

Beginnings - God Creates Life: Genesis 1&2

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Date: 10 January 2016

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[0 : 00] is only because of your sustaining hand upon us. And we ask that you, Creator God, would breathe afresh the power of your Holy Spirit upon each one of us so that we may hear these words correctly, that we may apply them to our lives, and that the same creation power that we see at work here in these words would be at work in our lives, forming us into the new creation that you would have us to be.

We pray that you would do this work amongst us today. In Jesus' name, Amen. Once Upon a Time is not just the beginning of a book.

It's actually a TV series that takes place in a seaside town called Storybrooke. All the residents of that town are characters from various fairy tales who've been transported into the real world, but have been robbed of their real memories by a powerful curse.

The town's only hope is Emma Swan, who is the daughter of Snow White and Prince Charming, who's come from the fairy tale world to rescue them.

She's the only one who can break the curse and restore the characters' lost memories. Sound familiar? You see, the story of the Bible has a similar theme.

[1 : 58] It's all about a hero. A hero who offers hope, who will rescue people from the curse that they are under, restoring what is broken and renewing what has been lost.

But here's the difference. The story of the Bible is not a fairy tale. It is a true story.

This is God's story and it begins, look at verse 1, in the beginning. That's what Genesis means. It means beginnings. The Bible begins by telling us the story of how the world and how humanity began. What we are like, how we came to be, and why we are here.

But the problem is, people don't always get very far in the story because they start arguing over how old the world is and how long it took to make.

[3 : 07] Now, I just want to say a few things about that because it's very important to recognise that faithful, Bible-believing Christians, and I'm sure if you were to do a quick survey here in this room, would all have various different views about that.

Some people will say, it took six days to make, and they read Genesis chapter 1 in a literal sense, so the end of verse 5, it says, and there was evening and there was morning the first day.

So on that basis, and looking at other dates in the Bible, they calculate that the world is not much older than 6,000 years old. Other people will say, well, if you read verses 1 and 2, there's a gap in between verses 1 and 2 or in between verses 2 and 3, and they call that the gap theory, and so on that basis, they calculate that the world is millions of years old.

Still other people will read it and say, well, the days that are mentioned are just periods of time. So while the creation story is historically true, the days are more symbolic than literal.

And you can talk to each other about that afterwards. Now, while debate is healthy and it's good, let me stress, it's really not worth falling out over.

[4 : 29] So how should we come this morning and understand the beginning? Well, here's what I'm suggesting we do. Rather than treat the Bible as a science book, we read the Bible as God's story.

Primarily, we're reading it not to find out how old the earth is, but to discover who God is and who we are.

So we're going to look at two big things this morning. Who God is and who we are. So first, in the beginning, God.

Surprisingly, the story doesn't actually start with us, does it? Look again at verse 1. In the beginning, God. It does not tell us how God came to be.

It simply and unapologetically tells us that God exists. Before anything else or anyone else, God was there.

[5 : 40] In other words, God has existed forever. There was never a time when God was not. God. Now that blows my mind a little bit.

It's hard enough trying to fathom how you and I came into being in a certain place in a certain point in history, but to try and understand or comprehend that God has always been and always will be, it causes my brain to freeze.

You see, if I could really get my head around that and fathom God's eternal existence, if I could understand that completely, then God would cease to be God.

You see, why should I have the right to say who God is and for how long he's existed? Because God is God, he tells me, he informs me, and the simple fact is at the very beginning we're told that God existed from before time began.

Now this means that the story is not about me. I am not the centre of the universe. I am not the main character in the story.

[7 : 02] Of course, the world tells each one of us that we are so important and that it is all about me and there's nobody is more important than me. But it's a lie, it's not true.

Part of our problem is thinking that God exists for me and my wants and my pleasures. But that's not how the story begins. The Bible starts with God.

This is his story, not my story. So who is this God?

Well, as we read on in the story, we see that God is one. When God begins to create, he says things like, let there be light or let there be an expanse in the sky.

