

Gen 1.1-31

Clint Le Page

Main point – God created everything & it was good. Enjoy the creation, praise the Creator.

Why do you matter?-----And other people too?-----(**SLIDE**)

Do I matter to God? Or am I just some evolved slime?-----

Where do we come from?----- Why is the world the way it is?-----

Genesis answers these questions.

It gives answers as we search for meaning.-----

The word 'Genesis' comes from the Greek word for '**origin**'.(**SLIDE**; the Hebrew name for the book is the opening words: 'In the Beginning').

And 'Origins' is the title for this series in Gen 1-12.-----

Knowing humanity's origins in the early chapters of Genesis, is vital for knowing who we are? Why things are the way they are?

And how we can find meaning, in a world of confusion, brokenness, and a million opinions?-----

God inspired Moses to write it about 1400 BC, not just for Israel, but for humanity, and for us.-----[cf Mt 19.4ff]

We also live in a time when many people live only for the present;

ignoring the past, not worrying about the future; or with no hope for the future.

But this only leads to bad choices, anxiety and meaninglessness.-----

We need to understand our problem and the solution.

And Genesis helps us understand both.

It's foundational for everything else we believe, everything else the Bible teaches, which is why we'll study it.-----

And Gen 1 is a majestic opening chapter to the Bible.(**SLIDE**)

It introduces the two main subjects of the Bible, God and humanity.

And it sets the tone for the long story of their relationship.-----

When it comes to Genesis 1 & 2, I think too many people miss the big picture, and therefore miss **the point**.

We are not meant to just focus on the details, or on debates about creation and science, which we'll look at more next week.-----

But please see the big picture and don't miss the point.

The point being, the heavens and earth sprang into being, through the all-powerful, Creator God. And what God made was good.-----

But we ruined it. Humanity spoiled God's good world.

Sin perverted the perfect world.-----

But, where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more (Rom 5.20).-----

The blessing & gracious promises of God are key themes in the book, along with themes like, sin and seed and land.-----

The next 2 weeks will also be on chapter 1, when we think about creation, evolution and what really matters, and then on being made in God's image.-----

We'll be in Gen 1-12 until August.-----

With that long introduction, here's my points for today.(**SLIDE**)

Point 1 being, The Powerful God creates.

Let's read **vv1&2** again...

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

In the beginning, God.

Before God created anything, before time existed, he was;

He existed; he was present.-----

God-alone has no beginning.-----

V1 answers the question why there is something rather than nothing.-----

V1 sets the tone and states the theme of all that follows.

But more than being a summary it is a statement of the first thing done.---

God created the universe.

He created it out of nothing.(Heb 11.3; Rom 4.11; Col 1.16; John 1.3).

There was no pre-existing matter before the beginning of creation.-----

And this is no made-up story, no fairytale.----

This is history.

The Bible treats the early chapters of Genesis as history (Exod 20.11; Rom 5.12), as does Jesus (Matt 19.5ff)-----

'The heavens' in Gen 1 v1,(**SLIDE**) are everything beyond earth, both the sky, and everything past that – space and the universe.

And on day 4 God fills it with stars and galaxies.----

14 years ago it was estimated that there's at least 125 billion galaxies, which we can't see.(**SLIDE**)

Now data from the space telescopes suggests there may be 2 trillion galaxies.

It's mind-blowing, isn't it?-----

Do you know that the average distance between those galaxies is about 48 million trillion kms; or, 3 million light years.-----

Wow!----- I cannot comprehend that.-----

Our transcendent, above-all, all powerful God, created them all.-----

Oh, and God created the earth.-----

And from here on in, from v2 onwards, there's a zooming in-on, a focusing in-on things from earth's perspective.

Creation is viewed from our perspective.

Theologically, humble earth is the centre of the universe; which shows what God thinks of human beings.-----

So what do we learn about God from these verses?-----

That the eternal, uncreated God, created all other matter in the universe.

