

Preview of Genesis

The Book of Genesis is truly the book of beginnings. It records the creation of the material universe, of plants and animal life, and of the human race. It tells the story of the first sin, the first birth, the first murder, and the first nation.

All these things appear, not in their final stage but in their commencement. We read that God commanded Adam to dress and keep the newly planted Garden of Eden. We see the introduction of sin into the human race but not its ultimate issue. We read the first promise of a Redeemer but learn little more about Him.

Genesis establishes the groundwork for the things that follow. Its opening sentence asserts the existence of God. Its opening chapters portray the Creation as the act and will of God. Genesis depicts sin as a loss of faith in God and as rebellion against Him. It suggests the divine plan for the redemption of the human race and outlines His covenant with a family line through whom the Redeemer would come. These fundamental concepts are essential to a sound understanding of the rest of the Scriptures.

Genesis starts with life and ends with a coffin in Egypt. But in spite of the coffin, hope resounds in Joseph's words, "God will surely visit you." Not all was lost.

The main divisions of the book are indicated by the phrases "In the beginning God" (1: 1), "Now the serpent" (3: 1), and "Now the Lord" 12: 1). In the beginning God made everything good. Then the devil instigated his ruinous work in mankind. Finally God moved toward the redemption of mankind by calling Abraham, who became the channel of blessing to the world.

Genesis points forward to a great culmination in the Apocalypse. Because of sin, God drove man out of the Garden, barred him from the tree of life, and cursed the earth. Through Jesus, the promised seed of the woman God restores those who believe and obey to a right relationship with Himself and promises them free access again to the tree of life in the heavenly city.

Lesson 1 – 31 January 2010

"In the Beginning God Created"

Lesson Scope: [Genesis 1: 1-2:6](#)

Lesson Focus

In awe, men stand under the night sky and try to fathom the mystery of Creation. The oceans, alternately savage and tame, puzzle and fascinate all who behold them. Everywhere we are confronted by a glorious yet mysterious world, and two questions that mankind often asks are how and why.

With brevity Genesis 1 answers these questions. How was the universe formed? It was God's work, completed in six days. God spoke the world into existence, and the Creation echoes back, as it were, to the God who made it (Romans 1:20). But why did God create us and the world? Revelation 4:1 1 tells us that He did it for His own pleasure. In His perfect goodness, God created to suit His good purposes. He has crowned man alone with glory and honor among His creatures (Psalm 8:5). Gratitude and praise are the least we can offer to our Creator.

The doctrine of the Creation is the object of Satan's attack, but our aim is not primarily to respond to those attacks. Uphold the truth of God by teaching what we know by faith from the Scriptures. There are many questions to which we have no certain answer. The main thoughts should focus on these rich truths: God alone is Creator; the creation is orderly; the creation is diverse and full of wonders; God has a purpose for the creation; and the reason for creation is ultimately God's pleasure

"In the beginning God" created all things—the earth, all living things, and the starry heavens. Every detail of God's handiwork declared His glory and sealed His purpose.

Lesson Aim: To see God's activity and purpose in the Creation.

Theme Verse

[Hebrews 11:3](#). Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Lesson Text

The Heavens Framed

Genesis 1:1-8

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. ²And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

³And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. ⁴And God saw the light, that *it was* good: and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

⁶And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. ⁷And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament: and it was so. ⁸And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

The Earth Furnished

Genesis 1:9-11

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry *land* appear: and it was so. ¹⁰And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that *it was* good. ¹¹And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, *and* the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed *is* in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

Genesis 1:13-14

And the evening and the morning were the third day.

¹⁴And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

Genesis 1:16

And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: *he made* the stars also.

Genesis 1:19-24

And the evening and the morning were the fourth day. ²⁰And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl *that* may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

²¹And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good. ²²And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. ²³And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

Genesis 1:26

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Genesis 1:31

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

The Creation Finished

Genesis 2:1-3

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ²And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. ³And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

Questions for Study

The Heavens Framed

1. Who was present at the Creation?
2. What is at stake in questioning a literal six-day Creation?
3. List evidences of purpose and order in the Creation.

The Earth Furnished

4. What inspiration can we draw from the fact that God created such a variety of life forms'?
5. How should the creation relate to its Creator?