But when God creates man, there is a subtle but significant difference. I wonder if you noticed this in verse 26. Look at verse 26.

[8 : 11] So this is at day five, he's created everything and then God said, verse 26, let us make man in our image, in our likeness.

So who's God talking about? God's God's God's God's word. Who's the hour and who's the us?

Well, I'm not going to spoil it for you just yet because at this stage in the story, we're not told.

We're maybe given hints, like in verse 2, we're told about the spirit of God is hovering over the waters. But all we need to know at this stage is that there is a complex unity to God.

God is always referred to as one, but yet he can speak of himself as being us and our. You see, God has made us, but he does not need us.

God is truly self-sufficient. God was not lonely and bored wondering who he could talk to, jumping from star to star and planet to planet, wondering what he should do with his time.

[9 : 31] No, God exists in this perfect relationship within himself, the us and the our, together. And as we'll discover in a minute, we have been created and made to share in that relationship that God has within himself.

So God is one and this God is our creator. Back at verse 1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Everything that exists, nature, all the plants, earth, all the trees, the planets, the stars, the universe in all its vast expanse, all the creatures in the sky and in the sea, and people themselves, we all have our origins or beginnings in God.

God is self-sufficient, but we are not. We are utterly and completely dependent on God for life and for breath. Look at chapter 2 verse 7 where it tells us, the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being.

God creates life. God sustains life. God provides us in life. Therefore, God owns my life.

[11 : 13] He rules over my life. This is God's world, not my world. And how this God has created is really important.

At the very beginning of the story, we're introduced to a creator God, but a speaking God. And when he speaks, things happen.

his words have power. Maybe you think your words have power. As you try to tell people what to do.

I try that sometimes at home. But my words really don't have much power. I can't make anything happen. Everybody seems to do what they like. Don't listen to that at all.

But look at verse three. And God said, let there be light. light. And there was light.

[12 : 16] God speaks life, the world, the universe into existence. And throughout the first chapter, we continue to read like in verses six and seven.

And God said, and it was so. Or look at verse nine, the beginning of verse nine. And God said, let the water under the sky be gathered into one place and let dry ground appear.

And it was so. Through the spoken word, God brings about life. John Stott, who's now with God, helpfully describes the power of God's word in creation like this.

He explained it in this helpful way. The word of God is proclaimed in heaven's pulpit and all comes to pass. The preaching, the speaking of God's word forms the universe.

The word preached by God is no empty word. It accomplishes and achieves the purpose for which it was spoken. God's word has power.

[13 : 30] God's love. God's love. And this one creator speaking God, who spoke creation into existence, does so with amazing order and precision.

Again, look at verse 1, chapter 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty and darkness was over the surface of the deep and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Do you see those two words there in verse 2? Formless and empty. That's the scene. If we can kind of picture that in our own minds, formless and empty, that's what was at the beginning.

If we could imagine in some ways an out of shape, watery ball that is suspended in utter darkness. No life. Uninhabitable. And then God speaks to this formless, empty sphere that is just suspending in darkness.

[14 : 54] On the first three days as we follow through chapter 1, God forms the formless world. And on the second three days, he fills the empty world.

So let's look at this pattern and design of creation. We'll go through it quickly. On day one, starting at verse 3, we're told there that God forms the light and separates light from darkness.

Then on day four, which is in verse 14, God fills the light and the darkness with the sun and the moon and the stars and he scatters them all into their various places to the ones that actually give the light.

Then on day two, starting at verse 6, God forms the sea and the sky. So the sea and the sky are separated. Then on day five, verse 20, God fills the sea with all kinds of living creatures and fish and eels and all the little shellfish.

And then God fills the sky with the birds of the air. He forms it and then he fills it with life. And then on day three, starting at verse 9, God forms the land and the vegetation, the mountains, the hills, the trees, the plants.

[16 : 20] Then on day six, starting at verse 24, God fills the land with animals that roam the earth in all the tiny little bugs and insects to the great big dinosaurs that at one stage roamed the earth.