God is powerful, all powerful, omnipotent.-----

And he is all knowing, all wise, omniscient.-----

God is also transcendent – above and beyond his creation.-----

There are no rival gods, there's one God,(**SLIDE**) who alone is eternal and self-sufficient.

This goes against polytheism.-----

Genesis 1 teaches monotheism – that there is only One God.-----

Now God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is present and active, v2 hovering over the waters [Job 26.13].-----

In Hebrew the word 'Spirit' is also the word for 'breath'. [Ps 104.30]

And interestingly, in v3, God creates by his 'Word'.-----

And because of the New Test, we know this points to the action of the Son of God.

From **John ch1**, 'the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'

And(**SLIDE**) 'Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.'-----

While the eternal Son of God, who would later become flesh in Jesus, is not mentioned in Gen 1, he is present here.

God: Father, Son and Spirit were all active in creating.

One God, in three persons, creating all things.-----

Gen 1 also contradicts pantheism – the belief that God is united with & part of the creation.-----**(SLIDE)**

Like an **Avatar** world, some Eastern traditions and environmentalists hold to that.---

The truths of Genesis 1 also go against the views of atheism; and materialism – that matter is eternal and the only reality.-----

All this also means we must not worship creation, or created things.-----

I don't agree with Lady Gaga who sings, 'I found God in the shape of a woman'.

No, you and I are not gods and goddesses.

Don't worship yourself or another human being.

Don't live for yourself; or for the praise or approval of others;

or possessions, or the pleasures this life brings.----- Don't worship creation.

But nor should we reject creation, or seek to escape from it.

Because God made it good.-----

These verses cut through other world views and beliefs.

They teach us what is true about God and the world.-----

We also learn that the creation is ordered, and planned.

And the repetition in it gives the intended sense of order and progress.-----

There is no concept of chaos in Genesis 1.-----

And nor did the world come into being by chance.

Our God is a God of order and purpose.-----

What a great and awesome God we worship!-----

Doesn't all of this make our God, the One true God, worthy of worship?-----

Let's now come to **Point 2, the Progression of creation - form & filling.(SLIDE)**

v2 said the earth was formless, empty and dark.

Formless, meaning it's uninhabitable, and hasn't been shaped.

Now God will give it form; and he will fill its emptiness, see table.**(SLIDE)**-----

God gives the world form, in days 1-3; and fills it in days 4-6.

We'll consider what is meant by the word 'day' next Sunday.-----

Let's look at what happens.----

On **day 1**, we assume that God created the unformed and watery world, but it is in darkness, and so God said, 'let there be light'.

And what happened?-----

There was light. God's word and command is executed to the letter.

What God says happens.-----

The sun and stars aren't created until day 4, so this light may be some shining splendor God just creates.

God demonstrates his rule, when he names the light 'day', and darkness, 'night'.

The evening and morning language, while there is no sun yet, is priestly time, holy-time.

It likely links not only to the work day, but to the times of the morning and evening sacrifice.(Ex 29.38-42)

It links God's work to ours, and even suggests that this world is a sanctuary, a holy place, where even God can dwell.-----

On **day 2, vv6-8**, God makes an expanse in the midst of the waters, to separate the waters above & below.

In other words, great rain clouds are separated from the seas, and the expanse in the middle, is called the 'sky'.**(SLIDE)**

Normally the word expanse refers to a solid hammered-out-thing, though here it refers to the atmosphere.-----

The focus here is not on defining the sky but on God's power over the waters.----

On **day 3, v9**, the land is created.

The dry ground appears as the waters gather together.

God separates, and names them 'land' and 'seas'.-----**(SLIDE)**

But not only is the land part of God's forming, the plants are too.-----

Once being a biologist, I would have thought living plants would be part of the filling.

But the plants are part of the non-moving things.**(SLIDE)**

They're like fixtures, like bench tops or cupboards in your home.-----

They're like part of the canvas that the artist will fill with other beautiful things.-----

God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation', seed-bearing plants and fruit trees.

