

Created

Genesis 1-2

Central Idea: Creation teaches us some of the foundational truths about the God that we serve.

Introduction

What should be one of the greatest truths of the Bible, foundational and most important to set the scene for our understanding of God has been muddied by recent discussions by Christians and nonChristians alike. The book of Genesis opens with some very stunning and different ideas of the origin of creation, and yet today most fight over how God created.

These six different theories of creation and evolution have done what the devil has always wanted, provided fodder for division and distraction in the church. Today, as I share the first two chapters of Genesis with you in our new series called “Foundations of Character” my goal is not to tell you which of these approaches is right or wrong, but to show you what a person living in the times of Moses would have understood and how radical the opening of Genesis was in the era that it was penned.

The first of our Character formations in Genesis, the book of beginnings, is to understand who this God that we serve is and what He can do. As we take a closer look at Genesis we will find the fingerprints of a very special God, unlike any other view of God in Moses time and since! Humans try to make their own god, but the God of Genesis will not be categorized into our neat little systems and packages. Let’s take a look at the God who forms character in us!

Text – Genesis 1:1-2; 2:1-3

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² 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.

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

- I. A God of Creative Power
 - A. God’s creation is original and stimulating.

- i. Although the debate has raged on for roughly a couple of centuries, Genesis 1-2 is not about whether God used evolution or not, whether there were 24-hour days of creation or a host of other fascinating topics that the crux of science and faith have produced.
 - ii. When Moses sat down and penned Genesis 1, there was a different kind of debate, and the creation account deals with that debate, not our science debates of today.
 - iii. You see, in Moses' day, there were many creation myths circulating, talking about who created and why they created. The how of creation was not as important.
 - iv. From the Egyptians to the Babylonians to the Mesopotamians, even to the Canaanites, every nation seemed to have their own creation myth with their gods somehow acting in creation.
 - v. Almost all of these were polytheistic. So in Genesis 1:1, when the Bible states matter of factly that one God created, that was revolutionary. Most of the creation myths had creation happening by mistake or by accident or as some byproduct of a war between the gods.
 - vi. But Genesis has a purposeful God who is not at war creating out of His character a world designed, not for his benefit, but for the benefit of his highest creation, humanity.
 - vii. One of the creation myths stated that the only reason humans were created was to be slaves to do what the gods no longer wanted to do. So the gods made humans to be their slaves. But the creation account of Genesis has God creating the world for humans.
 - viii. One of the most important aspects of a creative ability is that it stimulates others to be creative. The more we explore and discover God's creative power, the more we are inspired by it and in awe of Him.
 - ix. That word for create in Genesis one is a very special word, for it only occurs with God as its subject. Humans can build and make stuff, yes, but the word for create is never used with humans as the subject.
 - x. The creative attribute of God is foundational to our understanding of Him. He is not a destructive God by nature. He is a creating God. He takes the formlessness and void of a dark world, and He brings order and light!
 - xi. **Application:** God is not destructive but constructive. He will not beat you down just for His benefit. He is always nurturing, challenging, exhorting, and encouraging you. He disciplines, but He does not destroy us. It's because His creative attributes seek to make things "good."
- B. God's power is in His voice.
- i. The theme of creation will pop up throughout the Bible, as foundational in Genesis one, we will see a re-creation in the times of Noah and the flood,

a “new thing” God is doing among the nations, the new birth and making us new creatures in salvation, and the new heavens and earth. All of this is based off of the theme of creation! John in his Gospel will actually start with the phrases from Genesis 1:1!

- ii. But there is another theme that starts to become foundational to the Bible from Genesis 1:3. “And God said.” Immediately, unlike the gods of creation myths who have no intended purposes other than slavery for creating, or who create by accident or mistake, God actually speaks creation into existence.
- iii. The writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 11:3 makes it clear that part of having faith is to readily accept that God spoke things that were not into existence through His word.
- iv. The creation account is actually not about how God created the world. It is about the God who creates. The subject of Genesis one is not creation, but it is God. 35 times in 31 verses, the subject of the sentences is God Himself!
- v. This is one of the problems we have today in missing the point of Genesis one as we come with our Western mindsets and our science expertise. We attempt to explain in detail the hows of creation but the text is out to explain the Who of creation and the Why of creation.
- vi. This does not mean that there is nothing to be gained through scientific observation and comparing these verses to what we know of science, but it’s original purpose was not science but the author of creation itself and His divine ordering of creation.
- vii. So in Genesis 1:3, we are subjected to a continuing refrain that always starts out, “And God said...” From the very beginning of the Bible, we are to understand that God’s Word is so powerful that when He speaks, creation obeys.
- viii. The phrases teach us that obedience is the natural reaction to God’s powerful voice. It is not until Genesis 3 that anyone or anything challenges God’s speech. “And God said...and it was so,” is the natural paradigm of creation, and of our lives.
- ix. God as creator is sovereign ruler over all creation. He speaks and it is His, so creation listens and obeys. The voice of the Lord and the Word of God become hallmarks of our Bible, and the Bible itself is called the Word of God.
- x. God’s Word is a creative, powerful, guiding, and authoritative word. It is healing and redeeming. It is sought and necessary to our survival. In the Christian life, if God does not speak, we die.

