



Genesis 1:1-25

PRAY

As everyone who has seen 'The Sound of Music' will know, the beginning is a very good place to start. Tonight that is exactly what we are going to do. We're going to read and explore the first chapter of the Bible which is in the book of Genesis.

The book of Genesis is all about beginnings. It tells us about the beginning of the world we live in, it tells us about the beginning of the human race, and the beginning of a group of people who God chose to be his people called the Israelites. This book Genesis was written for Israelites by Moses to teach them about God, about themselves and about how God wanted them to live as his people.

So if it was written originally for the Israelites why should we bother reading it?

It might be because it has answers to our questions – its true Genesis does give us answers to some of our questions. 'How the world was made?' 'Why the world is like it is today?' 'Why there are lots of different languages in the world?' If this is the only reason for reading Genesis, Genesis is no different from an encyclopaedia.

We might read it because it has good stories – true again that Genesis does have good stories. There's the one with the talking snake, or the big boat full of animals. But if this is the only reason for reading Genesis, Genesis is no different from Harry Potter.

There is one other reason for reading Genesis. This reason makes Genesis and the rest of the Bible different from any other book. We should read Genesis because it tells us about Jesus and why He is such good news. Unless we understand the devastation and tragedy that we find in Genesis, we will never fully understand the significance of Jesus' death on the cross and what that means for us.

So let's dive in and read Genesis 1:1-25...

Imagine you're at the theatre to see show, and during the show, the spotlight focuses in on one person and the rest of the stage, the scenery, the props and the others characters are plunged into darkness. They're still there, but at this point the one thing that is really important is person the spotlight is on.

If you imagine Genesis 1 to be like the stage with all the props and scenery, the spotlight is on one person – God. God is the star of the show. Genesis 1 is all about God. 35 times in these verses God is mentioned. God created, God said, God called, God saw, God made. God was there – fact. You may have all sorts of questions about how the world was created, that's okay – it's good to have questions. But the focus of Genesis 1, the thing the spotlight is on, is not 'how?' but 'who?' It's all about who God is.

So, who is this God?

In the ancient world there were many gods. There was the sun god, the moon god, gods who were great sea monsters, and other animals. There was also another God. This was the God of the Israelites. This God had just rescued them miraculously from slavery in Egypt and was about to give them a home that He had promised their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

There was this vast choice of gods. Who is the real God?

The answer Genesis 1 proclaims is that there is only one God. This God created the whole world. Not only that, this creator God was the same God who had rescued the Israelites. This was the God that the Israelites should worship. This is the God that the whole world should worship.

This God is the one and only God. That is the first point on your handout, *God is the one and only*.

1. God is the one and only

There is no other god like Him. Look at what Genesis 1 says about the other gods that people believed in.

Verses 14-16 tells us about the sun god and moon god: *"And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to make seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars."*

The sun god was no god at all. It was created by God. Therefore worshipping it is stupid thing to do. The same goes for the others gods like the sea monsters. Look at verse 21: *"So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems..."* This so-called god was created by the one and only God too. The same goes for all the other idols that were around in the world then, and are around now. All created by God.

But the one and only God wasn't created. The Bible tells us that God is from everlasting to everlasting; that He is eternal; He has no beginning and no end. But at some point in eternity called the beginning, God decided to do something that He hadn't done before and that was creating the heavens and the earth. *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* This one and only God is the creator God.

This God is powerful. He made the world out of nothing just by speaking. God said...and it was. That's real power. When we think about who the most powerful man in the world is, we probably think of the President of the USA – George Bush. But compared to God he's not powerful. If he wants to do something, he has to go through the right channels, he has to ask his aides whether what he wants is possible, and in the end there is no guarantee that it will happen. After 9/11 George Bush said he would catch Osama Bin Laden. 6 years on, he still hasn't caught him. But God speaks and it happens. Creating the world was easy. God's word is powerful; it can do what it says. This means that we can trust God's word. Everything we read in the Bible has happened or will happen.

This powerful God who's Word can be trusted is the one and only. He is also the careful creator. That is the second point on your handout, *God is the careful creator.*

2. God is the careful creator

Did you notice as these verses were read out all the repeated phrases? Genesis 1 has been carefully written and ordered in a certain way. Generally we think repetition is boring. We don't like it when TV shows are repeated for tenth time. But repetition in Genesis 1 is an amazing thing because it shows how careful a creator, God is.

Look at how the earth is described in verse 2. It is formless and empty. A big blob covered in water and darkness. Then like clay on a potter's wheel, this blob is moulded by God's powerful Word and Spirit. God carefully sculpts the world in all its beauty. These verses describe a master craftsman at work.

