

The God Who is There

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Genesis 1 verse 1 says, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

May God bless the hearing and the preaching of His Word. In 2015, the sellout musical Hamilton first hit the stage.

The musical is based on the life of one of America's largely unknown and overlooked founding fathers, Alexander Hamilton. In fact, most of what we know about him is negative, at least when I was taught growing up.

[1 : 11] You know, it tells the story of Hamilton, a fascinating story of being orphaned as a child in the Caribbean islands, gaining passage to the new land, joining the revolutionary, joining the revolution and, and working with and under George Washington directly.

Climbing through the ranks of politics, the Federalist Papers that he wrote the large majority of, our financial system is attributed largely to him.

And of course, the deadly duel with Aaron Burr, who was Jonathan Edwards' grandson. A little lesser known fact.

It's a remarkable story. I mean, his life is a remarkable story. And the musical brings the story of Alexander Hamilton. It brings it to dramatic life and musical life in a, in a remarkable way, filled with hip-hop and different genres of music.

In the final scene, though, the musical turns from Alexander Hamilton's story to the listener's story. In the final song, it recaps again all that the musical has said about Hamilton.

[2 : 32] It does that like most musicals do. They keep repeating these themes so that you get them. So they're recapping those things that Hamilton did. And then it continues and tells about others who followed him.

Jefferson, Madison, his wife, Eliza. And then the cast turns to the audience and says, Who remembers your name?

Who keeps your flame? Who tells your story? The musical ends, repeating this sequence of questions. Who lives?

Who dies? Who tells your story? Who lives? Who dies? Who tells your story in a culture urging us to view our lives as our story?

These final words are searching. What the cast is saying is it's not enough to be impressed with Hamilton's story. You need to find your own story.

[3 : 33] What is your story? What are you saying with your life? What are others going to remember about you long after you're gone? Interestingly enough, the book of Genesis is a book trying to help people find their story.

But what exactly is the book of Genesis? What is this book that includes tales of a six-day creation, giant and a worldwide flood?

A cosmic showdown between man, woman, an apple, and a snake? Not to mention the disappearance of Enoch, the pillar of salt, the rain of sulfur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah.

What exactly is Genesis? What exactly is Genesis? A myth? A saga? Is it history?

Is it history? Is it a religious book just compiled over the ages? That's what a lot of scholars have said in the past couple hundred years.

[4 : 38] Just a religious book written by different people over time. Not really a product of a period of history as much as many periods of history. Is that what it is?

Well, it's not myth or saga. It's not a religious book compiled over hundreds of years or even thousands of years.

But it's not merely history either. It's not merely the reporting of events. It's not merely the biography of a nation like Ron Chernal's report of Alexander Hamilton's life.

Genesis is revelation from God. Genesis is a word from God to his people. When it was written, Genesis was a word desperately needed.

The people of Israel were living in Egypt. They were slaves suffering under Pharaoh's rule. They were far from the promised land, making bricks without straw.

[5 : 36] Carried along by the Spirit, Moses wrote the book of Genesis to remind the people who they were. To remind them their story. He writes it to remind the people who their God is, who they are, and where they're going.

It's a word from God to the people of Israel to call them to cry out to their God and to follow Moses into the promised land. In so many ways, it's a prologue to the book of Exodus.

Genesis is a word desperately needed now. Genesis is a word for people who've lost their sense of identity.

People who are confused, wrestling with how to understand the truth about creation, gender, marriage, and so many other things.

It's a word to people who are tired. People tired of looking into the mirror, trying to find something to live for. It's a people who've lost their sense of identity.

[6 : 41] There's nothing our culture is talking about more than identity. Maybe it's because of these phones we're walking around and the projections all over our culture of ourselves.

We lost our ability to understand who we are. It's for people who feel forsaken. For people who say, how did I get here? I'm not talking about mom and dad.

What's going on? Where's all this going? It's for people who don't know who they are, who God is, and the meaning of life. Genesis is a word for people trying to find their story.

And wonderfully, the book of Genesis does not tell us our story by encouraging us to look inward. It doesn't encourage us to view our lives as our one shot to make a difference.

Our one chance to make others remember who we are. Genesis has no such talk. Genesis helps us to find our story by looking out, by looking backwards and seeing the faithfulness of God, the countless generations, and looking forward to the destiny God has promised.

