

God's Big Story: Creation

Genesis 1:1-2:3

**A sermon by Dr. Calvin Warpula preached at the
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On February 5, 1971, Apollo 14 Commander Edgar Mitchell deposited on the moon a microfilm packet containing a complete Bible and one verse of the Bible written out in 16 languages. The words of that verse: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

This is where the Bible begins. Without creation, there would be no need for a Bible, for there would be nothing but God. God is eternal, without beginning or end. God chose to create something out of no preexisting material and that's where this universe, our earth, and man come in.

Why This Message Is Important

This is an important message because we must get our view of God right or our entire life will be wrong. What we believe about God determines what we believe about ourselves. If we see ourselves as independent of God, that is, we don't need him, that we are self-made people, then we will live for ourselves as selfish beings. If we see God as high and holy and he loves us, and the creator of us, then we will worship him because of who he is and what he has done for us.

We will realize that everything that we have comes from God: the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the rest we have, the work we do, the children we have, and the love we enjoy and share. Everything ultimately traces its roots back to God.

God created us. We did not create ourselves. Nothing can create itself for in order to create, it must first exist. We therefore are not independent, self-caused, or self-existent. We are dependent on God in heaven for everything.

The Importance of Creation

The Bible places great emphasis upon creation. Hear the Gospel of John, chapter one, the first three verses: [read John 1:1-3]. Then the writer of Hebrews

adds: [read Heb. 11:3]. And then in heaven, hear how God is worshipped by the heavenly creatures: [read Rev. 4:11].

All thinking persons wonder about ultimate questions: Where did I come from? How did I get here? What am I doing here? Where will all this end? Is there life after death?

These questions begin to be answered for us in one of the most important books of the Bible, the book of Genesis. Genesis chapters one and two are the second most important section in all of Scripture. The first fundamental questions of life are answered here.

What Genesis 1:1 Tells Us about God

The first verse of the Bible is one of the most famous verses of all time: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The following verses go on to show that God in six days created and shaped all the things that exist.

God, the first subject mentioned in the Bible, is the greatest subject of the universe and of human thought. No one or no thing is greater than God.

The first verse of the Bible shows us some truths about God.

1. “In the beginning” means that God is self-existent. He is the only self-existent being or thing in the universe. Everything we know is caused but God is uncaused. He never came to be; he has always been. We will never comprehend all there is to know about God. We need to think about God. We spend most of our life thinking about ourselves, how to build better mousetraps, how to make things go and work better. This is one reason we are decaying and becoming more secular all the time. God is self-existent means that he does not answer to us. He does not have to explain himself to us.

2. “In the beginning” means that God is self-sufficient. God has no needs. As humans we depend on so many things. We depend on oxygen, light, heat, gravity and the laws of nature. Without these we would die. God does not need anything. He does not need us. His glory is self-sufficient. He does not need us to give him glory or worship. He exists perfectly well without us. He does not even need us to keep him company. He gets along perfectly well without us. Arthur Pink wrote about this in his book, Attributes of God, hear him:

God was under no constraint, no obligation, no necessity to create. That he chose to do so was purely a sovereign act on his part caused by nothing outside himself, determined by nothing but his own mere good pleasure; . . . God is no gainer even from our worship. He was in no need of that external glory of his

grace which arises from his redeemed, for he is glorious enough in himself without that. . . .it is impossible to bring the Almighty under obligations to the creature; God gains nothing from us.

Arthur W. Pink, The Attributes of God (Grand Rapids: Baker, n.d.), pp. 203.

God does not need helpers. God does not need us to manage the world or the church. Yes, God lets us participate in his work. We help manage the world he has made and we work with him in preaching the gospel and baptizing people. But none of this work is grounded in God's necessity. He has chosen to do things this way but he did not have to.

God does not need to be defended. He is who he is regardless of the evil attacks of arrogant men. A God who needs to be defended can only defend us when we are defending him.

This helps us to see why faith in God is so important. A. W. Tozer said in his book The Knowledge of the Holy:

Among all created beings, not one dare trust in itself. God alone trusts in himself; all other beings must trust in him. Unbelief is actually perverted faith, for it puts its trust not in the living God but in dying men.

A. W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy. New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 42.

When we refuse to trust God, we are saying that someone else is more worthy of trust than God. That is blasphemy and slander against God.