And alongside the animals, God fills the land with people. Do you see the world that we live in? It's not random.

This is no accident, the world that we are in. We are not here by chance. We're not some kind of primeval slime that's come from nowhere and nothing and kind of formed into a blob and eventually grew into some kind of species and developed and so on.

We're not here by chance or some big unexplained big bang. We're here because God formed us and made us and filled the earth with all its beautiful creation.

That means that my life today has meaning and purpose. I'm no accident or no mistake. God has created us and God has designed and ordered such a beautiful world for us to live in.

[17 : 38] Amen. Amen. Amen. And God is not only ordered but God is good.

Do you see what he says as God finished each stage of forming and filling the world in which he made? Do you see what it says in verse 4? Beginning of verse 4 after he made the light God saw that the light was good.

then down at verse 10 at the very end of verse 10 and God saw that it was good at the end of verse 12 and God saw that it was good and after each piece of creation God looks and marvels at what he has done and goes this is all good at the beginning it was all good because there was no death there was no funerals going on there was no decay there was no disease there were no hospitals nobody was getting sick there was no destruction there was no tsunamis or hurricanes there was no breaking up there was just unity and beauty and harmony with man and creation in existence together and God looks at it all and it was good and then into this good world that God makes he creates mankind and look what he says when he makes man verse 31

God saw all that he had made and it was very good with the creation of male and female it's not just good this is very good the pinnacle of God's creation mankind God is a good God and all that he does for us is good and every work in our life is always right and best for us because God is good and God is rest look at chapter 2 verse 2 by the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing so on the seventh day he rested or he ceased from all his work the work of creation had been done it is finished nothing else to do yes of course he's still sustaining the world and maintaining it and making sure the seasons go the way they go and holding everything in its exact and precise place but creation is done all that is left is for

God's created people to enjoy and delight in all that God has done for them to rest in a God who has made and done everything perfectly for us this is the God that we have who invites us to rest in him and so as we look at the beginning of the story we are introduced to God in all his glory and in all his greatness isn't God awesome stand back and look at how God introduces himself this vast unexplored universe that we live in our world this planet that we are on right now is like like a tiny pinhead that's suspended in this hall here you imagine the universe for what we know of it our world is just like a pinhead in this great big room except for there are no walls it just goes on forever and forever but yet this God who has created it all who existed from before beginning spoke it all into existence by his word amazing perfectly designed perfectly ordered every planet spinning the way it should be the sun where it should be the moon where it should be everything existing together so that we have life on planet earth and God did it all so that we could know him so that we could enjoy him the beauty the power the greatness the glory is all on display as we were singing earlier and reading from the psalms it's all there to glory and say look at

[22 : 56] God look at what he has made it demands and it deserves all of our worship and all of our lives in the beginning God second God created man made in God's image look at verse 26 verse 27 so God created man in his own image in the image of God he created him you see we're part of God's creation but yet but yet we're unique we're the same as the animals we've got blood and flesh and bone we live we die we eat we sleep but we're different to the animals because why we're made in God's image unlike the rest of creation something of who this God is that we've been looking at something of this awesome amazing

God is who we are we reflect or mirror God's nature his character we reflect something of who God is so just as God has a relationship within himself so we now get to share in that eternal relationship relationship we can relate to God in ways that the rest of creation can't nothing else in all creation has that privilege the God who spoke us into existence and breathed life into our being now speaks to us and we can speak to him the God who created us now enables us to be creative to design things to make things not least as it goes on to say in creating or rather making more people the God who rules over all of us the God who rules over everything that he has made calls us as people to rule over his creation to take care of it and to follow his good design the God who delights in everything that is good and right has given us a capacity to know what is good and right we have an inbuilt conscience that knows that this is good and that this is wrong we have been made in God's image and to share and to reflect