[7 : 48] It's anchored in His sovereign will and His sovereign promise. So in a word where we're going, not just this morning, but for this series, your life is not about you.

The meaning of your life is found in the story of God and His gracious covenant. Your life is not about you. The meaning of your life is found in the story of God and His gracious covenant.

And this morning, I'm going to unpack this, well, more than this one verse, kind of unpack Genesis, if we will, in three headings, three truths about God that are vital for understanding the book and finding the meaning of our lives.

So the first one is God is eternal. God is eternal. The book of Genesis, that's a pretty clear statement, understandable statement, and yet its reality is world-altering, life-rearranging.

The book of Genesis begins in a memorable way. We could probably all quote it. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Derek Kidner healthfully says, It's no accident that God is the subject of the first sentence in the Bible.

[9 : 03] For this word, God, dominates the whole chapter and catches the eye at every point of the page. This passage, indeed, the book is about Him first of all.

And so, I love it. The subject of the first sentence of the Bible is the subject of the whole Bible. It is God Himself. So it's telling us, alerting us immediately, Genesis is not a history book.

Not a science book. It's not a self-help book. Genesis is a theological book. It's a book about the theos, about God.

But before we can understand what Genesis 1-1 says about the beginning, we must understand what Genesis 1-1 says about what was before the beginning. The beginning reference in Genesis 1-1 is not the beginning of God, but the beginning of all that is not God.

Herman Baving, the great Dutch scholar, said, that beginning, Genesis 1-1, points out the moment from which those things which were made began to exist.

[10:19] God Himself has no beginning, nor can have. This beginning marks the moment when created things came into existence. But before that beginning, God was always there.

Francis Schaeffer famously had one of his, in his trilogy, the God who is there. He's always been there.

Moses would later write in Psalm 90, Before the mountains were brought forth, wherever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

Most famous hymn in the history of the church is based on those words. God is everlasting. The foundation of all that we know is founded right here. God is eternal.

God is the Alpha and the Omega, the first word in the alphabet, and the last, because He's the first and the last of all things. God is the one who is, and who was, and who is to come.

[11:28] God is before every moment in time. Time is bound up with what is made, but God was there before anything was made.

God's not bound by time in any way. God is eternal and before every moment in time. But God also does not experience life through time.

You know, life comes through us in moments and hours and seasons. We're rejoicing now with the beginning of summer. It's starting to feel like it outside. These changes of season.

The idea is life comes to us sequentially. Life moves towards us. There's always a past, a present, and a future for us. Even if we destroyed all our clocks.

One time in college, I was committed to not using my clock at all. I wanted to be led by the Spirit all day. That didn't last too long. You know, I had to make it to class, but I just felt so hindered by the clock.

[12:29] Well, regardless if we destroyed them all, threw them in a big fire pit, we would not eliminate our biological clock. From the day of conception to day of death, we live life in time.

The clock is ticking. In my life, one of my children likes to point out the clock keeps ticking, and as it does, keeps adding wrinkles to my face, primarily my forehead.

It gets bigger and bigger every year, but God does not experience life that way. God's outside of time, not bound by time.

If you want to twist it even more, all of time is present to God always. Somebody can explain all that to us after the service.

But there's more. Just tucked into the single verse. If God was there before the beginning, then God is separate from all that is made. In the beginning, God created.

[13:35] The idea is that God remains outside of time, but he creates something in time separate from himself. With a word, God created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.

God spoke the entire world from non-existence into an existence that is separate from himself. God created something separate from him, of which he is completely independent.

So it's very unlike pantheism or something like that, where God is dependent on the creation. So wonderfully, God created all these things and created them, brought them to existence and into an existence that is separate from him.

Our statement of faith says it helpfully. There is only one true and living God who is infinite in being, power, and perfections. God is eternal, independent, and self-sufficient, having life in himself with no need for anyone or anything.

Now this is going somewhere, not just to philosophy. Negatively, this means God has no need for anyone or anything.

[14:48] We're born into this world with so many needs and are dependent on our parents for nutrition and nurture. But God does not need anyone or anything.

God created the world with a word and now sustains the world without anyone's help. One of my favorite passages, Acts 17 says, The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything.