- **God forms and fills**

The problem of the earth being formless is solved in days 1-3 as the earth is given the form of light, day and night, sky, land and vegetation. Then in days 4-6 the problem of being empty is solved as this now formed earth is filled with the sun, moon and stars, fish and birds, animals and humans. God does it this way because He is a careful creator. There is nothing chaotic about His creating. He doesn't create elephants and then realise that he's forgotten to create land for them to live on and plants for them to eat. No he creates the land and the plants before he creates the elephant.

- **God separates and draws boundaries**

As God forms and fills and transforms this blob from chaos to order and beauty, we see Him separating things that don't go together. Look at verse 4: *"God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness"*. Light and darkness don't go together; it can't be light and dark at the same time, so God separates the two. Five times in these verses we read about God separating things.

God also draws up boundaries for the things he has created. Look at verse 5: *"God called the light "day", and the darkness he called "night"."* Why do we call it night time when it's dark outside? Because that the way God has made His world to work. He has ordered his world so the sun comes up during the day, and moon comes out at night time.

God has arranged his world so fish live in the sea, birds live in the air and other animals and humans live on the land. He has created animals and plants according to their kinds. Orange trees don't produce lemons. Dogs give birth to dogs not cats or mice or squirrels.

The reason why science can spot patterns like the earth going round the sun, water boiling at 100°C is because that is the way God has design His universe to work. Things have set roles.

- **God creates things that are good**

Throughout this forming and filling and separating and assigning roles process of creation, God takes a step back after each stage and has a look at what He's done and gives it a mark. So after stage 1 or Day 1 when God creates light, He looks at what He's done and says 'good', He gives it a thumbs up. This happens again and again. At the end of the Day 6, the final stage of creation, having just made humans, God looks at His creation, which is now complete and says 'very good' or as we would be more likely to say 'fantastic, I love it, it's brilliant!' The final exam has been marked and God has got 100%

God has made an amazing, fantastic, very good creation. A creation that has been careful made so that everything does what it's supposed to. A creation that is good for humans to live in. Unfortunately two chapters later in Genesis, the good creation is spoilt as the first humans stop doing what they're supposed to.

God is the one and only and the careful creator. This world God has made belongs to Him. This means that we, as things God created belong to Him too. What does that mean for us?

Inside St Paul's Cathedral in London, we find the tomb of its designer, Sir Christopher Wren. On the outside of the tomb in Latin are the words "If you are looking for his memorial, look around you". The cathedral proclaims the greatness of its architect. As we look at the world around us and see an African sunset, the night sky full of stars, a mountain top view, as we cuddle a cute puppy, or eat a sweet tasting mango, or hear a beautiful piece of music, when we're tired after enjoyable game of football, we are to think how great and wonderful God is. We are to praise God.

When we read Genesis 1 and think about this wonderful world that God has made that we can enjoy. That God made me, it's only right that we recognised God and tell him how wonderful He is. No wonder when the apostle John was given a glimpse of what heaven is like he see the people of God singing: "*You are worthy, our Lord and God to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their beings*".

Creation was made to praise God. As the trees waves their leafy branches they are praising God. As birds whistles in the tree they are praising God. As the waterfall rolls and splashes it is praising God. We were created to praise and worship God, to show how wonderful God is, that's what we were made to do!

The New Testament takes this one step further. It tells us that Jesus is God and that He was there at the creation of the world. In fact, the Bible says that was world was made through Him and for Him. Colossians 1:16 says: "*For by him [Jesus] all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.*" It is not enough to acknowledge that God is the creator. We need to acknowledge that this world belongs to Jesus too.¹

Sadly we don't always worship God our creator. Sadly we don't always recognise that this world belongs to Jesus. Instead we chose to worship things that have been created by God instead of God. The Bible calls this sin. The Bible describes this as falling short of God's glory. To ignore God, to worship something else is a wicked thing to do and it is right that God punish us because of this. The punishment for sin is facing God's wrath for eternity in hell.

But there is some good news. In the beginning God through Jesus transformed a dark, formless and empty world and created a world full of light and life. The good news is that now, God through Jesus is transforming the hearts of sinful people living in darkness and making them into new people, or a new creation, who worship God and who one day when they get to heaven will become the people they were created to be.

If you are a Christian that is what has happened to you. God has made you into a new creation. Your old way of life is gone and you now heading in a new direction. Thank God for work of new creation He's done in your life through Jesus. Seek to live your life in a way that shows how wonderful God is.

If you are not a Christian, you are like the world in verse 2. You are dark, formless and empty. But there is hope for you. If you trust that Jesus died for you so that your sins can be forgiven you will be rescued from an eternity facing God's wrath and punishment in hell. God can transform your heart and make you into a new creation full of life. Take this opportunity tonight to ask God to do so.

¹ Luke Tattersall, Approaching Genesis [www.perspective.org.au]