It's not that other plants aren't created too, but these are the focus, because they provide the food for people and animals, vv29-30.-----

And again, what God said, is done.-----

Then for the third time out of 7 we hear, 'And God saw that it was **good**'----**(SLIDE)**

'Good' likely means, it was done just as God intended.

But also, like an artist admires his handiwork, God is satisfied; pleased.-----

It's beautiful!-----

On **day 4**, lights are created in the sky.

The bigger light, the sun, and the smaller light, the moon.**(SLIDE)**

What's their purpose?-----

v14-17, to give light on the earth, to govern & determine the day & the night.

And to measure time, days and years.-----

And the marking of seasons isn't just Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring, but more likely the religious festivals.[Ps 104.19]

It's the theological reason for their presence.

Just like we use the moon to determine when Easter is.-----

Notice too, that the words, 'sun' and 'moon' aren't even used; they're not named.

That may be to rebuke the other nations & religions who worshipped the sun & moon.

And God is saying, they're pretty insignificant, they're just created things.-----

God is the only actor in this story.-----

And even the billions of stars are just light-producers, for our sake and God's glory.

The stars do not determine our destiny or future, as astrologers would say.-----

On **day 5**, from v20, the sky and seas are filled with swimming and flying creatures, fish and fowl.

God says literally, let the water swarm with swarms of living creatures.

I imagine swarms of shrimp and bait fish.**(SLIDE)**-----

And they are commanded to be fruitful and multiply.-----

One comment on **v21**: the large sea-creatures is more literally, 'sea monsters'.

Not meaning mythical or fictional creatures, nor even just whales.

The word can refer to snakes, but also dragons.-----

Surely includes Leviathan, swimming dinosaurs, Loch-ness type creatures, even ones now extinct.-----

Then the final day of creation & filling, **day 6**.----

Now the land is filled, **v24**.

'Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds'.

And three categories are highlighted: the cattle or livestock, the creeping things that move along the ground, so imagine reptiles, mice and invertebrates;---

then there's the wild animals, the beasts of the earth.-----

I wonder when you look at the world, what most amazes you?-----**(SLIDE)**

For me I love, huge trees.

Or for you is it flowers, birds, animals, or bugs?-----

God made an amazing world, hasn't he?-----

However, as the climax to God's creation,**v26**, God makes people, male and female, in his image; Adam and Eve, and all of us.-----

Brian will be back in 2 weeks' time to look at vv26-28.

But for now I ask: Do you accept that you were made by God?----- [Ps 139.16-19]

And if we are made by him, do you know we are accountable to him?-----

So humans are blessed and commanded to be fruitful, multiply & fill the earth.

God says to them you may **eat from** every seed-bearing plant and fruit tree on the whole earth.**(SLIDE)**

The emphasis is on the gigantic generosity and bounty of God's provision.-----

This also contrasted with other religions at the time, which asserted that mankind was created to feed the gods with their sacrifices.

But here we see the sovereign God feeding humanity.-----

And God doesn't stop providing, he continues to feed his creatures.

Like **Psalms 104 says,(SLIDE)**

God supplies water for wild animals (v11).

He causes grass to grow for livestock,

and provides crops for man to cultivate (v14).

God provides for his creatures.

And He has provided for you and I, hasn't he?-----

At the end of day 6, God saw all that he had made and pronounced it 'very good'.

It was very good indeed.

This creation is perfect.

It's just as God planned; and to his pleasure.-----

God delights in what he has made.-----

But it wouldn't stay that way, would it?-----

Soon enough the man & woman would reject God and his rule, and sin - eating the forbidden fruit, and that would be catastrophic for humanity, and the world.

And as we know, we now live in a broken world, a world of suffering.

A world where the creatures of this world suffer and we suffer.-----

Yes, there's still much goodness in the world; we see God's power and goodness in creation

Yet the world we live in now is not as God created it in Genesis 1.

While we live in a world of death, God's grace he hasn't left us without hope.