This truth that God is completely independent and self-sufficient confronts our arrogance. We often treat God as if he's waiting around for us.

As if he's a needy mother-in-law who wants more of our time, our attention, our affection, our prayers, our obedience.

The truth is, God does not need anything from you. Nothing that you do ever enhances God in his essence.

[16:02] Now, in a very man-centered culture, this should be an affront. God shares his glory with no one, as Ezekiel told us.

So negatively, he needs no one and needs nothing. Positively, God is the fullness of life, or God is fullness of life in himself, gives to all people life and everything.

God is truly independent and self-sufficient. It's important that we define it negatively first, but it's important that we define it positively as well. The truth of God's independence is not merely that God is not dependent upon all that is made.

Not only that, the truth of God's independence is not that all that is made is dependent on God. The truth of God's independence is that God exists eternally as the fullness of life in himself, and supplies all that is made with all that is needed.

Acts 17 continues, the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

[17:10] So, contrarily, God's not dependent on anything that is made, but God supplies all that is needed to all that is made from the essence of himself. God supplies it all, gives to all humankind life and breath and everything.

And so, as our statement of faith says, God is eternal, independent, and self-sufficient. One of the most remarkable pictures of this in the Bible is the story of the burning bush.

I remember listening to an interview with Matthew McConaughey years ago, and Matthew McConaughey was talking about, like, I understand love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

I understand love your neighbor as yourself, but I do not understand the burning bush. And this is with Joe Rogan. And he said, the burning bush, what are you talking about?

Well, it's the story of Moses. Moses is shepherding his flock. And he sees this fire, and he goes up, and this is, now this is not like a little, you know, candle, you might hold it, a candlelight service, or a little bonfire.

[18:18] This is a great sight, Moses says, and he goes up to this fire. It's a great sight. It's a big roaring fire. And every school-age kid knows every fire needs oxygen, heat, and fuel to burn.

But this fire doesn't need any fuel. It doesn't consume the bush either. The fire in the bush is a picture of who God is.

The Lord is like a fire always burning. In fact, later on in scriptures, he compares himself to a consuming fire. He's a roaring fire that's always burning.

But the Lord is a fire that needs no fuel. He's independent, self-sufficient. He's not dependent on anyone or anything. He's not constrained by anything or anyone.

He is life without dependence, power without limitation. He does what he wants in the heavens and the earth, always. Daniel 4 says, none shall stay his hand or say to you, what have you done?

[19:24] The Lord is completely and totally free. So what are these verses trying to say to us? Shortly before a man named Clement Attlee won a landslide victory in the British general election in 1945, he had trouble with another man in his party.

So much like the mudslinging goes in politics, he had trouble with this man in his party who was telling him to resign, to not run for office. The man kept writing to Attlee, telling him he should resign, telling him how to do his job.

Attlee ended his reply to one of those wearisome letters with the pointed words, a period of silence from you would now be most welcome. Seems that God is saying a similar thing to us.

All this noise about identity. A period of silence would be most welcome.

Before you can understand who you are, where you're going, you need to be silent to hear who the Lord of all is. John Calvin famously said, no one can understand themselves without first understanding God, the opening of his institutes.

[20:59] There he says, no one ever attains clear knowledge of self unless he is first gazed upon the face of the Lord and then turns back to look upon himself.

What Genesis is offering us is not a mirror to look back at our reflection, but the mirror of God's word to take in the face of the Lord.

Two, God makes promises and keeps them. God makes promises and keeps them. The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings.

The name Genesis comes from the word to begin or origin. So Genesis includes the beginning of light and life, of human beings, of marriage, of sin, of murder, lust, greed, incest, of civilization, of

death.

Perhaps most importantly, when you study the book of Genesis as a whole, the book of Genesis tells the beginning of the promise. One author says, the scaffolding of all of Genesis is the promise of God.

[22 : 10] But as you know, Genesis doesn't begin with a promise. It begins with a command, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, is what Genesis 1, 26 says, 27. Begins with this command to subdue and multiply.

The creation mandate is what we've called it, to subdue the earth and to make it serve and worship God. It begins with a command. And Genesis 2, everything in the garden is yours.

All of it is a yes, except for one thing, the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil. And much like a sign saying, wet paint makes the wall irresistible.

