

Blurred for Now

January 1 — *Genesis 1:1-3:24*

Day 1 — 364 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

We covered the creation account, a description of life in the Garden of Eden, and the events leading up to and including “the fall” of man. God designed everything to perfection yet man, with his moral freedom, chose to disobey God and, consequently, compromised creation; but rather than focus on the fall and its terrible results, let’s dwell on the bigger picture.

From the beginning, it is obvious that God desired for man to reflect His image, to express the glory of His name and the magnificence of His nature. However, by choosing to sin, **man marred that image**. Even though he is still God’s most prized creation, he is no longer the model of perfection that God intended; in his sinfulness he forfeited his holiness. But, the good news is that the story doesn’t stop there!

In *Genesis 3:15*, the first prophecy of the Bible, God explained His plan to restore mankind. Through Jesus Christ and the work of salvation by the Holy Spirit, God would remake us into His likeness, by conforming us to the image of His Son. His image will again be perfectly reflected in us when we are glorified in heaven!

Praise God that, from the beginning, He had a plan to restore us to Himself, and that one day, thanks to Christ, we will be made perfect again. We are a blurred image only for a time.

Daily Reflection

How is the image of God blurred in you? What does that mean exactly?

It is God’s desire to restore your blurred image of Him, by conforming you to the image of His Son. How are you falling more in line with Christ and His image today?

What steps will you take this year to allow Christ’s image to be expressed more clearly?

“For whom God foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son...” (*Romans 8:29, NASB*).

“I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ comes again” (*Philippians 1:6*).

“...We can’t even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns; but we do know that when He comes we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He really is” (*1 John 3:2*).

Walking With God

January 2 — *Genesis 4:1-6:22*

Day 2 — 363 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

Sin had an immediate effect on humanity. The broken relationship between Cain and Abel was just the beginning. Man degenerated quickly. His evil intentions culminated in just two short chapters. By *Genesis 6*, "the Lord saw the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and He saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil" (v.5). God was sorry that He made man, and He was planning to blot him out and start over.

At this point, we were introduced to Noah, the main character, at least for a few more chapters. Notice that "he found favor with God, and that he was a righteous man, blameless in his time?" He's also described as one who "walked with God" (v.8, 9). It's interesting that he was described much like his great grandfather, Enoch, who also "walked with God" (5:24).

One generation can have tremendous influence on future generations; but try to grasp the fact that God wanted to start over, and He chose this one man and his family. Noah wasn't perfect, mind you, but that must have been quite an honor. Imagine the pressure he must have experienced, knowing that the weight of the world rested on his shoulders, to restore all of mankind to God in purity and faithfulness. What a great picture of Christ that was. In fact, Christ was foreshadowed many times in the account of the flood. How so?

Daily Reflection

I wonder, if God were going to start over today and He had to choose one person through whom to begin again, could He pick you? Your first instinct is probably to say, "Sure, who else is better than me," right? We all love ourselves; that's no secret. But seriously, how would you stack up against Noah? Are you a righteous person, not perfect but desiring and doing what it is right?

Are you blameless in your time, not without faults and shortcomings but living a life of virtue and integrity? Are you walking with God, spending time with Him each day, reading His Word, and seeking His will for your life?

Noah received a great legacy from his predecessors, and he left behind a great legacy for his descendants. What about you? What legacy or example have you received from your family?

What legacy or example would you like to leave for your children and grandchildren?

The Ultimate Judge

January 3 — *Genesis 7:1-10:5*

Day 3 — 362 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

Noah and his family, by the grace of God, survived the great flood. Then, after the water subsided, Noah built an altar, offered a sacrifice, and worshiped the Lord. As a result, God made a covenant with him, promising never to destroy mankind with water again.

After displaying Noah's great faith, courage, and obedience, the Bible revealed one of Noah's more shameful moments. Consequently, Noah prophesied about his three sons and their descendants, which in turn affected men and nations for generations to come.

