

In the beginning

Genesis 1:1-2:3

Covenant Waterfall, 10 October 2021

Read

Pray

Introduction

We've all wrestled at some point with the big questions of life. How did we get here? How did the universe come into being? Who or what made us? What's the purpose of our lives?

If we listen to the voices of our culture, what answers to these questions do we hear?

Firstly, the idea of a personal God is repugnant. We are told that there is either there is no God (atheism), that creation itself is all there is and ever was. Carl Sagan – "The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be." – universe is eternal. Therefore, life must have come into being on its own accord, no Creator. Just evolved from the sludge from lower beings of life to higher beings.

Others in the culture may affirm the existence of God, but prefer to speak of an impersonal divine force ("the Universe"), which connects all creation together. God is seen to be within everything – in the plants, trees, animals, humans – everything is one with the Universe – all is one with this divine energy that connects us all together. Basically creation is divine, we are gods. If we want to find any higher meaning to life, must look within ourselves and realise our true potential and discover the divine spark within. This is the message of much of the pop-spirituality, self-help stuff around us like Oprah. Even in some churches! Old ideas – paganism, Hinduism, recycled in every generation.

In stark contrast to these ideas, we open the book of Genesis. New series, beginning today.

What we're going to see as we work through this book – not some old myths and tales.

Instead, it's true – as is all of God's Word, divinely inspired by his Spirit. Genesis provides us with foundational truths from God on which we can base our lives upon. What we'll see is

that there is indeed an eternal, personal God who created everything. He created us, in his image, as the pinnacle of his creation, giving us meaning and purpose. What's that purpose? To worship him – to glorify and enjoy him forever. Because God is our Creator, we are to worship him alone.

- God created, vv.1-3
- God separated, vv.4-31
- God rested, 2:1-3

A. God created, vv.1-3

“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. ³ And God said, “Let there be light”, and there was light.”

These opening words of Scripture declare key foundational truths to us. All that we see around us, the earth, the heavens, in fact the entire universe, had a beginning. It did not always exist – creation itself finite, is not eternal. Everything – the heavens and the earth was created. It did not come about spontaneously, at random, through some big bang. Instead, everything was created purposefully, at a point in time: “in the beginning”.

Who then created the universe? Verse 1 tells us unequivocally – *God!* God – separate and distinct from his creation. God – the source of everything we see around us. He existed before creation came into being. Where then did God come from? Who created God? No one! He always existed – he was, he is, he is to come. He's eternal, uncreated, sovereign, entirely self-sustaining.

Because he is sovereign, all-powerful and entirely complete within himself, he spoke a word, and creation came into being. Verse 3 – **“God said, let there be light, and there was light...”** He created the universe out of nothing – ex nihilo. He spoke, and it was. He didn't fashion something out of some pre-existent matter. He created something from nothing. That's the meaning of the Hebrew word, “bara” in verse 1, for “create”. It describes God's unique ability to create something from nothing. He speaks creation into being through his

powerful Word. God speaks, as the sovereign King, and it comes to pass, he purposes it and he does it (Isa 46:11). Nothing can stop him, nothing can thwart his plans and his will!

Verse 2 describes the creation in the beginning: the earth was without form and void, covered with darkness, Spirit of God hovering over the waters. Right at the start of God's act of creation – his Spirit is at work. Already, in the second verse of Scripture, points us to the Trinity – Holy Spirit, Third Person of the Trinity – with God in the beginning, involved in creation.

B. God Separated, vv.3-41

From verse 3, we see the manner in how God created the universe. The Scripture tells us that he created in the space of six days. Are these literal 24-hour days, or figurative days, symbolising a longer period of time? Similarly, is this opening scene of Genesis scientific evidence for a young earth – 6000 years, as opposed to the billions and billions of years that most modern scientists claim? The age of the earth and scientific details is not really the concern of Genesis. Purpose of Genesis – not science text book. Yet must not over-spiritualise it either – key truths about creation which are revealed here. Whether the process took place 6000 years ago, or billions of years ago, is really beside the point. The point here in Genesis is that it was God who created the universe. Yet it's clear from the text that the "days" here have an evening and a morning – in other words, it's assumed we're talking about a 24-hour day.

Verse 3 describes God's first act of creation on the first day. He commands there to be light, and there is. He separates the light from the darkness. The light he calls "day" and the darkness he calls "night". There was evening and morning – the first day.

On the second day, verses 6-8 tell us that God created the sky, the heavens. He separated the waters in two, creating an expanse – sky, the heavens above, waters below.

Third day, vv.9-10 – God formed dry land – he separated it from the waters, gathering the waters together, dry land together. Called the dry land, "earth" and the waters "seas". Then in vv.11-13, God creates vegetation upon the earth – plants, fruit trees "each according to its kind". He creates different species of vegetation – variety, difference between them.

Fourth day, vv.14-19, God creates the heavenly lights in the skies – in order to separate day from night and distinguish seasons from each other and mark the days and years. He creates what v.16 calls the “greater light” to rule the day (the sun), the “lesser light” to rule night (the moon) and the stars.

How do we reconcile the fact that God created light on the first day, yet the sun was only created on the fourth day? Many say this is evidence that Genesis is untrue. Yet the existence of light is not necessarily synonymous with the existence of the sun. How can we say this? Revelation 22:5 tells us that in the new creation, there will be no sun, yet it will be light – **“And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.”** We can imagine something similar to this here in the creation account. Source of the light – God, not the sun.