We'll see in Genesis that God promises blessing.-----

God has a plan, **point 3.**

God's ultimate Plan is to bring about a New creation, through his Son.(**SLIDE**)

We've just read the first chapter of the Bible.

And do you recall what the last chapter of the Bible promises? Rev 22?-----

Please turn to that.-----

In chapter 21 the apostle John described a new heaven & new earth,(**SLIDE**) which will come, because the first heaven and this earth will have passed away.

Then in **ch22 v1**,(**SLIDE**) John sees a vision of the river of the water of life, flowing from the throne of God.

Over this river stands the tree of life, for the healing of the nations.

The healing of our brokenness and hurt, our sicknesses and sinfulness.

And the trees won't just produce crops once a year, v2, they'll produce crops of food every month of every year.-----

The bounty and provision and blessing of this new earth will exceed the first creation.

And to beat that, God is no longer going to dwell in heaven, somewhere else.-----

And come and pop in for a visit like he did with Adam n' Eve.

We will live with God and he will live with us.

We will be in his very presence for ever – never ending fullness, life, joy!-----

How good is that?-----

We won't even need the sun any more, v5,(**SLIDE**) because the very presence and splendor of God, will be all the light we need.-----

How wonderful!!-----

Don't you want to be there, in this new creation?-----

That's something to look forward to, with great hope and expectation.-----

But please understand, that only Jesus can get us there.

If you want to enjoy God's presence in the new creation, the last words of the Bible invite you to Come.(**SLIDE**)

Let everyone who is thirsty, spiritually relationally thirsty, come.

The water of life is a free gift.

The grace of the Lord Jesus is offered to you.

Come to Jesus, trust in him, rely on him.

And one day you will suffer, and spiritually hunger n' thirst, no more.

Come to Christ to gain relationship with the providing, all-powerful God.

Come to Christ and find satisfaction, and one day all the longings of your heart will be filled.-----

When we think about what God has made, and will make, and what he provides and offers people, we will want to respond with praise.

Point 4, The response of Praise.

When we realize that God created the world, the massive universe and the smallest microbe & atom, we will respond with praise.

It's not only right to praise him, but we will want to.-----

In the words of **Psalm 8**.(**SLIDE-ESV**)

"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.----

And (v3), When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?

When King David sat back and considered God's creation, the moon and stars, he responds, "O Lord how majestic (how excellent) is your name in all the earth".-----
How will you respond?-----

I asked you earlier, what amazes you in God's creation?(**SLIDE**)
Maybe it's the beauty, intricacy or glory of something God made?-----
Let's take time to get off our screens, and marvel at God's majestic creation.-----
But non-Christians can be amazed at a glorious sunrise too.
Let's not stop with amazement.

Let's praise the God who made it.

If you have kids, or teach kids, help them see God as the Creator.

As Andy said two weeks back, help them to see God in everything.-----

I pray others will see you respond to the Creator with wonder.-----

As we're struck by our smallness and God's greatness; or by his beauty, or wisdom;
don't just be wowed.

Turn your wonder at the creation into awe and gratitude to the Creator.

Turn it into praise.

Turn your meals into genuine times of thanksgiving.

And find satisfaction in the God who gives us so many good gifts.-----

Enjoy created things, enjoy God's good gifts, but love the God who gives them to you.

Love and praise the Lord Jesus through whom they come to you.-----

Maybe we should sing with Chris Tomlin(**SLIDE**)

Indescribable, uncontainable,

You placed the stars in the sky and You know them by name. [Ps 147.4]

You are amazing God.-----

Incomparable, unchangeable

You see the depths of my heart and You love me the same

You are amazing God.-----

Living for the praise of God's glory, as we wait for the return of Jesus and new
creation, it actually gives our lives meaning.-----

We don't have everything we want now.

But the Lord has created all things, and gives you good gifts, and promises perfect
fullness in the new creation

So Will you praise him?-----

Let's pray.