3. "In the beginning" means that God is eternal. There never has been when he was not. He always has been and always will be. The Bible says, "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Psa. 90:1-2). The Book of Revelation describes him as "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (Rev. 21:6). The creatures of heaven worship him saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8).

The fact that God is eternal means that he is unchangeable. We need never fear that he will ever stop loving us. He will never cease to be holy. Sin will always be sin. God will always be wise, holy, gracious and just in everything that he reveals himself to be. Nothing we do will ever change God. This means that God can be relied on. He keeps his promises. You can depend on him.

The fact that God is eternal also means that God is inescapable. God, unlike man, does not change his mind, or move away, or die. You cannot escape him. If

you ignore him now, you will have to deal with him in the world to come. If you reject him now, you will face him in judgment.

God Created the Heavens and the Earth

God is creative. God speaks and acts can cause that things to exist that do exist. Contingent things are those things that could well exist or not exist. They are dependent upon some thing or some else for their existence. God is different.

Without God there would be nothing. “Nothing” means that there was no matter, no energy, no time, no wind, no air, no water, no gravity, no gasses, absolutely nothing before God created them. God created the world out of nothing. As soon as we say “nothing” we give nothing some kind of existence. But nothing is nothing. Jonathan Edwards said, “Nothing is what sleeping rocks dream about.” Nothing is the absence of reality. It means here that God created the world without the use of preexisting materials.

Since God speaks that means that God is personal. He has mind and intelligence, far, far beyond man or anything else in his creation. Rocks don’t speak; dust doesn’t speak, trees don’t speak, but God speaks. He merely utters a word and the things appear.

God speaks nine times in chapter one, saying, “Let there be...” And then names something, like “Let there be light.” The seven paragraphs from v. 3 through v. 24 begin with those same words, “Let there be...” and then there was. God wills and speaks and things come into existence. You and I can never create anything; only God creates, and when he does, he creates out of nothing. *Ex nihilo* is the Latin term for this

“In the beginning” speaks of an intervention of God when time began to be. God existed before the beginning. There once was when only God existed. He is the prime reality.

At singularity point, zero, God caused all things that came into existence to come into existence. But God is not just the cause of all things coming into existence, he is the reason that things exist now. “Without him, nothing exists that does exist” (John 1:2-3).

God created the heavens. When you look up at night, you can see 10,000 points of light. These are planets and stars in our solar system. Others are entire galaxies which shine as one point of light because they are so distant. What we can see is but a tiny fraction of what is out there. There are billions of galaxies containing billions of individual stars. Our Milky Way galaxy alone contains 200 billion stars. Our galaxy is shaped like a lens with extended arms. It is a giant spiral rotating majestically in space. It takes 250 million years to make a complete

rotation. The distance from one edge of an average galaxy to the other edge is approximately 600 thousand trillion miles. The average distance from one galaxy to another is 20 million trillion miles. To simplify these figures, astronomers talk about light years, the distance that light travels at 186,000 miles a second in a year, about six trillion miles. The Andromeda Galaxy is the one closest to our Milky Way. It is two million light years from us. That means that the light you see tonight from Andromeda left there two million years ago and just now got here, and all the time traveling at 186,000 miles per second. The most distant galaxies are retreating from earth at the rate of 100 million miles an hour.

No wonder then the Bible says,

The heavens declare the glory of God;
The skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech,
Night after night they display knowledge.
There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out into all the earth,
Their words to the ends of the world.

Psa. 19:1-4

God also created the earth. When we go from the microscope to the telescope, the wonders of the macrocosm are also in the microcosm. Here we are dealing with electrons, protons, neutrons, neutrinos, and other particles. The distances between these particles, proportionate to their size, are comparable to some of the distances involved in the solar system. For example, if we were to take the simplest atom, the hydrogen atom, and blow it up billions upon billions of times to where the proton at its center would now be the size of a ten-inch soccer ball, the electron that circles this nucleus would now be the size of a golf ball and would be circling the proton at a distance of five miles and there would be nothing else within the circle.

Genesis One Refutes Several False Ideas

This first verse disproves several false ideas.

1. This verse refutes atheism that says that there is not a God. God is such a self-evident truth that the Bible does not try to prove the existence of God. It simply says that he is.
2. This verse refutes pantheism and panentheism which says that God is the world and the world is God.

