***How do you see God and what he was doing?*** Do you know your reason for being? Is God, by nature a killjoy who delights in making rules and keeping good things from us? Or, is God a creating and sharing God?
- ***How do you see you and your part in it?*** Do you have a purpose? Is it to make money and acquire stuff? Enjoy life—have fun? Live as long as you can? Make yourself significant in the eyes of other humans?
- *Genesis* gives you a much bigger, cosmic purpose—image God!
- ***The AI preachers next says: However, Satan deceives Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, and she convinces Adam to do the same. As a result, they are banished from the Garden of Eden, and God curses them and their descendants with death.***
- Without giving us all the details we would like, *Genesis* tells us the first human beings broke their relationship with the Creator and twisted their created purpose into lives that imaged the opposite of the God who shared Creation and LIFE. Now human beings image destruction and death.
- ***How do we see God’s part and our part in the destruction and death in this world still today?***
- Let’s continue the review: **The narrative then shifts to the descendants of Adam and Eve, through their third son, Seth. The story highlights the long lives of people before the flood, with some living up to almost 1,000 years. The world becomes increasingly wicked, and God decides to flood the earth, saving only Noah and his family and pairs of animals.**

- What do increases in sinfulness and decreases in life expectancy tell us about this creation and our human part in it? Is all going well when humans leave the life and purpose God shared with them?
- So, God washes the earth with a flood of death. Did the creating, life-giving God give up on humans? No. he took drastic measures to redeem them—to bring them back to his LIFE and plan.
- So what came next in *Genesis*, Pastor Al? **After the flood, God makes a covenant with Noah, promising never to flood the earth again. The narrative then follows the descendants of Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The Tower of Babel story follows, where people attempt to build a tower to reach the heavens, and God confuses their languages, scattering them across the earth.**
- There is a new beginning, why? Because the very nature of God is to be redemptive and to give life again. No one forces God to save Noah and family. God's nature is to cleanse and to redeem at the same time in this way. He provides a kind of new Adam and a new family to fulfill human purpose
- How did we humans respond to this? It got worse! We built a tower to stick a thumb in God's eye up in heaven. By nature, God is a redeeming Life giver. By nature post-Adam and Eve we humans are God rejecting ***autonomous rebels***.
- So what happens next? What does it mean? **The focus then shifts to Abraham, whom God calls to leave his homeland and go to the land of Canaan. God promises Abraham that he will be the father of a great nation and will inherit the land. Abraham obeys and becomes a wealthy herdsman, and God makes a covenant with him, promising him a son and many descendants. However, when Sarah, Abraham's wife, is unable to conceive, she gives her maidservant Hagar to Abraham, who bears him a son named Ishmael. Later, Sarah conceives and gives birth to Isaac, whom God chooses as the promised son. God tests Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice**

Isaac, but just as he is about to do so, an angel stops him, and he offers a ram as a sacrifice instead. The narrative then follows the descendants of Isaac, including his sons Jacob and Esau, who become rivals. Jacob, through deceit, obtains Esau's birthright and blessing from their father Isaac. Jacob flees to his uncle Laban's house, where he works for him and marries his daughters Rachel and Leah. Jacob becomes wealthy and has many children, including twelve sons who become the twelve tribes of Israel.

- At this point, we have reached again reached our restart point following chapter 28...God the Creator, Life-giver and Redeemer narrows his work through Abraham's family. Now, God especially reveals he is by nature a Promise-Maker and a Promise-Keeper. Humans connect with this God and his promises for Life by faith—i.e., by believing that what God says is true is true.
- Still, humans struggle with faith in God's promises. They work their own half-baked, ill-informed, powerless plans over and over apart from God. They exert their rebellious autonomy. Their human plans always fail to bring about God's promises and purposes. However, God never fails.
- We have learned more than a few facts of history. We have been taught by God's Living Word that God is the creating, Life-sharing, redeeming, promising God.
- We have learned that we humans are the creatures of purpose and promise made to share receive Life from God and to display his image. However, we humans from just a lone couple to our great cities and back down to our tribes and our families—down even to every one of us individually, we humans by nature falter in our created role.
- We want autonomy, we want to be like God—in fact to be God. We are not and that brings death.

Series: Genesis: *Back to The Beginnings Again*

Sermon: *Two Reviews of Genesis 1-28*

Text: *Genesis 1-28*

RGJR/FBCCS/3-19-23 UNEDITED

- The answer here very early in *Genesis* and continuing with the stories of Jacob and others—the answer is always faith in the God revealed from the beginning in *Genesis*.
- ***AI Preacher may not tell you that but I will!***