The Creation Finished

6. Did God need rest after Creation?

7. Does God need the creation? Explain.

Analyzing the Passage

The Hebrew word for *God* used throughout this passage is Elohim. This term is used to designate the Creator, the one who upholds and governs the universe. It emphasizes God's power and preeminence.

The word man (Genesis 1:27) is *adam* in the Hebrew text (derived from or soil, earth). Though grammatically masculine, this word is actually gender neutral, like the English word human. This helps us understand verse 27.

The Hebrew word translated image is from a root meaning "to cut off "to chisel." Consider a statue, which is the image of some other thing. Man is created in God's image in that he exists eternally and possesses a rational mind. As He moved through the days of Creation, God pronounced the work good. But after looking over all of creation including man, God's judgment was that all was "very good"

Principles and Applications

The Heavens Framed

1. *Creation brought into being what had not previously existed* (1:1). God created the universe out of nothing. The idea of a pre-existing raw material out of which God shaped the universe is incompatible with orthodox Christian doctrine. Scripture rejects this possibility. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 1 1:3).

To concede the possibility of an agent or substance beyond the realm of God's handiwork is to suggest the existence of something outside of God's control and, ultimately, to imply that God might be just one deity among many.

Likewise, God did not create the universe out of Himself. This teaching would rightly lead to pantheism, which is the teaching that God is everything and everything is God. Pantheism is the stage upon which all new-age teaching introduces itself. The only remaining option—and, really, the most mysterious and unfathomable—is that God created all things out of nothing.

2. *God carried out His creative work in an orderly, progressive, and purposeful manner* (1:1-3: 2: 1). Nothing was created mindlessly, every-thing

was intentional. The order and progress of Creation displays the providential character of the Creator. He made the land, air, and sea: then He filled each with inhabitants. We have an assurance that the world does not have - nothing exists by accident! Everyone is here because God willed it for His own good purposes.

3. *God accomplished His creative work by speaking the word* (1:3). The spoken word is a revelation of the mind. The creation, with all its myriad details, is a revelation of Cod's thoughts. Just as an effect can be traced to its cause, the creation leads back to the mind of God. Just as a meal reveals something about the cook, the creation reveals truth about God and His Word.

4. *God prepared the earth as an ideal environment for life.* (1:4-10). Words discriminate, divide, and separate. For example, what begins as a vast expanse of space can with words become east and west, up and down, this and that, ours and theirs. God gave order to His creation by calling into being day-and-night cycles, boundaries for the seas, a place called heaven, and dry land. Life of all kinds is able to exist and to flourish because of the divisions and provisions God established.

The Earth Furnished

5. *God filled the earth, sea and sky with a vast array of living things* (1:11, 20, 21, 24). God Himself is a triune God of life. His is a life of delight and perfection. How delightful and perfect? In every way possible—which is to say, with variety upon variety, like a beautiful song composed with every possible variation. Is it any surprise that the God of life and infinitely varied delight has filled the earth with so much life and beauty? Man has not yet discovered all the forms of life on earth. How much less we are able to comprehend the love He has for His children!

6. *God designed living things to reproduce according to fixed laws* (1:11, 21, 24). One phrase that is used repeatedly is "after his kind." Mankind is still learning about this in the study of genetics. One truth that can be drawn confidently from these fixed laws is that every man and woman since Adam and Eve came from human parents.

7. *God subjected His creation to time, placing heavenly bodies to mark its passage* (1:14, 10). Every part of life on earth is situated in time, even our thoughts! For us, time is inescapable, yet God is timeless. Time is a mystery. But God has provided the celestial bodies to mark its passage. By the sun, we reckon the day and the year. By the moon, we reckon the month.

The stars indicate the seasons.

8. *God made man in His own image and gave him dominion over the rest of creation* (1.-26). From the beginning all the creatures of earth, sea, and sky have been subject to man. Man is subject to his Creator alone and not to any of the animals. Although animals, as well as the rest of creation, have been made for God's pleasure, He gave man dominion over them for his own profit and pleasure.

Man was made in the image and likeness of God. Because of this, the life of every human being is special. Human life is sacred for what it is and not for what it does. For this reason, the senile, the poor, the terminally ill, the aged, the unlearned and the unborn have a dignity that neither human reasoning nor Satanic forces can ever terminate. Man has dominion over animal life, but only God has dominion over the life of man.