- xi. Several chapters of the Bible and other places carry on the theme of God's powerful voice, like Psalm 29. Imagine the power of God's voice that He simply speaks, and it is always done.
- xii. Illustration: I bet parents wish this could happen for them. Wouldn't it be nice if your children hung with obedience on every word? But they don't. It seems only God can have such a command with His voice. Parents must speak twice, three, four times or more to be obeyed. But when God spoke, it was accomplished without a fight.
- xiii. **Application:** The sad part of this point is that we have learned from Satan and the world that we can challenge God's words to us. When He commands us, we nitpick instead of saying, "Yes, Lord." We flat out disobey His word, and they did back then too. From Adam and Eve to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, humans have learned well to ignore God's voice. But that is not how it is supposed to be. The creation account teaches us that when God speaks, His creation obeys. It is a life lesson we would do well to relearn!

II. A God of Order

A. God made things with purpose.

- i. Unlike the creation myths around Israel at the time, the God of creation was purposeful in His crating, not accidental. Creation was not the divine "Ooops!" moment. It was done with intention.
- ii. We can see this in the order of creation as well as the words of God. For instance, at the end of chapter one on day six, God makes humankind. But before He does, He says, "Let us make humans in our own image."
- iii. He planned for human beings to have His image. There is much debate about the plural verb there, "Let us make," and the reason for it is both grammatical and theological.
- iv. First, the word for God, elohim, is in the plural, so the verb for make in the dialogue is going to be plural to agree with its subject. This plural is called a plural of majesty, showing that God is great. You cannot talk about Him in the singular because He is too great to be held to the singular. But He is one (Deut 6:4).
- v. Second, for many theologians, while this plural verb is not explicit that there is a trinity, it is an open door for the trinitarian understanding of God to begin developing through revelation as God reveals more of Himself in time and space. Thus, while I would not point to it as proof of the Trinity, I would start there to show the possibility of the Trinity.
- vi. Suffice it to say that God is a God of order. Even as our scientists are studying this creation that God created, they find great order, and the same types of order, even when they go to smaller systems.

- vii. The planets in our solar system have a center, the sun, and then eight or nine planets orbiting around that sun. When you look at a cell, the same type of organization with its creative variations exists! One God, one mind!
 - viii. So also, God is sovereign over His creation. He's in charge, because He made it all. He knows it all in detail and in intimate understanding. It is all from Him, and so He controls it all.
 - ix. One of the ways we see God's order and sovereignty is in how He creates the divisions for light and darkness and the seas and the heavens. In dividing things up, God is showing His order of creation. In naming things, like calling the greater light day and the lesser light night, God is showing His divine imperative.
 - x. **Illustration:** Part of dominion in ancient times was knowing the names of things. To know a thing's name was to show ownership, much like when you get a pet, you give it a name, and it is your pet and not someone else's.
 - xi. **Application:** Such an attention to the sovereignty and order of God will lay the groundwork for some of the most cherished principles and Scriptures for believers, like Psalm 139 which states unabashedly that God knows us in the innermost being. God is intimately familiar with our lives and our person. He made us, and He knows what goes on in and around us. He is not ignorant of our struggles, our joys, our hopes, our preferences. He knows it all. And just like the creation that He loves, He loves us despite what He knows. We can't even say that about ourselves!
- B. God made things with organization.
- i. God organizes the universe like a pro. Unlike the gods of creation myths, God did not make mistakes or only have control over one thing. It was different for an Israelite, for the Egyptians worshipped the sun god, and the Mesopotamians had their river and water god. But what would they do if their need was not in those areas? They had to go to a different god and appease that god.
 - ii. Not so for the Israelites. The whole system of multiple gods is laughable to the Hebrew, for there is only one God who created all things. The sun, moon, stars, the rivers, and the weather, fate itself, fertility. All these things were created by God, which means He controls them all. He is not a specialist, but a generalist.
 - iii. You don't have to go anywhere else but right to God's throne with any issue. You don't have to first categorize it into which god to go to. God alone controls all things! It really cuts out the spiritual red tape!