Adam and Eve could not resist that one tree. They break one rule, but in so doing, they rebel against God and break out to rule themselves. The consequences are tragic, envy, anger, bitterness, murder, isolation, polygamy, and that's just Genesis 4.

Mankind continues to spiral down. Really, Genesis 1 through 11 tells the story of all the order and all the wonder of creation being slowly spun into disorder and disintegration because of sin into destruction.

[23 : 29] God causes a worldwide flood. One of the things that perplexes secular scholars to this day to judge the world and start over, but the corruption continues.

It's inconceivable to imagine the effects of sin on what we call life. Eric Ortlund says this, it's unwise to underestimate the profound depths of human misery that exists for no other reason than our sin and rebellion against God.

So often we lift to other explanation, but it's unwise to underestimate this. Can you imagine how wildly happy you would be if you'd never broken any of the Ten Commandments?

If you'd never set up some finite good in God's place and asked it to fulfill you as only God can, only to have your heart broken later.

Can you imagine if you'd never lied or cheated or stolen, never been jealous or petty or angry, never hurt or slighted another human being?

[24 : 33] Can you imagine how the world would change if, irrespective of being converted, everyone merely obeyed the second half of the Ten Commandments? Natural disaster and disease might still exist, but war would be a thing of the past.

Police would no longer be needed and no more courts or jails or lawyers as well. You would never need to have a lock, have to lock your door at night or worry about your children being harmed.

Imagine if you're safe with every other human being, both physically and relationally. It takes one's breath away to imagine how much of the world's misery is our own fault.

That's the story. Wonderfully, Genesis tells the story of creation, but quickly after that, it tells the story of the fall. The disaster could not be more serious.

The continued corruption that invades every human heart could not be more serious. And a careful reader of Genesis 1 through 11 would be wise to ask, how is this going to work?

[25 : 48] Like they fell and you cursed it. They kept sinning and you flooded it.

They started building and you confused it. How in the world is this going to work? How are sinners going to have a relationship with God? Isn't this a scrap the universe and start over kind of moment?

This God who's eternal and who needs nothing and needs no one. How in the world is the creation going to relate to this God? Is it going to be an endless seesaw of rebellion and judgment?

It must be. But Genesis 12, something happens that is utterly unexpected. God says, in effect, I am going to provide the solution to sin and rebellion.

Instead of waiting on you people to get your act together, I'm going to make a promise. Actually, go ahead and flip there. Genesis 12. God makes a promise to Abraham.

[27 : 01] The Lord said to Abraham, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless you. And of him who dishonors you, I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Now, this is not another example of God saying, be fruitful and multiply, as he did in Genesis 1.

And again in Genesis 9, restarting with Moses. This is different. This is not beginning with a command. It's beginning with a promise. And so God says, I will. I will. I will. I will. Four times I believe in that passage. I will give you a people. I'll give you land. I'll give you blessing.

Now, you may be thinking, okay, great. People, land, blessing. This is great, I guess. But we have to understand what's going on.

[28 : 07] I have a family friend who was at the top of his career. He just built his dream house, a little pond in the front. Catch a few koi or something.

He came home from work one night. He worked out. He ate some dinner with his wife. Later in the evening, he laid down to go to sleep. Fifteen minutes after falling asleep, he had a massive heart attack and died.

In that moment, because this man was a sinner, one of two things happened. Either the Lord said, come my son, because he had trusted in Jesus Christ, or the Lord said, you fool, tonight your soul will be required of you.

Only one of those two things happened. There was no third option. There was no pleading the case. There was no resolving to do better in the next life.

There was no bartering with this God. There was no defending. Well, I tried hard. I was a deacon. I went to church. None of that. Why? Because this God is eternal, independent, self-sufficient.

[29 : 17] He owns all that is made. He doesn't barter. And so the only way to have a relationship with this God that's going to endure is if he decides for it to be so.

And that's what's going on here in this text, that the Lord is saying, I'm done with bartering. I'm writing my own agreement. The command didn't work. I'm writing my own agreement.

I'm making a promise to you. I'm committing to you. I'm going to bless you. I'm going to show you steadfast love and faithfulness. I'm going to make you as numerous as the stars. I'm going to undo the effects of sin through you.

