

Introducing the “Primeval History”

Throughout the Fall season, Pastor Tony will preach a series of sermons on **Genesis 1-11, a section of the Bible scholars call “the Primeval History.”** The Primeval History is set in the time before the call of Abraham and the beginning of the Israelite people, and so the stories have a more “universal” focus than the rest of the Old Testament.

The episodes are familiar to many of us: the seven days of Creation; the story of Adam and Eve; the fall of humanity; Cain and Abel; the Great Flood; the Tower of Babel. There are also a few minor episodes sandwiched in there that might make us raise our eyebrows, like the interbreeding of angels and humans (Genesis 6:1-4) and Noah’s cursing of some of his descendants (Gen 9:18-27). While the selection of stories seems almost random, these episodes have been chosen and woven together in a way that demonstrates both literary artistry and theological insight.

Throughout history, the stories have been understood in a variety of ways. Mostly, they have popularly (and shallowly) been understood as historical accounts of early world history. But through the ages, there have also been dissenters who have argued that the stories should be understood metaphorically (as signs of events or principles not explicitly stated) or even allegorically (i.e., that most all the elements of the stories are symbolic of the work of Christ).

Pastor Tony believes that the stories of Genesis 1-11 are true, but they are probably not history in the way we typically think of history. Rather, these episodes are designed to provide a theological groundwork for the story of Israel, and the story of humanity’s relationship with God. Some of the themes that we will encounter in these stories are central to the entire biblical narrative:

- There is only one God, sovereign over the entire universe
- Human beings have a unique relationship with God, and an indissoluble connection with the earth
- Humans inevitably rebel against God’s commands
- Human disobedience results in estrangement from God and from the earth
- God repeatedly has mercy on humans, not treating us as our sin would deserve
- God always “leaves the door open” for our return home
- The stories are pregnant with foreshadowing, repeatedly pointing forward to the exile of the Israelites from Babylon (586-515 BC), and to God’s ultimate plan for human redemption in Jesus Christ

Some of these sermons will be a little dense, and you are encouraged to ask questions, send e-mails, or do your own research to understand the topic more deeply. If you miss a sermon or have trouble following the main points, there will be videos and sermon transcripts available. We hope you find this series enlightening and inspiring!