



Genesis

RBS
Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

Lesson 1: Creation

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

Doctrinal Focus: Creation, Redemption,

Read Genesis 1:1 – 2:3.

God, through the writing of Moses, introduces the Bible’s unfolding story of redemption, which begins at creation and ends when Christ comes again to consummate his kingdom in the new heavens and new earth. The Bible reveals that the only holy and righteous God has acted in human history to redeem a people from sin through the work of his Son, Jesus Christ, so that they will glorify and enjoy him forever by proclaiming his excellence.

The revelation of the book of Genesis was given by God through Moses at the time of the Exodus. Like other books, it was written for a purpose with an audience in mind. Why is this important? The reader is more likely to understand its message rightly when it is read in light of why and to whom it was written.

The people to whom Moses was writing had experienced God’s presence among them. God soundly defeated Pharaoh and his gods (Exodus 7–12). They had rejoiced in his protection and care while Egypt’s land and people writhed under his judgment. When they got to Sinai, they trembled at the sound of the thunder and lightning, thick cloud, and trumpet blast. They saw and felt God’s presence among them in profound ways. But they did not yet understand his nature, purposes, and claim on them. Yet, they did not doubt God’s existence as some do today.

God clarified the redemptive nature of his relationship with them by revealing the first events of the Bible’s story within the context of their

deliverance from Egypt. Their deliverance from pagan bondage pictured the redemption from sin’s bondage God had purposed and planned in eternity past, and set in motion “*in the beginning*” of human history. In Genesis 1:1 – 2:25, God, through the writing of his servant Moses, set the stage for the story of redemption. He revealed that his people’s Redeemer is also their Creator and described the catastrophic event that made redemption from sin necessary in order to have a right relationship with him.

Moses began by correcting many of the pagan creation myths with which God’s newly formed nation of Israel was no doubt familiar. Although these ancient stories reflected a common human memory of certain events involved in creation, none of them remembered creation accurately. In Genesis 1 – 2, Moses set the record straight, writing not out of common human memory but under the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit.

God created the universe and everything in it by the power of his word (Genesis 1:1). The first words in the Bible, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,*” describe water, formless and uninhabitable matter from which he made other parts of the creation. This may be a summary of the entire creation account. He was apart from all he created—existing before time, space, and matter.

“Created” (*bara* in Hebrew) means created out of nothing, revealing God’s sovereignty and unparalleled power. The Hebrew description of

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“the heavens and the earth” is *tohu* (unformed, chaotic wilderness) *wabohu* (empty). Out of nothing, God initially created an empty, unformed, chaotic wilderness and “*darkness was over the face of the deep*” (1:2). No life could live in it. However, “*the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters*” (1:3).

God, by his Spirit and through his word, would give light and order, filling his creation to make everything for the habitation of men and women who would bear his image and live for his glory. God the Father spoke, “*Let there be*” and it was so and was good. What God wills, he speaks and it is so. God the Son carried out the decrees of his Father (John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:15–16; Hebrews 1:2); and God the Spirit hovered over the dark, wet, unformed creation, preparing to breathe life into what would be formed.

On six successive days, God, who alone has the power of being in himself, spoke elements and aspects of our world into being. Those elements and aspects did not exist until he spoke. God drew on no energy outside of himself. He issued ten basic commands and brought a fully functional universe into existence. What God willed, God said, and it came to be.

Day 1: God said, “*Let there be light*,” and there was light. He saw that the light was good and separated the light from the darkness. He called the light “day” and the darkness “night.” He ordered time on the basis of day and night before creating the sun, moon, and stars.

Day 2: God said, “*Let there be an expanse* (big space) *in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.*” God named the expanse “Heaven.” And God made heaven and separated the waters that were under heaven from the waters that were above heaven. And it was so. The expanse (heavens, sky)—what humans see above them—is the region that contains both celestial light and birds.

Day 3: On this day, God organized two more regions. He gathered waters into one place (seas) and let dry land (earth) appear. Out of these regions he brought forth vegetation.

Day 4: God spoke and there were lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the days from

the nights, for signs and seasons, and for days and years and also to give light on the earth. The greater light (sun) would rule over the day and the lesser light (moon) would rule over the night, and the stars.

Day 5: God made the water swarm with creatures and the sky swarm with birds. He commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

Day 6: God made creatures on earth according to their kinds (beasts, livestock, creepers). He also commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

On the sixth day, God said, “*Let us* (Father, Son, and Spirit) *make man in our image, after our likeness.*” “Make” is not “bara.” Rather, it means to form from existing matter. God formed man (Adam) from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7) and Eve from a rib taken out of Adam (2:20–21). God created them male and female.