And I'm going to do all this because of my sovereign will alone. The story of the people of Israel is a story of election.

There's no other way. Otherwise, it's just a worldwide flood again. God chooses Abraham out of the people of Israel.

[30 : 27] He calls him while he's worshiping the pagan gods of the day. God chooses to make a covenant with him. God chooses to make from him a people, a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation through which he would bless all the peoples of the earth.

Threading through the book of Genesis is the reiteration of this promise. I will be your God. I'll be with you. I will bless you. I'll establish you. I'll make you fruitful. So much so that God says, you'll call me the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, because I'm your God.

Can you imagine the effect of reading these words while they're in chains in a foreign land? Suddenly they remember God had not forgotten them. God had not forsaken them.

God, this eternal, completely independent and self-sufficient. The one who no one puts constraints on has made a promise to them that he will never break.

Exodus tells us the reality. While they're groaning in slavery, crying out, this is what's going on in the heavens. Exodus 20 or Exodus 2.

[31 : 38] Because of the promise to Abraham, what's going on in the heavens is during those days, the king of Egypt died and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out to God. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.

And God heard their groaning. God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel and God knew.

You don't know what God's doing when you pray. That's what God's doing when you pray. When you're praying in Christ, it's going all the way up to God. This eternal, self-sufficient God who has no business being your friend, but because of Jesus, he is.

He remembers his covenant. It was sealed with his son's blood. And he sees and he knows. And he's coming. That's what's going on.

And so Exodus tells us, these words are meant to have a similar effect on us. The wonder of Christianity is not merely the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[32 : 52] And even our trust in these things. The wonder is not the New Testament answer as if Jesus came to rescue the plan that was going off the rails. To rescue us from that big, bad God

who's all anger and wrath.

That's not the story of Christianity. That's not where its wonder is. The wonder of Christianity is in the eternal counsels of God where the plan and purpose of God to save sinners on the basis of his sovereign will alone was conceived.

No one is saved if this plan is not conceived in the eternal counsels of God. David Wells healthily says, the Christian faith began in the eternal counsels of God.

Without the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, there would be no Christian faith. But without the eternal counsel of God, there would have been no incarnation, atonement, and resurrection.

That God has thus planned our redemption from all eternity delivers a declaration louder than any thunderclap. It is that he is for us.

[33 : 55] That he has always been for us. He was for us in the far reaches of eternity. It was there that he took thought of us even before we existed. It was there that he planned to act for us.

This plan was there from the very beginning. He planned to do this knowing that once we fell into the disorder of sin, our fist would be raised against him. Beloved, that's the glory of Christianity. It wasn't rescued off the course. It's conceived in the eternal counsel of God to rescue people that deserve only his wrath. John Murray healthily says, the Christian life is anchored between two indestructible realities.

One is the eternal counsel of God, the one who swears by himself and cannot break his counsel, and the purpose for which all the eternal counsel is going to glorification of his people with his son forever.

forever. That's where your life is. Held between these two endpoints that never end.

[35 : 10] That are completely unstoppable. And it's because God made a promise that I stand on the authority of God's word this morning and say this promise is for you and your children and for all that are far off.

That I stand on the authority of God's word and call you to come to this one, this one who loved you from the foundation of the world, this one who set his affection on you and worked for you in Jesus Christ.

I call you to come to him. The Bible says today can be the day of salvation if you'll bow your knee and shut your mouth before Jesus Christ and stop saying the things you've done and receive him by faith.

All you have to do is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you can be saved and anchored in these things.

Our lives are bound up with the promise of God in his sovereign will to call us and draw us to himself. Three, God gives grace.

[36 : 22] God is eternal. God makes promises and keeps them. God gives grace.

Why did God create all things? That's a question that's perplexed perplexed Christian philosophers for years. Why did God make promises and pledge to keep them?

Herman Bavinck again says to the question of why things exist and are as they are, there is no other and deeper answer than that God willed it. But why?

Why bring forth existence and not allow things to never exist? Why make promises and pledge to keep those promises?

Bavinck, others would go on to say he did it for his glory. But why did God make promises and pledge to keep those promises when he knew his people would never uphold their side of the bargain?

[37 : 32] Well, he did it for the glory of his grace. The foundational motive of all that exists is for God to glorify his grace, not treating others as their sins deserved.