As I read these chapters, I thought it was ironic that, on one hand, God destroyed every living thing on the earth; yet, on the other hand, He spared Noah, his family, and the animals. Then, after the flood, God proclaimed His high view of human life by telling Noah that those who disrespect it and move to murder the lives of others should be dealt with in the severest manner. What's the irony? That God commanded mankind to protect life while He Himself ended the lives of thousands, maybe millions.

However, before we make an erroneous conclusion, consider this question. Is it okay for me to take a key and etch a six-foot scratch down the side of your car? No, of course not. Is it okay for you to take a key and etch a six-foot scratch down the side of your car? Sure, it's your car. You can do with it what you want. The same principle applies to God. **All life is His**. In fact, everything on earth is His. He can do with it what He wills. However, we are not permitted to do with His what we like. It is His, not ours.

In light of that truth, God has the right to destroy whatever and whomever He chooses, especially those who hold Him in disdain and commit terrible acts of evil, as did those living in the

time of Noah. God is the ultimate Authority and Judge in the universe. We must never take it upon ourselves to act in His place.

Daily Reflection

Do you ever find yourself judging the Lord for His actions, saying things like, "That's not fair," or "Why did You let that happen?"

How have you responded to things that God does or allows that you don't understand?

You should be careful questioning God. Why?

We should always question the ways of men, but **we should be careful when questioning the ways of God**. Often we humanize God with our characteristics, but we must remember that "His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts" (*Isaiah 55:8*).

Also, remember that "all the people of the earth are nothing compared to Him. He does as He pleases among the angels of heaven and among the people of the earth. No one can stop Him or say to Him, 'What do you mean by doing these things?'" (*Daniel 4:35*).

All For Him

January 4 — *Genesis 11:1-14:24*

Day 4 — 361 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading...

Man defied God's command to spread out (*Genesis 9:1, 7*). The Tower of Babel was the height of man's arrogance — to live by his own rules, to make a name for himself, and to obtain salvation by his own means. However, God is never impressed with our earthly deeds when they are done with selfish motives; and **oftentimes He will humble us, just to save us from ourselves.**

We were also introduced to Abram today, God's man to become the father of His people, the Jews, and many other nations, as well as an ancestor to Jesus Christ. Notice that he did not build a monument to himself but an altar for the Lord (*Genesis 12:8; 13:4*). Neither did he indulge himself in the worldly ways of Sodom and Gomorrah. In contrast to Lot and the people of Babel, who lived an "all for me" kind of life, **Abram chose the Lord's path and lived his life all for Him.**

Daily Reflection

When you examine your thoughts, motives, decisions, words, and actions, do you live an "all for me" kind of life or do you live life all for God?

Write out the evidence in your life that supports your answer.

Oftentimes, Abram would construct an altar and designate it as a sacred place where he could "call on the name of the Lord." At an altar, you sacrifice what is important to you and surrender it to the glory of God.

Do you have an "altar," a sacred place where you can daily call on the name of the Lord and surrender your all to Him? What thing in your life has been the most difficult to sacrifice to God? Explain why.

"I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have discarded everything, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ" (*Philippians 3:7, 8*).

"All to Jesus I surrender. All to Him I freely give. I will ever love and trust Him, in His presence daily live." *Hymn by Judson Van Deventer, 1896*

Hurry Up and Wait

January 5 — *Genesis 15:1-17:27*

Day 5 — 360 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

We covered everything pertaining to covenants and kids! Included were some unfortunate animals, a flaming torch, a smoking oven, two name changes, a whole host of stars, a freaky forced marriage, and circumcision for the whole camp! Wow, that's quite a day!

In essence, God made a covenant with Abram, whose name is now Abraham, a promise to bless him with countless descendants. However, in order to do that, God would have to bring them about one at a time, starting with Abraham's first child; but, something went wrong. Although Abraham knew God's promises, it was a bad idea for him to presume upon God's timing and method. He and his wife Sarah laid out a plan that simply backfired.

Anytime we presume upon God's timing or methods, we are asking for trouble. Abraham and Sarah knew God's intentions; He told them what they were, but they could not wait. However, we must remember that **God doesn't work by our ways, with our means, or on our time table.** As a result of their impatience and presumption, they forced a way that hurt everyone involved. The Bible says that "Hagar was despised," that Sarah "treated her harshly," that Hagar "fled from their presence," and that Ishmael would be a "wild donkey of a man, whose hand would be against everyone."