3. This verse refutes materialism which says that matter is all there ever was and that everything: all life, all morality, all principles, all mind and all consciousness, feelings and emotions came from dead, inert matter, such as this rock [show it] or this dirt [show it].

5. This verse refutes dualism which says that evil, something other than God, existed eternally also. There cannot be two infinite beings because they would either be the same being or one would necessarily have to be different from the other which would mean that the different being is less than the other so it is not infinite.

Genesis One Is Simple, Non-Scientific Language

This first verse is an overall, comprehensive description of creation, a description that will be detailed in the following verses and the next chapter.

Sometime we wonder why this chapter does not contain scientific language. Instead, most of it is one-syllable words. If this verse were written in scientific language, it would not be understandable by the first readers of this book.

Frederick A. Filby was a professor chemistry in England for many years. In 1963, he published a book entitled Creation Revealed: A Study of Genesis Chapter One in the Light of Modern Science. Hear what he wrote:

The sciences which probe most deeply into the ultimate facts of matter and life are probably astro- and nuclear physics and biochemistry. But these sciences are written, not so much in language as in symbols. It takes many pages of symbols to discuss the nature of a single atom of hydrogen. It has been estimated that to give a complete account of the position of the groups and bonds in a single virus of 'molecular weight 300 million' would take a 200 page book.

If the scientific description of a single hydrogen atom, or of a virus too small to be seen without a microscope, takes a book, what hope is there of ever giving a scientific account of the creation of man and the universe? Yet Genesis 1 in its original form uses only 76 different root words. If Genesis 1 were written in absolute scientific language to give an account of creation, there is no man alive, nor ever has there been, who could understand it. If it were written in any kind of scientific language, only the favored few could comprehend it. It would have to be rewritten every generation to conform to the new views and terms of science. It could not be written in our mid-twentieth century scientific

language, for no earlier generation could have grasped its meaning, and to our children it would be out-of-date. The scientific description of the 'how' of the universe is beyond the understanding of any human brain, but Genesis 1 was written for all readers, not for *none*.....

What then would be the best method for the Creator to use for (1) making a beginning to his book and (2) establishing that the God of the Bible is also the God of creation-in language simple enough for all men in all time?

The answer is ...Genesis 1...the most amazing composition in all the world's literature, using only 76 different word-forms fundamental to all mankind, arranged in a wonderful poetical pattern yet free from any highly colored figures of speech. It provides the perfect opening to God's book and establishes all that men really need to know of the *facts* of creation. No man could have invented it: it is as great a marvel as a plant or a bird. It is God's handiwork, sufficient for Hebrew children or Greek thinkers or Latin Christians; for medieval knights or modern scientists or little children; for cottage dwellers or cattle ranchers or deep sea fishermen; for Laplanders or Ethiopians, East or West, rich or poor, old or young, simple or leaned...sufficient for all! Only God could write such a chapter...and he did.

Frederick A. Filby, Creation Revealed: A Study of Genesis Chapter One in the Light of Modern Science (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revel, 1963), pp. 15-16, as quoted by James M. Boice, Genesis: An Expository Commentary. I (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982, pp. 22-23.

Genesis 1 is not a scientific document but a religious affirmation. John Willis of Abilene Christian University in his commentary on Genesis says,

The truth it proclaims is that God created all that is, that he has adequately provided for the needs of all his creatures on earth, and that the sum total of all he has made is very good. Apparently, the author is not concerned about how long this took, the chronological sequence in which it was done, or the procedure God employed in doing it.

John Willis, Genesis. The Living Word Commentary. Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing, 1969, p. 93.

The Bible usually deals with who, what, and why questions while science deals with when and how the observable universe came into being and continues to function.

Genesis One Shows Great Literary Qualities

The first chapter of the Bible has great literary quality. The author focuses on the number seven or a multiple thereof. Seven and its multiples connote completeness, totality, fulfillment and perfection. The first verse has seven Hebrew words. The second verse has twice that, 14 Hebrew words. It is also interesting that the name for God, "*Elohim*," occurs 35 times in 1:1-2:3, and 35 is five times 7. There are seven paragraphs in chapter one after the opening sentence. Seven instances of "and it was so." Seven examples of "and it was good." Seven occurrences of the terms "light" and "day" in the first paragraph, seven occurrences of "water" in paragraphs 2 and 3, The seventh paragraph about the seventh day there are three consecutive sentences of seven words each in 2:2-3a, There are thirty words in the seventh paragraph.