God's image to the world around us we're his image bearers knowing him reflecting him enjoying him now while we're made in God's likeness we are made different to each other look at the end of verse 27 he created him male and female he created them you see before God male and female are equal in value and worth man is not superior to woman and woman is not inferior to man but we are different physically we're different but we've also got different roles that complement each other so have a look at chapter 2 verse 18 the Lord God said it is not good for the man to be alone I will make a suitable helper for him now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air and he brought them to the man to see what he would name them and whatever the man called each living creature that was its name so the man gave names to all the livestock the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field but for Adam no suitable helper was found so the Lord caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and while he was sleeping he took one of the man's ribs closed up the place with flesh then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man and he brought her to the man the man said in his best love poetry possible this is now bone of my bones flesh of my flesh she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man and for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh you see in God's perfect and good design he makes male and female and together they come together and form a sexual union they are one flesh it's what we call

marriage they become one but yet in their oneness they have different roles the woman we're told throughout what we've just read is to draw alongside and help the man they are to complement each other and as we go through the story we'll begin to see

God's good design for man and woman together and because we are created by God as male and female we must obey God as God orders and designs the world he gives the orders and we must obey so back in chapter 1 verse 28 God blessed them and said to them to man and woman be fruitful there's a command be fruitful and increase in number fill the earth and subdue it rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over living creature that moves on the ground you see this is not our world we're not in charge of it it's not up to us to decide what we should do we are to follow the laws of God it's not for us to distort and reject

[29 : 54] God's good and beautiful design for life we're to obey him because God is our loving ruler and we obey what he says because what he says is always right and always good for us we might not always appreciate it but he always says what is right and we obey and of course at the beginning of the story it's hard for us to think of disobeying or rejecting God because as we look at the beginning of this story everything is so good and perfect and beautiful and all in harmony in fact mankind was created innocent look at chapter 2 verse 8 now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east in Eden and there he put the man he had formed

Eden is a beautiful pleasing and plentiful garden and it means delight nothing going wrong there's no sadness or hurt no pain or struggles and it's in this garden that man and woman joined together in their first marriage so look at chapter 2 verse 25 here's the picture we have in Eden the man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame not only is this a picture of something that's delightful here is a picture of pure innocence the physical nakedness of the man and the wife reflects a deeper inner nakedness here are two people where there is a complete openness a vulnerability towards each other nothing to hide nothing to fear completely transparent there is no shame but we know it's not like that today is it today we are a people who are filled with shame and burdened by guilt we don't like to be open we don't want people to know what's going on inside here we hide our deep inner thoughts we cover up our nakedness we hide our true self from one another and even from ourselves there's not one of us in this room here that would want anybody to see or to know what we are really like

I would dread if you would know the thoughts that go on in here or the feelings that are in here why because there is too much to be ashamed of but here in the beginning is a man and woman not just naked before each other but in a sense naked before God where everything is known there is no hiding there is no shame there is no guilt man and woman with their creator God in perfect relationship in Eden pure delight and so the story begins but what about the hero you said there was a hero one who gives hope and makes this story that we're looking a reality for us well we know the hero his name is Jesus and he's right there at the very beginning turn with me please to Colossians chapter 1 Colossians chapter 1 verse 15 the story begins and right at the beginning of the story is the one who is central to the story it's speaking of Jesus look what it says in verse 15 he is the image of the invisible God the firstborn meaning the head the supreme one over all creation for by him all things were created the things in heaven and on earth visible and invisible where the thrones or powers or rulers or authorities all things were created by him and for him he is before all things and in him all things hold together so there he is

Jesus Jesus Christ the hero the creator of all things is there at the beginning ready to restore what is broken and ready to redeem all that has been lost and how will he do it look at verse 19 for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood shed on the cross you remember that picture in Eden man and woman unashamed naked nothing to hide no fear of God at one with God without guilt that is what he has come to do for us so that we can stand unashamed holy and pure before him look at verse 22 but now he has reconciled you by

[36 : 59] Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation the relationship restored standing before God without shame the story begins let's pray our father god our creator hard and we have about especially if she doesn't think would even love