Fifth day, vv.20-23 – God created the fish in the waters and the birds in the heavens, blessing them and commanding them to be fruitful and multiply (v.22). He also created fish and birds each **“according to their kinds”** (v.21) – showing the God created a variety of species of fish and birds at creation. This would go against the theory of evolution – all life forms slowly evolved from one common life form into many different species. Yet here – at creation, God creates a variety of species and kinds.

Sixth day, vv.24-31 – God creates the land animals – livestock and creeping things – “according to their kinds” (v.24-25). Last act of creation - vv.26-28:

Then 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 birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Key truths – ***God created us according to his image***, after his likeness (v.26). In other words, he created us to resemble him. We’re not God, but made to be like him – we therefore have innate value and worth – every single human being, regardless of whether believe in God or not, regardless of race, culture etc.

God created us as the pinnacle of creation in order to have dominion over it – he has set us over the animals, birds, fish, over the plants, over the earth, in order to rule over it and subdue it (v.28). We are distinct from the rest of creation, not just an advanced form of animal. We represent God on earth. High calling.

God created mankind as male and female (v.27). Both male and female equal and image bearers of God. One not superior to the other. Purpose of man and woman? Complement each other. Meant to be together – to marry, to ***“be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”*** (v.28) – have children! No matter how loud the culture shouts about things like gay marriage, being non-binary, identifying as one of 72 genders – can’t change this self-evident truth that God created mankind, male and female, which he calls “good”!

In fact, God calls every aspect of his creation “good” (tov) – repeated seven times in Genesis 1. Truth that creation itself is good, gift from God, to be enjoyed – not intrinsically evil. Enjoy these gifts from the Lord – beauty of creation, food: bread, wine, oil, meat, fruit and veges – all blessings of common grace.

Overall, what we see here is a common theme – in his work of creation, God separated – he distinguished between: light and darkness, sky and waters, earth and seas, day and night, different kinds of plants and animals, between animals and humans, male and female and ultimately between God and his creation.

Embedded into God’s design for creation is this God-ordained difference: opposites, binaries – we can call this a “hetero-cosmology”. In other words – difference is good! Not everything is meant to be the same.

Contrary to what our culture tells us – culture – “homo-cosmology” – all is one: no difference between humans and animals – humans are animals – evolution.

No difference between male and female – essentially the same - gender is seen as a social construct. Result? Identify as non-binary – neither male nor female. Embrace of homosexuality – important thing is you love someone, doesn’t matter about whether male or female – that’s accidental.

Ultimately – no difference between us and God – God is seen to be within everything – we are gods, end point of this is the rejection of God the Creator and worship of the creation, as

Romans 1:25 explains: **“they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.”**

A creation with no distinctions – no difference between God and his creation, leads to idolatry – worship of creation and ultimately a rejection of the Creator. Ends in tragedy.

Rather – order your life according to God’s pattern for creation – embrace the God-ordained differences – reveals God’s goodness and his perfect will.

C. God’s Rest, 2:1-3

God finished his work of creation in six days. On the seventh day, 2:2, tells us, he rested. The Hebrew for rest = Shabbat = Sabbath. Verse 3 – God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. The first thing that God makes holy in all of creation is the Sabbath day. He sets it apart from the other six days of works, as his special day. On it, he rests, he enjoys the creation which he has made.

This Sabbath rest is embedded into the fabric of creation. Perspective of the New Covenant – Christian Sabbath is now on the first day of the week, the day of Jesus’ resurrection. This day is a gift to us – Christians and non-Christians alike – to have one day in seven as a time of rest. Work continuously for seven days – burn out. Given this day in order for the Lord to refresh us. Primarily by delighting in God himself - gathering for worship with God’s people, strengthened by his grace, preaching of the Word, ministered to by his Spirit, prayer. Also time to delight in God’s good creation – enjoy family and friends, good food and drink. Not burden, but a gift and a blessing!

Conclusion

Culture, spirit of this age – so much confusion, look within for answers, look within for salvation and enlightenment – divinity within ourselves. Sounds promising and exciting, live how you please, own gods. Yet in reality, when we look within, it’s depressing, dead end, purposelessness, find no meaning to life, no true rest – only endless striving for something we never attain. Why is this? Jeremiah 17:9, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”**

Our hearts are sinful and sick – going within is always futile, lead ultimately to death.
Instead, we need something, Someone, from outside ourselves...

First five verses of John's Gospel, reflecting on Genesis 1:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...(v.14)
⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

In the beginning, when God created the universe, he created it through his Word. Here we see his eternal Word revealed as Jesus Christ – Word made flesh – who was with God and himself is God. All things were made through him. Came to bring God's life – light of men, full of grace and truth.

Instead of looking within ourselves for answers, heart of Genesis 1 tells us to look up to God our Creator and worship him instead. Worship our eternal Creator God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit! Trust in Jesus Christ, God's Word – give you true life and shine light on the darkness of your heart, forgives your sins – death and resurrection, gives you true rest and peace, ultimately an eternal Sabbath rest – eternal life with God in the new creation – he our God, and we his people, forever.

Amen.