

## **The sermon**

### **Intro**

Where does your head go when you think Genesis one?

Enjoyment of nature. You love swimming in the oceans and the lakes and playing in the sand. You love the warmth of the sun. You love hiking in the mountains and climbing in the trees. You love the fact that God made deer. Or animals like cats or dogs or bunnies. The tics. You love the seasons. The snowmobiling and the sledding in winter. The negative ten degree temperatures. Shoveling the driveway. Falling on the ice. The emergence of grass in the spring. The sprouting of flowers. The warm summer days. The sunburns. The fall foliage on the trees. Apple picking.

Maybe your head goes in the direction of theology and apologetics and science. How old is the earth? How long have humans existed? Did humans come from primates? Was there animal death before the fall? How long were the Genesis one days? How was there vegetation before there was a sun? What do I do if current scientific conclusions don't square with the Bible?

Maybe you're thinking, how can God's creation be good? What about hurricanes and tornados and tsunamis?

We'll get there over time. This morning we'll look at the first three days of creation.

### **READ PASSAGE**

## **Body**

### **Passage Focus**

I'm going to introduce Genesis, go verse by verse through the first three days. Then I'll draw one major implication.

### **Meaning of Genesis**

The title Genesis stems from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. Genesis was the title given by the Septuagint translators. The Greek word *genesis* can mean origin/birth, history, or lineage/family line/genealogy.

The Septuagint regularly translated the Hebrew word *toledot* (account, record = genealogy/descendants, family line/history) with *genesis*. So Genesis means family line. Meaning Genesis traces a family line, namely, Israel. Genesis traces the history of Israel, which ultimately culminates in Jesus Christ.

### **Authorship**

The historic consensus of the Jewish people and the Christian church is Moses authored the first five books of the Bible (Pentateuch), including Genesis. Same with Jesus. For example, Jesus attributed the Ten Commandments to Moses (Mark 7:10). Jesus referred to the burning bush account (Exodus 3) as being "*in the Book of Moses*" (Mark 12:26) = the Pentateuch (see also Luke 24:27, 44).

With a few caveats. Deuteronomy 34 records the death of Moses, so Moses didn't write that chapter. There's room for a later compiler who took Moses' information and gathered the data into orderly accounts. Like we have in 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles.

How did Moses get his information? Sometimes it was eyewitness testimony. Moses was there for the giving of the Ten Commandments. Sometimes it was either direct revelation from God or pre-existing sources. Moses wasn't present for days 1-5. No one was. So God had to reveal this directly to someone, whether Moses or someone before Moses. It's likely that the genealogies in Genesis came from pre-existing sources (passed down genealogies).

## Introduction (1:1-2)

There's differences of opinion over 1:1-2. Is it a summary statement? Is it describing the creation of matter? Is it part of day one? Is it before day one?

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* – 1:1

I'm taking this as a summary statement. The rest of the chapter reveals how God did this.

*“the beginning”* = the beginning of time and space and matter. Before the beginning, God was. Eternally. In three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit.

God is the one and only source behind *“the heavens and the earth”* = everything. The things below. The things above.

*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.* – 1:2

I believe this is the state of affairs is before day one. Why? 1:3 begins day one. There's a neat formula that begins days 2-6: *“And God said.”* I think *“And God said”* (1:3) begins day one.

*“without form and void”* means unformed and empty. There's matter, but it lacks structure. It lacks occupants.

*“darkness”* = physical darkness.

*“the deep”* = deep waters.

*“the Spirit of God was hovering”* = God, the Holy Spirit, was present and ready to act.

1:2 = how things were before God began to speak. Earth's original condition. God had created matter. There were raw materials: formless earth, deep water. There was darkness. God was present. But there wasn't any life. God's work wasn't complete.

## Structure of the days

1. Unformed resolved in days 1-3 (day and night, expanse to separate the waters, lower waters moved for dry land to appear, vegetation). Empty resolved in days 4-6 (lights, sea creatures, birds, land creatures, mankind).
2. God speaks things into existence (light, expanse, lights, sea creatures, birds, etc.). God speaks functions into existence (reproductive vegetation, reproduction of sea creatures and birds).
3. Each day begins with *“And God said...”*
4. God says, *“Let there be...”* (with variations) to speak things into existence.
5. *“And it was so”* indicates just as God spoke. Just as God desired.
6. *“And God separated”* reveals God forming by separation.

Light from darkness. Waters from waters. Waters from land. Day from night.

7. *“And God called”* (or named) indicates God's ruling function over creation.
8. *“each according to their kind”* indicates distinctions within vegetation and the living creatures God made.
9. *“And God saw”* reveals God evaluates.
10. *“that it was good”* reveals God approves.
11. *“And there was evening and there was morning”* wraps up each day.
12. *“And”* indicates succession of events. One thing happened after another in orderly sequence.

### Day one (1:3-5)

*And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. – 1:3*

God speaks physical light into existence. Previously there was only darkness.

God speaks and it's there.

*And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. – 1:4*

God looks on his work approvingly. He's not like us. I could have painted that a bit better. My door installation is a bit off. **"God saw"** = God noticed, inspected, evaluated his work. He liked what he saw.

**"good"** = God's work is pleasing in his sight and done well.

Light is separated from darkness. Separation's a repeated theme. In forming the formless, God separates.

*God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. – 1:5*

To name something was to rule over it. Like Adam naming the animals. Parents naming children.

Separating light from darkness results in evening and morning, Day and Night. The first day.

### Day two (1:6-8)

*And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." – 1:6*

God speaks and there's an expanse. **"the waters"** were the deep waters of 1:2. God divides again.