“The text does not define the image of God in mankind, but it does offer several hints. Adam and Eve *are* God’s image. God created them holy (Ephesians 4:24) and with the ability to obey him in knowledge (Colossians 3:9–19), to use language, and to be creative” (STSB). They would relate to God through intellectual ability, moral purity, a spiritual nature, creativity, a relational nature, dignity, ability to make ethical choices, and the ability to recognize value and beauty. But they would not be God. He alone is eternal, infinite, unchangeable, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, wise, pure, and holy.

God also blessed them with a purpose in his command to “*Be fruitful, multiply, fill, subdue, and have dominion* (rule).” God’s world was designed to be filled with his image-bearers that descended from Adam and Eve. By placing his image bearers throughout the earth, he declares that all earth belongs to him and he rules over it. His image bearers belong to him and are responsible to him in every area of his life. To have dominion over all the created order underscores the responsibility and accountability man has to represent God rightly.

God gives significance to both man and woman by creating both of them in his image. Two genders were God’s plan from the beginning. Both image God in his world. As image bearers, they fulfill the

unique roles God assigns to them. Because Adam and Eve are the first parents of all humans, only one race of image-bearers exists. Paul echoes the same truth: “*And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth*” (Acts 17:26). Consequently, mankind’s various ethnic groups come from one family, ruling out any racism” (STSB). They were to represent God with authority over the creation, fill the creation, tend the creation, and enjoy the creation and the Creator! God also gave them plants for food. God saw everything he had made and deemed it very good!

Day 7: The Apex of Creation: In six successive days, God finished his work of creation. On the seventh day, God rested from his work, blessed the day, and made it holy. God provided a model for the cycle of labor and rest for man and woman.

Read Genesis 2:4–25.

Genesis 2 presents an intimate description of the creation of the first human couple. While chapter 1 reveals God’s transcendence, chapter 2 emphasizes his immanence seen in his personal relationship with Adam and Eve.

God is the main character in this narrative. He is called “the LORD God,” stressing that he is both God the Creator, and Israel’s covenant God, the LORD. The LORD God formed the man from dust, breathed into him the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. Later, we will see that man returns to dust when he dies. The LORD God

also planted a garden, waters it, names the rivers flowing from it, puts the man in it, gives him work to do in it. In the center of this beautiful garden were two trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said, “*You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*” (Genesis 2:16-17).

God gave Adam work to do by bringing him every beast of the field and bird of the air to decide what to name them. In doing so, Adam realized he had no helper fit for him. God then made (not created) Adam’s wife from one of Adam’s ribs to be a helper fit for him. When Adam saw her, he responded, “At last!” Now he had a helper who was bone of his bones, flesh of his flesh. He named her “Woman” because she was taken out of Man (Adam).

Adam and Eve had been told by God to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The LORD God also gave them a mandate for marriage, “*A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24). While they had no mother and father, the time would come when they would need to remember this mandate for themselves and for their children. Jesus affirmed this one flesh mandate in Matthew 19:4–6. Marriage changes the relationship with parents and is to be honored above all relationships.

Cited Works

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 Goldsworthy, Graeme. *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1991.
 Williams, Michael D. *Far As the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005.

Recommended Commentaries

Genesis: Volume 1 by James Montgomery Boice (An Expository Commentary)
Genesis: Volume 2 by James Montgomery Boice (An Expository Commentary)
Genesis: Volume 3 by James Montgomery Boice (An Expository Commentary)

Sample



Genesis Lesson 1

Questions for Discussion

Read Genesis 1:1 – 2:3.

1. Explain in your own words why it is important to realize that Israel was the first audience of the Book of Genesis.
2. Some Bible critics say that Genesis 1 and 2 present contradictory accounts of creation. How might reading and understanding Genesis in the light of why and for whom it was written help you explain the suggested contradiction?
3. Although the people to whom Moses wrote did not doubt the existence of God, many people today do claim to doubt his existence. Consider Psalm 19:1–6 and Roman 1:18–32 in the light of the absence of an airtight argument for the existence of God in Genesis 1. According to these passages, compare the evidence for the existence of God that people today have with evidence for the existence that people to whom Moses wrote had.
4. According to the Romans passage, what actually motivates a person to profess atheism or agnosticism?
5. How might you explain to a professing atheist or agnostic that the issue at stake is not lack of evidence?

6. What did God produce in each of the following environments?

Created Environment **Filled Environment**

Day 1:

Day 4:

Day 2:

Day 5:

Day 3:

Day 6:

Day 7:

7. Using what you have learned in your study of Genesis 1:1 – 2:25, respond to a friend who tells you that responsible scientific inquiry is necessarily inconsistent with biblically-based faith in God.

8. What passage of Scripture was particularly helpful or meaningful? Why?