9. *The Creator was satisfied with His completed and perfect work* (1:31). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Today we can look at the world and see many, many imperfections. It is a glorious and sobering reminder that before man sinned, the world was originally deemed very good by our perfect and very good by our perfect and holy God. All the works of God are perfect.

The Creation Finished

10. *Creation was finished in six days* (1:31, - 2:1). Six days of Creation is a marked contrast to the idea of millions of years of evolutionary fits and starts. For the past century these Scriptures have been used to reveal part of the error of evolutionary theory. But, for hundreds and hundreds of years since the time of Moses these verses have also provided man with an example that is a call to work. Yet, for a great number of people today, six days seems just too long a work week. The Scriptures teach us to work both to provide for ourselves and to have something to give away. We ought not squander our opportunities or subvert the original pattern that God established.

11. *God set apart the seventh day as a special day of rest* (2:3). Interestingly, the seven days of the week are not described by sun, moon, stars or any natural phenomenon. The week is a representation of the seven days of Creation. It exists as a schedule for the rhythms of work, rest, and worship.

Important Teachings

1. Creation brought into being what had not previously existed (1:1).
2. God carried out His creative work in an orderly, progressive, and purposeful manner (1:1-3; 2:1).
3. God accomplished His creative work by speaking the word (1:3).
4. God prepared the earth as an ideal environment for life (1:4-10).
5. God filled the earth, sea, and sky with a vast array of living things (1:11, 20, 21, 24).
6. God designed living things to reproduce according to fixed laws (1:11, 21, 24).
7. God subjected His creation to time, placing heavenly bodies to mark its passage (1:14, 16).
8. God made man in His own image and gave him dominion over the rest of creation (1:26).
9. The Creator was satisfied with His completed and perfect work (1:31).
10. Creation was finished in six days (1:31; 2:1).
11. God set apart the seventh day as a special day of rest (2:3).

Answers to Questions

1. Who was present at the Creation?

God, the Holy Trinity, was present. The Father spoke the Word. The Spirit moved upon the face of the waters. The New Testament names Jesus as Creator. The Scriptures do not clearly date the origin of the angels, but Job speaks of "morning stars" singing for joy at Creation.

2. What is at stake in questioning a literal six-day Creation?

The dangers of not accepting the literal interpretation of other parts of the Bible and of accepting evolutionary development at the expense of the ordered creation of "kinds" of creatures are both at stake.

3. List evidences of purpose and order in the Creation.

From the obvious to the mysterious, Creation is well ordered. The solar system provides us with twenty-four-hour days, predictable patterns, and just the right amount of heat and light. Physics and chemistry are understandable because of the stability of the creation. Mathematics cannot be refuted. All mankind has some concept of God's moral law.

4. What inspiration can we draw from the fact that God created such a variety of life forms?

There is a place for variety. God is able to maintain an immeasurable amount of life on earth. God expects man to enjoy life on the earth.

5. How should the creation relate to its Creator?

We should be grateful that God's word of approval crowns our existence. Because we were created with the aim of pleasing God, we should seek to understand and accomplish His every will for us. We should take seriously God's commands given at the Creation. "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

6. Did God need rest after Creation?

God rested, but not because He was weary. His rest was the realization of perfect fulfillment His work was completed.

7. Does God need the creation? Explain.

God does not "need" anything. He is already perfect and cannot become more perfect. He wanted creation for His pleasure.

Summarizing the Lesson

The opening pages of the Bible make clear some basic truths. There was a beginning, and the world will not continue forever as we know it. God exists, and the world is His handiwork. All life did not spring from one life form, but God created different "kinds" of creatures in great number. The entire starry heavens are for the blessing of mankind. Procreation is sanctioned by God's mandate. Work is a normal part of life. Man is the highest creature on earth, made in the image of God. And, perhaps most importantly, God was pleased to make us for Himself. May we each live a life of which it can be said, "And God saw that it was good."

Research Guide

1. There are many trans-literal versions of the Bible that are instructive and interesting. One such book is by Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*.

2. Sound doctrinal books covering the doctrine of God (as Creator) and the doctrine of the Creation will prove helpful. (Unger's *Bible Handbook*, usually a reliable aid, is unhelpful in the study of Creation.)