**"expanse"** = sky, the atmosphere.

*And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. – 1:7*

The waters were separated into two locations.

**"under the expanse"** = waters on earth. What would become oceans, seas, rivers.

**"above the expanse"** = waters in the sky (e.g., clouds). The expanse held waters in the sky to prevent them from being one with the waters on earth.

**"And it was so"** because God spoke it. Just how God wanted it.

*And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. – 1:8*

God rules over the expanse. So he names it Heaven = the sky/the atmosphere (not where God dwells).

The second day is complete.

### Day three (1:9-13)

*And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. – 1:9*

Here God doesn't speak something new into existence. He speaks relocation of the waters ("**one place**").

**"waters under the heavens"** = the waters on earth. God's purpose in moving the earth's waters was to allow the dry land to **"appear"** = be seen. Previously, the land was under the deep waters. It couldn't be seen. This indicates dry land was present in 1:2.

***God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.*** – 1:10

God names the Earth and the Seas, indicating he rules over both. God approves of his work once again.

***And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so.*** – 1:11

God speaks vegetation into existence. By enabling the ground to produce plants and fruit trees.

Sometimes God speaks new things into existence. Sometimes God speaks new functions into existence.

Vegetation's spelled out as **"plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed."** Plants and fruit trees that produce seed allows for the ongoing reproduction of plants and fruit. God has a long game in mind.

**"each according to their kind"** indicates a distinction between plants and fruit trees. There's boundaries and order within different elements of God's creation.

***The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*** – 1:12

The earth does what God told it to do. God's purposes aren't thwarted. God's pleased with his work.

***And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.*** – 1:13

The third day is complete.

### **Next week**

Next week we'll look at days 4-7, the image of God, the polytheism of Moses' day, and we'll get into Genesis and science (e.g., the age of the earth). For now, I want to leave you with one implication.

### **Implication: God can do as he pleases**

If God is the source of all that exists, everything belongs to him. When we talk about tithes and offerings, we use language like "we're giving back to God a portion of what belongs to him." Our money actually belongs to God. So he's justified to tell us to give a portion to support the work of the local church. I think the implications extend beyond tithes and offerings.

What I'm getting at is God can do whatever he wants with what belongs to him. That's what it means to be God.

***Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.*** – **Psalm 115:3**

God can tell the stars what to do. God can direct the waves however he sees fit. God can bring forth vegetation. God can order a drought. God can do whatever he wants with what belongs to him. That's what it means to be God.

God is free to raise up and remove rulers. God is free to prosper nations and subdue nations. God is free to direct our lives as he sees fit. God is free to bless one person with great wealth. God is free to bless another with great health. He can do as he chooses. He's under no obligations to a higher authority. That's what it means to be God.

God is free to take life. God is free to extend life. God is free to pardon David for adultery. God is free to take Herod's life for refusing to give God glory (Acts 12:23). God is free to send a flood upon the earth. God is free to choose Abraham's seed for special blessing. God is free to send sulfur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah. God is free to determine how he relates to Israel: by covenant. God is free to issue commands that please him. God is free to hold us accountable when we reject his commands. That's what it means to be God.

I think the whole Bible falls into place, we can answer the hard questions, when we accept this truth: God can do whatever he wants with what belongs to him. In doing so, we free ourselves from idolatry. We don't need to fashion a god to suit our desires. There's no need to fit God into our box, our assumptions. There's no need to make God look good. We're free to let God be who he reveals himself to be.

Oftentimes we might encounter in others, or in ourselves, the idea of disappointment with God. Some conclude I don't believe in God because this bad thing happened to me. We Christians might struggle with thoughts like, how can God be good if this is happening to me? How can God care if this is happening to me?

I believe we'll have a framework to fight disappointment with God when we realize God can do with us what he chooses. He's free to bless and discipline and gift and provide and guide and send trials as he sees fit. Yes, balance this out with truths like God is good. God is wise. I can look to the cross and know God is good to me. I can look to the promises of the new heavens and new earth and know God will make all things good. I can look to God's ability in creation and know God is wiser than me!

But when we concede God can do with me as he pleases, we free ourselves from the comparison game and envy. We allow for contentment. We don't assign to ourselves rights God never promised. And we see a personal God wrote out our days before he formed us (Ps 139:16).

God is a Creator. He creates different kinds of creatures. He creates different stories for each one of us. God is free to write my life as he sees fit. When my story doesn't make sense to me, I can trust God's steadfast love follows me every day of my life (Ps 23:6). I can trust God is working all things for good (Rom 8:28), just like his work in creation was good. God looks down with approval on the days he's written for us (Ps 139:16).

**Practical question:** do I believe God is free to do whatever he wants (my life included)?

## **Conclusion**

I've highlighted the fact that God, as Creator, can do whatever he wants with us, his creation. God dictates how we relate to him. He sets the terms, not us. That's what it means to be God.

Shortly we'll see that God made man to reflect God and rule over God's creation and God gave mankind one rule. Which was broken and subjected our world to sin and death. As a result, we sin. We do life our own way, not God's way. We reject the Creator and put ourselves on the throne.

God doesn't take rebellion lightly, so he punishes sin.

As we'll also see, God is merciful. He didn't make an end of Adam and Eve. He made provisions for their new situation and promised a future deliverer. That future deliverer is Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to die on a cross to rescue a people from sin and death by taking the punishment in their place. Jesus offers rescue from sin and death to all.

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. – John 3:16*

Come under God's rescue and blessing by trusting in Jesus.