The story of grace begins in Genesis 1. Have you ever noticed that the Bible often talks about God being a God of grace but never says God is grace? God is love.

God is light. But never says God is grace. God is obviously light. God has no darkness or shadows, no imperfections or impurities, nothing unclean or unwholesome in God.

He's completely pure and holy, beautiful and lovely. He is light from all eternity. God is love. As John tells us, he is endless love and delight among the three persons of the Trinity for all time, all eternity.

But from all eternity, God is not grace. God has no need of grace for himself.

[38 : 48] God only needs grace for all that is outside of him. And so, in so many ways, at the beginning of creation, God is giving grace. God is creating a world, bringing into existence a world that did not exist so that all that exists might know his light and his love and his life.

All that exists might know his grace. After the fall of mankind, God gives more grace. He doesn't wipe out the rebels. He promises to send another son born of woman who would crush the serpent. But God continues to give grace throughout Genesis. One of the most difficult things about the book of Genesis are the shady things the founding fathers do. Abraham twice lies about his wife's identity.

one time placing her in such a vulnerable position that she becomes an adulteress. At his wife's suggestion, Abraham, too, commits adultery and has children with another woman.

Isaac lies about his wife's identity as well. Jacob takes advantage of his brother, deceives his father, lies to nearly everyone in his life.

[40 : 02] Judah conceives twins with his daughter-in-law. Joseph, even Joseph, brings false charges against his brothers and makes them to look like spies.

How would we think of this ungodly behavior in the founding fathers and the patriarchs? What complicates this even further is the author of Genesis doesn't condemn the behavior like he does in Judges.

Author, Judges, they're just dopes. They're doing what's right in their own eyes. He makes it very clear what the author thinks about what's going on, but not in Genesis.

Some traditions have added explanations for the ungodly behavior to make it appear less concerning. Others say they were permitted to break the law because the law had not been given in a physical form yet like it was in Exodus 20.

But I don't think those are right. The reason the author of Genesis includes the ungodly behavior of the patriarchs is to show that the promise of God will be kept by the faithfulness of God alone.

[41 : 27] Victor Hamilton, no relation to Alexander, says, Genesis is not interested in parading Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as examples of morality.

It's not trying to say be like Abraham. Of course, don't lie about your wife. So, not even a negative example. Therefore, it does not moralize them.

what Genesis is doing is bringing together the promises of God to the patriarchs and the faithfulness of God and keeping those promises. Even if the bearers of those promises represent the greatest threat to the promises, the individual, the individual lives of the promise bearers cannot abort those promises.

That's what Genesis is whispering. He gives more grace. The promises of God established by the will of God kept by the sovereign grace of God.

Your life's not your own. The meaning of your life is found in the story of God and His gracious covenant. For school, my kids are memorizing this song called The Timeline.

[42 : 41] Right? I guess. I don't know. But, you know, so it's a wonderful timeline. Last night we were talking about the exile and when the exile happened and they couldn't tell me right out but they could sing it to me.

They could sing when it happened. They could sing the day when it happened. 722 and 586. As I was listening to this recently at their graduation, I was struck by the concluding lines.

It concludes, Timeline. I'm part of my timeline. Timeline. Timeline. This is my timeline.

From the very beginning, what made Christianity distinct from all the other religions of the world was not its laws, its commandments or exhortation.

It was its story. It was the story that turned the world upside down. It wasn't the story of something that happened back then.

[43 : 50] It was the story of this eternal God who gives grace, who keeps His promises, who's driving all this towards a glorious point in this future.

So God is eternal. God makes promises and keeps them. God gives grace. That's the story of Genesis. The story of the Bible can be your story through Christ.

Father in heaven, we cast ourselves onto You, offer ourselves to You sincerely and completely, God. We think of You.

We consider the moon and the stars that You put in place. What is man that You're mindful of him? of the Son of Man that You care for him?

That You, God, the eternal, self-sufficient and self-existent God would choose to make a deal with us, to love us with an everlasting love, to keep us steadfast in Your promise.

[44 : 54] We rest in You. We hide in You this day and always. This is our story. The eternal God has had mercy on us. We bless You and praise Your name forever.

In Christ's name, Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.