- iv. As far as the order of creation, a scientist who approaches it linearly will have several issues. For instance, how does God create light on day one without a sun or stars (the source of light) on day four? And how can we number days one through three when days, months, seasons and years are not initiated until day four?
- v. There are a ton of holes in the creation accounts for most scientists and atheists, a whole lot of cannon fodder there for their arguments when you look at the days in successive order.
- vi. I don't want to get too radical on you this morning, but the six days of creation, while literal 24-hour periods, are not outlined in logical linear order by Moses.
- vii. The key to the six days making sense is in verse 2. The words "formless and void" are our guide. As God speaks into existence things like the planet of earth, they are in the start of His creating formless and void. Detail must be added to them. He must mold them.
- viii. So first He must make form out of the formlessness. You see form being added to creation in days 1-3. God creates light to expel the darkness that is over the waters in verse 2. In day 2, God separates out the sea from the sky. In day 3, God forms the land mass or masses from the seas.
- ix. Next, besides formless, you hear how void and empty the creation is in verse 2, so days 4-6 are about God filling the creation with stuff! In day 4, the light from day 1 is defined as sun, moon and stars. In day 5, the sea and skies are filled with creatures suitable to them, and in day 6, God makes land animals and humans for the land masses.
- x. There is a perfect order to creation, and God begins to call things good. Now let's go back to verse 2, because it is important for us to see not only that God is a God of order, but also of redemption.
- xi. When creation has barely been initiated, it is chaotic and a mess. God takes that mess and He brings order and life to it! His Spirit is hovering in the waters and in the chaos.
- xii. And then God brings forth order out of the chaos. He brings His redemptive plan into fruition. God is not a God of confusion, but of order, and He brings His order into creation itself!
- xiii. **Application:** Your life might seem like a mess, but God has a plan for you. There's always a plan, a way God wants to use you and your talents. He wants to bring order to your chaos and redeem the broken pieces of your life. He wants to set you free from the bondage of not knowing and not understanding and pain. He came to bring order and life to your chaos!

III. A God of Authority

A. God ordained certain structures.

- i. We see God dividing up parts of creation, making distinctions between types of animals and their kinds, and we also see Him showing His dominion through His own organization.
 - ii. He is sovereign and Creator, and so He can order things however He wants. Out of His mind and creative abilities, God set things up the way He wants.
 - iii. This idea of God's ordaining and setting in motion certain divisions, characteristics, and so forth, is seen all throughout the Bible. Indeed, even today, we call ministers who serve in full time ministry ordained ministers.
 - iv. The idea of ordination is that God chooses what He wills, cultivate it how He wills, and then uses it how He wills. This is true of all creation. God is always the potter, and creation and its creatures are always the clay.
 - v. God can mold and shape however He desires, and we have no right to complain about it or argue with Him. He is the Potter and we are just the clay.
 - vi. Now God also passed that dominion over to human beings in His creating. We have already seen that one of the ways you can tell God has dominion over all creation is through His naming things. In Genesis 2, as we zoom in on day six and see more specifics of how God does things, He lets Adam name the animals.
 - vii. God is passing on through His image the ability to have dominion over things, to govern and set up governance on human levels. And so God has ordained certain authorities and governances.
 - viii. **Application:** What we will discover in our next sermon is that sin destroyed this God-given authority structure and today much of the problems in our world is a direct result of sin staining the perfect created order and structure for authority. We must be careful to make sure we honor the authorities God has set in place, or life will not go well for us!
- B. God created relational beings.
- i. The image of God is too lofty a subject for this week, but His image means that we carry on at least in a lesser degree, some of God's characteristics.
 - ii. Some of these characteristics range from intelligence, creativity, emotion, having a will, having authority over lesser creatures, and some others as well.
 - iii. But most of all, like God within the Godhead, is relational, so we are relational. As much as some of us have a natural bent toward being hermits and introverts, God made relational beings. Even the introvert needs the occasional connection to others.

- iv. We know God made relational beings because Adam as he is naming the animals cannot find one suitable for him. Why would Adam need this if he was not relational by nature?
- v. Humans tend to congregate in cities and in masses. Part of the reason for that is that God created relational beings. We like to marry and be a part of our community and have close friends. There's a certain satisfaction or joy in these relationships.
- vi. God made man and woman for these reasons, to share life together, just as there is a perfect harmony of relationship within the Trinity itself as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit work together and love one another.
- vii. **Application:** Even in relationship, we are to mimic God, as it were, to be His image, on the earth. God sets up all of this and calls it very good. It is all good, healthy, beneficial, to live within the bounds of God's created order. Our problems come when we shrink away from this created order, and find ourselves in trouble!

Conclusion

God's creation teaches us a lot about who God is and what He expects from us. It teaches us about our origins that a loving and redemptive God created out of His own desire with purpose. We are not accidents or throw-aways. Each one of us is planned and God has a purpose for our lives individually. He knows us better than we know ourselves. And He wants us to be like Him! He made this world for our benefit, and the way we treat this world reflects how much we appreciate God's first gift to humanity.

Action Points

- God created with a purpose and is redemptive in His creating. He is one who builds you up, exhorts you, encourages you and gets involved in fixing your situations. If you hear a voice that is not redemptive and constructive in your life, it may not be God's voice.
- God's order might not be readily seen by us, but there is always order. God takes the chaos of our lives and brings order to it. When we obey Him, He is painting a beautiful picture with our lives, writing the chapters of our story, and you are always a masterpiece!
- God's order and dominion has also been passed on to us as He let Adam name the animals. God has a divine order of authority as well, and when we don't follow it, we suffer through life.