The six days of creation divide themselves into two groups: Days of Forming, days 1, 2, and 3: and Days of Filling, days 4, 5, and 6. The days of forming correspond with the days of filling, i.e., day 4 goes with day one; day 5 goes with day 2; and day 6 goes with day 3.

Notice this chart:

Days of Forming

"Separate and gather"

1. Light
2. Water under the expanse
3. Dry ground

Vegetation

Days of Filling

"Teem, fill, be fruitful, increase"

4. Lights
5. Every living and moving thing
6. Livestock, land creatures, man

every green plant for food

Note that "Light" is the key word of Day 1 and Day 4. On day 2 God separated the water under the expanse from the water above it, and on Day 5 he ordered the water under the expanse to teem with living creatures and let the birds of the air to fly above the earth across the expanse.

On days 3 and 6 the author wrote, "And God said," more than once. Day 3, 3 times; day 6, 3 times. The dry ground of day 3 is for the animals of day 6 and the vegetation of day 3 is for the food on day 6.

This shows the symmetry and orderliness of God's creative activity. There is order and organization here. This also shows that the author's purpose may not be to give a chronological sequence of events, but a theological affirmation of God's work.

In the days of creation, there is a set pattern to God's words:

1. Announcement- "And God said."
2. Commandment- "Let there be."
3. Separation- God separated the day and night, water and land, animals and plants.
4. Report- "and it was so."
5. Evaluation- "and God saw that it was good."

When Was The Beginning?

This verse does not tell us when the beginning was. The Bible is more concerned with the fact of creation than the time of creation.

In the seventeenth century, an archbishop in the Church of England, a very good biblical scholar, named James Ussher (1581-1656) added up all the genealogies in Genesis chapters 5 and 10 and arrived at 4004 B. C. Some editions of the King James Version inserted the date 4004 B.C. above the text of Genesis chapter one. A man named John Lightfoot (1602-1675) later refined Ussher's work and said that creation occurred during the week of October 18-23. He said that on October 23 Adam was created at 9 a.m., forty-fifth meridian time. The Bible does not say this.

The genealogies are not complete. We know from comparing genealogies in the Bible that there are sometimes several generations skipped over. For example, in Matthew 1:1 it is very evident that many, many generations are skipped over when the Bible says, "The book of the generations of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham." Abraham and David lived 1000 years apart so we know there are at least a thousand years skipped over there. In the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew chapter one, the book of I Chronicles (3:10-17) records several generations that are omitted by Matthew. The words "father of" mean "an ancestor of" and not necessarily a direct one-to-one relationship.

Does Genesis One Conflict with Science?

Now sometimes there are alleged conflicts between those who follow science and those who follow the Bible. This should not be since God is both the author of science and the Bible. God created science and God is responsible for the message of the Bible. They come from one mind and there is harmony between them because God is one and not confused or divided. God is the author of science. Science is the study of what God has made. Scientists simply discover

God's secrets after him. There is no conflict between the Bible properly interpreted and science properly interpreted. Scientists make bold proclamations and then months or years later change their minds or add additional discoveries to what they said. Science is changing as we discover more and more about our world.

Scientists do claim that the earth began with a big bang, and everything blew apart and the universe began to expand at a million miles a minute and it is still expanding. The steady state theory that the universe eternally existed in a steady state is now totally discarded. The oscillating universe view that the universe eternally expands and contracts is now proven to be false because there is not enough gravity in the universe to pull it back together. Most all scientists now accept the Big Bang hypothesis that everything began with a big bang some 14.5 billion years ago.

Does this conflict with the Bible? No. The Bible does not tell us how old the universe it or how old the earth is. Genesis 1:1 sounds like a mighty big bang to me: Once there was nothing and then nanoseconds later, the heavens and the earth existed.

Scientists say that the earth itself is 4.8 billion years old. Does that contradict the Bible? No. The Bible does not tell us how old the earth is. There may have been billions of years between Genesis 1:1 and the time when God began organizing and forming the creation as we know it now.