No doubt, one of the most difficult things to do in our hurried lives is to wait for anything, especially to wait on the Lord, but that's exactly what we need to do — **hurry up and wait.** We must be patient and wait on the Lord, wait for Him to move and open or close doors, wait for Him to provide, to make a way, or to lead us in the next step. **God is always on time. He is never late.**

Daily Reflection

Think of some times in your own life when you ran ahead of God, took matters into your own hands, and messed up. What did you learn in your impatience?

Why is it so hard for us to wait on the Lord?

One of the best things you can do while you wait is to pray. What are some of the things that you could pray for while waiting?

What are you waiting for now? Are you praying to that end?

"Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage" (*Psalms 27:14*).

Getting Your Attention

January 6 — *Genesis 18:1-21:7*

Day 6 — 359 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

We saw again a contrast between Abraham and his nephew Lot. Angels of the Lord visited both men but for two very different reasons. For Abraham, their visit was to announce the birth of a son by Sarah. For Lot, their visit was to announce the destruction of his hometown and godless neighbors.

When reading about these two men — Abraham and Lot — did you notice in whose presence each of them liked to dwell? Abraham rushed to spend time with the Lord; he prepared a meal for Him, made Him feel at home, and later walked by His side and talked with Him about His plans.

On the other hand, Lot was found by the angels sitting at the gate of Sodom. He had become a fixture in that perverse society, and that perverse society had compromised his testimony and influence. His in-laws thought he was joking when he warned them of Sodom's doom. He hesitated when it came time to leave. He did not want to remove himself from the city, but, rather, he wanted to stay nearby. His wife was concerned for the welfare of that wicked place; and his daughters debased him with Sodom's perversion. It's pretty clear that **when Lot moved into Sodom, Sodom moved into Lot.**

Daily Reflection

What about you? Are you Abraham or Lot? **Who is getting your attention — the Lord or the world?** For whomever you are spending time with will influence your life either positively or negatively. Pay attention to what's important in life, the eternal things of God, not the temporal things of this world.

Compare your relationships with the Lord and the world. Which one has captured you? How can you tell?

It is interesting to note that **your relationship with one — God or the world — affects your relationship with the other.** How have you witnessed this truth in your own life?

"Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers; but, they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither; they prosper in all they do" (*Ps. 1:1-3*).

When There Seems to Be No Way

January 7 — *Genesis 21:8-24:67*

Day 7 — 358 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

We read about the problems between Sarah and Hagar, the call of God to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, the death and burial of Sarah, and, finally, Abraham's finding a bride for Isaac. While these stories are foundational to the establishment of the Jewish race, there is another story lurking in the background, a fact that still holds true today.

Notice that in all four stories, **God proved Himself faithful** to provide for those who trusted in Him. Though Hagar wandered in the desert and despaired of her life and the life of her son, Ishmael, God came through and delivered them both with His provision of water and His promise of a hopeful future.

When Abraham was called to sacrifice Isaac, God Himself provided a ram in his stead. When Abraham was looking for a decent burial place with which to honor his wife, God provided the best tomb in the land. When Abraham's servant went to look for a bride for his master Isaac, once again, God provided the perfect person in Rebekah. **God is faithful.**

Daily Reflection

Of the four stories today, three of them were times we would call *duress* (Hagar and Ishmael), *stress* (Abraham and Isaac), or *suffering* (Sarah's death and burial). It is during these times that we can see God's hand most clearly but, then, we often forget to thank Him for His faithfulness. What difficult times have you been through lately? What are some ways that you saw God's provision?

Did you remember to express your gratitude for God's provision and faithfulness? Why should that be a regular activity in your life? What does recognizing God's provision do for you?

How should God's provision today relate to your faith tomorrow?

"The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is His faithfulness; His mercies begin afresh each morning" (*Lamentations 3:22, 23*).

"The same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from His glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus" (*Philippians 4:19*).