

“Creation: In the Beginning . . .”

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and earth . . .” (Genesis 1:1)

We’re beginning at the beginning - the first book of the Bible, first chapter, first verse. Genesis is an epic of God’s creation and our place within it. In upcoming weeks we will look at a series of stories from this book as we learn about God’s power and love, human nature, and the shape and direction of human life. We will take a look at the world God intended – and what the world has become. It all begins with God . . .

The Story of Creation
Adam and Eve

Genesis 1:1 – 2:3
Genesis 2:4 – 25

Introduction:

- Myth and Truth: pre-history (Genesis 1-11)
A myth is an imaginative story using symbols and images to help us understand a truth that is complicated or difficult to put into words. Jesus’ parables are another example from the Bible of using a story to teach (the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Laborers in the Vineyard that we heard on Sunday). The truths that Jesus conveyed in his parables do not have to be literally and/or historically accurate in order for us to learn from them. In a similar fashion, Genesis presents God’s work of creation to teach us some important things:
 - God created all things, and everything God created is good.
 - God made the universe in an orderly and sequential fashion over a period of time.
 - Life was created in an ever increasing complexity.
 - Human beings are the supreme culmination of God’s creation and are created in God’s own image and likeness.
 - The created order is subject to humans, but not absolutely so. Humans must protect its future for their descendants.
 - God gave humans a free will, but humans are limited in their judgment and knowledge. (Next week we will talk about how humans have misused their free will.)

None of these truths conflict with what science reveals about the origin of the universe and life on earth. However, science cannot teach us about the purpose and meaning of life. One way to think about this is that Bible completes what science (astronomy, physics, biology, and geology) cannot teach us about our origins.

- How/Why/Who? (Evolution and Creationism)
Why does Genesis contain two creation stories – neither of which is supported by the scientific evidence we have about the age of the earth and the way life developed? The creation stories make clear the fundamental truth behind science. All creation was lovingly created by a God who continues to nurture it.

This is a story about the Creator, and a faith confession about the ongoing nature of God as Creator now. God is the Creator and Sustainer of the world! This does not exclude the endeavors of science to understand the world as God created it or eliminate technology as a means to enable us to live in it. In fact, such investigations help us to understand God’s creation.

Themes:

- The sovereignty of God
- Order out of chaos
- Humanity's place in creation and dominion
- Image of God
- The world God intended

Genesis 1: Priestly Account (see handout)

- Context: Babylonian captivity (587 B.C.). Religious, political, social, and economic structures of the Jews had been destroyed – Judah had been conquered, the Temple burned, the monarchy ended, and the Jews were deported to Babylon. It was written at a time when people were very likely asking – where is God?
- One main character: God
- Creation takes place over the course of six days.
- Sixth day – “So God created humankind in his image” (1:27)
- “the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1; 2:4a)
- Seventh day – rest – Sabbath – sabbatical
- Name of God – God (*Elohim*)

Genesis 2: Yahwist: “Walk with God” – A much earlier telling of the creation story.

- Context: Believed to have been written during the time of the United Kingdom (1050-922 B.C.) – a time of peace, prosperity, and expansion for Israel.
- Begins with reference to “the earth and the heavens” (Genesis 2:4b)
- Different order of creation
- “Adam” created first; “Ish” (man) and “Ishah” (woman)
- adam/adamah (from the earth – human)
- “Adam’s” place in creation: naming
- “It is not good...”
- The “rib” or “side”: human relationship and community
- “Naked”
- The trees: life and knowledge of good and evil – boundaries – something forbidden
- Name of God – LORD God (*Yahweh Elohim*)

The BIG Picture

- Genesis story – not a scientific account (physics, cosmology, biology) – but gives us the “big picture” of creation (God-made and God-given) – and then moves on to the rest of the story – God’s purpose for us.
- God continues to create and recreate. This is God’s first and ongoing miracle.

~ SMALL GROUP TIME ~
~ CREATION ~

1. What are some of the differences between the two Creation accounts?

2. What are the characteristics of God in Genesis 1?

3. What are the characteristics of God in Genesis 2?

4. What does it mean to be created in the “image of God”? What are some examples of “God’s likeness” that you see in people?

5. What is God’s purpose for Creation?

6. What is humanity’s place in Creation?

7. Where do you see yourself in Creation?

8. In what ways is Creation ongoing?

9. How is God’s love revealed in these stories?

Did you know? (Fun facts to know and tell!)

- Genesis means origin, but it wasn't the first book ever written – it's not even the oldest book in the Bible! But when the Bible was put together, it seemed obvious that this was the book that had to come first.
- There is an “echo” of Genesis at the beginning of one of the Gospels. Do you know which one? (read John 1:1-3)
- Just as in English, the Hebrew words for woman and man are related to each other – man in Hebrew is *ish* and woman is *ishah*.
- You'll notice as we go through the Old Testament that names are important and have special meanings. For example – Adam's name is related to the Hebrew word for earth or ground, *adamah*. In Genesis 2:7 we read that Adam was formed from “dust from the ground.” Eve's name in Hebrew means “life” (*chavvah*). Adam called his wife “Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20).
- *And on the seventh day . . .* God rested. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy (Genesis 2:3). The seventh day becomes ‘Sabbath’ from the Hebrew word for ceased. Some years later, this day of rest will become a commandment. God invites everyone to share his peace and the joy of his creation.

And something from Martin Luther . . .

In Luther's Small Catechism, he summarizes the significance of each of three articles of the Apostles' Creed. Does his explanation of the First Article remind you of the creation stories we heard tonight? Which one?

Article: I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Luther writes: I believe that God has created me together with all creatures. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and home, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property – along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life.

God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. God does all this out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him.

This is most certainly true.

Our Verse: “In the beginning when God created the heavens and earth . . .” (Genesis 1:1)

See you next week! We'll be talking about “The Fall”!