Scientists say that life has been on earth for 3.8 billion years. They say that hominids like Cro-Magnon and the Neanderthal man were here 5 million years ago. Does that contradict the Bible? No. There could have been hominids thousands of years before God created Adam and Eve in his image and likeness. These hominids would not be in the image and likeness of God. They only had animal intelligence and would not be in a covenant relationship with God.

Scientists say that *homo sapiens*, man as we know now, has only been on the earth a relatively short while, about eight to ten thousand years. Does this contradict the Bible? No. We are not told how long man has been on the earth.

God created science but man formulated scientism. Scientism is a philosophy that says that "the cosmos is all there was, all there is now, and all there ever will be" (Carl Sagan). That is a denial of God. Some scientists have naturalistic presuppositions that leave the supernatural out of everything. They are opposed to any talk about intelligent design, or any intelligence that created science, man, the earth and the universe. This is a prejudicial bias that does not include all the evidence.

How Long Were the Days of Genesis One?

The “days” of Genesis can be interpreted in several ways. We do know that that the word “day” is used in three different ways in Genesis one and two. Gen. 1:5 speaks of the day opposite the night, so that is a 12 hour day. The same verse speaks of the day composed of daytime and nighttime so that is a 24 hr day. Then Gen. 2:2, 3 speaks of “the day” when God made the heavens and the earth. That is a longer period than either of the others. Psalm 90:4 uses the same word to say that “one day with the Lord is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.” That is using the word “day” to mean a long, long period of time.

We use the word “minute” something like that. When we are getting ready to come to church, I may call out to my wife, “Are you ready to go?” She may answer, “Just a minute.” Now does she mean 60 literal seconds, and that I should start counting down—59, 58, 57, 56, 55, 54? I don’t think so. If I did, I think I would make her mad. On the other hand, you go to the university and they tell you that you will have three fifty-minute class periods a week. Are those classes fifty indefinite periods of time? No, they are much more specific and limited.

Whether that is the way “day” is used in Genesis one and two is a debated among Bible-believing, Jesus-loving people. We must not divide over the meaning of days in creation when we do not know for sure what the text means by that.

There are many questions about the beginning, the age of the earth, exactly how life came to be in its present form, and the days of Genesis that we must leave open. On Oct. 28-29, Friday and Saturday, there will be devout biblical scholars discussing different views of the meaning of Gen. 1 and 2 in a seminar here in Houston. You are welcome to attend these dialogues with me. Please read about it in your church bulletin today and check out the details on the web site that is given.

More and More Evidences Point to a Supreme Intelligence

The view that God created the heavens and the earth, that there is intelligent design in the universe, is gaining more and more popularity among thinking people. The evidences for the existence of God today are stronger than they have been in the last 100 years. The more we learn about the universe, about man, and about the DNA in the cell point to information that could only come from intelligence. God, we believe, is that intelligence.

Many educated people who have made a thorough study of the evidences and have concluded that there must be a God. There are many good books, DVDs, and web sites that provide evidences that point to the existence of God.

The most famous atheist in the world, a philosopher named Antony Flew, for sixty years argued strongly against God. In 2004, in his mid-80s,

he changed his mind and wrote a book entitled, I Know That God Exists. His atheistic friends were bewildered by his change of mind. They asked him, “Why did you do that?” Flew responded, “I have always tried to go where the evidence leads me, and I see now that there is evidence that God exists.”

On Monday nights we offer a free class to everyone on “Evidences for the Existence of God.” We have viewed some thought-provoking videos produced by capable men on the reasons why the evidence points to a creator. You are welcome to join us for this class.

The Most Important Doctrine in the Bible

Creation is the second most important doctrine in the Bible. The most important doctrine in the Bible is redemption, i.e., that God loves us and saves us through the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ, his spiritual Son of God who is really God the Son.

God created you and made you for himself. You will never find what you really need in life and what your heart craves until you come to God through Christ. God says we are delivered from our sins and bondage when we trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, repent of our sins and turn away from them and turn back to God, and be baptized in his name to become his full-fledged disciples. After that, if we wander away, we can come back to him any time when we turn from our sins.

We are here to help you now come to the Lord. Whoever will may come now while we stand and sing.

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The sources for the technical information in this sermon are James M. Boice, Genesis: An Expository Commentary, I (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) and Ronald Youngblood, How It All Began: A Bible Commentary for Laymen/Genesis 1-11 (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1980).