

## **In the beginning was God** Genesis 1:1 Deuteronomy 4:32-35,39

Gratefully adapted from "God The Creator Series," by Jeff Strite @ SErmonCentral.com

OPEN: video "Creation Calls" by Brian Doerksen.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28sqs5H5hao>

Abraham Lincoln once said: *"I never behold (the star filled heavens) that I do not feel I am looking in the face of God. I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up, into the heavens and say there is no God."*

The very first book of the Bible is called Genesis. Genesis means "beginnings." Which it takes from the opening sentence: in the BEGINNING ...

- Genesis tells of the beginning of our world as we know it.
- The beginning of humanity.
- The beginning of sin.
- The beginning of sacrifice for sins.
- And the beginning of God's special relationship with a specific group of people whom he created for the purpose keeping His promise to Eve
- Genesis also describes how the world at first was meant to be (perfect) and why it is now what it is (broken), and gives us the first hints as to how in the future all will be restored.

But what can all these Genesis stories from Adam to Joseph teach us?

- It not about the **history** of humanity or the nation of Israel .... There are too many gaps, too much passing of time between the stories for Genesis to be a good history text.
- Neither is it a good **biographical** (genealogical) record; the family histories are too selective, whole families, whole generations are left out
- Neither is it a collection of **moralistic** tales .... There are way too many unpunished bad people populating Genesis and the main characters appear many times to actually benefit from their moral compromises.
- Thus the best way to thematically understand **Genesis is as a history of God's relationship with humans**. Going from the few to the many and back the few Genesis is all about God working with individuals to bring to pass the restoration of his lost creation.
  - Chapters 1-11 describe the reasons God needed to develop a covenantal relationship with humanity.
  - Chapters 12-50 describe the formation of God's first covenant with a specific individual; a covenant intended to develop a peculiar nation in order to eventually bring to pass God's plan for the saving both humanity and His creation.

That is why it is difficult to understand the rest of the Bible until we fully understand the stories in Genesis. These chapters form the FOUNDATION of the rest of what the Bible story is all about; Which both **begins and ends with God.**

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Many people have the mistaken impression that Genesis along with the rest of the Bible is Geo-centric. In other words they believe the Bible's stories are centered on the earth and mankind. And that's partly true. But the Bible is actually "Theo-centric." The entirety of its stories and lessons are entirely focused on God's overt or covert activities, throughout history, to redeem humanity and His creation back to Himself.

For example, notice the very first words of Genesis are "**In the beginning... God**" Before anything else happened... there was God, self existent and eternal.

Scripture DIDN'T start out:

"In the beginning, the earth was without form and void."

OR "In the beginning when the sun and solar system were young"

OR "In the beginning in a land far, far away"

It simply says "In the beginning... GOD" Hebrews 1:10-12 tells us: "

"In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands;  
they will perish, but you remain;  
they will all wear out like clothing;  
like a cloak you will roll them up,  
and like clothing they will be changed.  
But you are the same, and your years will never end."  
Hebrews 1:10-12

Thus, everything in scripture is built - not so much around the earth or humans - but around God. So the essential purpose of Genesis was to teach the Hebrew people and us, who God is the singular loving creator of the universe, who has always been .... There never has been any other. That was the summary of our Deuteronomy scripture leading up to the great faith statement of the Hebrew nation: *The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.* (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Here are a few more reasons why the Bible starts out saying "In the beginning God?"  
**1st – because God formed the earth, He owns it  
He created it all, so it all belongs to Him.**

We may be actors on the grand stage of life, but God owns the stage. He owns the props. He planned for, designed, and individually builds each one of us. Even you and everything that you see or touch in this world – first came from God and thus belongs to God.

A group of scientists got together and decided they no longer needed God. One of them said to God, "We can now do all kinds of things through science. We can even clone people and make body parts, so we just don't need you anymore."

God listened patiently and then replied. OK, "Let's have a man making contest just like in the days of Adam."

The scientist agreed and bent down to grab himself a handful of dirt.

And God smiled and said, "No, no, no – you get your own dirt."

It's all God's.  
Everything is His.

**Once you figure that out, everything else in Scripture begins to make sense. But you have to START with God.**

The 2nd reason Genesis starts out saying "In the Beginning God" **is because without God nothing else matters.** If you take God out of the picture, nothing has purpose, nothing has real value; you end up with an empty, meaningless universe.

About 50 yrs. ago, a man named Hugh Morehead wrote several famous people - people who were accomplished and had made something of their lives - and he asked how they would answer the following question: "**What is the purpose of life?**"

\* Isaac Asimov wrote back, "As far as I can see there is no purpose to life."

\* Arthur Clark, the author of "2001", wrote, "I'm afraid I have no concrete ideas of the purpose of life."

\* A famous American Philosopher Thomas Nagle wrote "I'm afraid the meaning of life still eludes me"

\* Comedian Fred Allen replied. "I say: 'Life is a slow walk down a long hall that gets darker as you approach the end.'"

\* With a sense of resignation Joseph Heller (author of "Catch-22") wrote, "I have no answers to the meaning of life and I no longer want to search for any."

These are people who had "arrived" in the were the thought leaders in their respective fields of endeavor. **They were successful in this world... but they were apparently people without God in their world. And because of that - they had no answer as to purpose of life.**

You see, it's God that creates value in this world and in us. Without God you're left nothing that has any intrinsic value in itself. Everything you see becomes the result of a chance collection of atoms and molecules. There's no plan and no purpose just a drifting existence between birth and death.

So the only value that anything or anyone in godless world has is based solely on NEED or WANT. In such a world Pokémon cards and Beanie Babies can be just as valuable as gold, diamonds, or a good t-bone steak; this also holds true for human life born or unborn.

But once you put God back into the picture life suddenly has value and human life has special value. Because God values our life.

Through Jeremiah the prophet , God spoke to us

"I know the plans I have for you,  
**plans to prosper you and not to harm you,  
plans to give you hope and a future."**

Jeremiah 2:11

And writing to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul says that having become Christians

we are what He has made us,  
created in Christ Jesus for good works,  
**which God prepared beforehand  
to be our way of life.."**

Ephesians 2:10

Over and over again in the Bible tells us we are valuable to God and that He has a plan and purpose for our lives. But if God isn't in your life, you don't have that. Without God, life is formless and empty (just like the pre-creation earth).

It's God that gives your life value.

**(TAKE OUT A \$20 Bill)**

This is a \$20 bill.

How many of you would be pleased if I gave you this \$20 bill?

What if it were torn in half ? Would you still want it?  
What if I crumpled it up into a ball, would you still want it?  
What if I stomped on it – would you still want it?

**Too bad. I'm not giving it to you.**

But ask yourself this question: why is this \$20 bill worth \$20?  
Is the paper worth \$20?  
Is the ink worth \$20?  
Is that little strip of plastic they put inside the bill worth \$20?  
Well if the paper, the ink and the plastic strip inside aren't worth \$20, what makes this bill worth \$20?

It's worth that much because the US Government declares that it's worth that much. And to verify this bill's value, the Federal government put its IMAGES on this bill. It has imputed intrinsic value capable of purchasing \$20 dollars worth of whatever you want.

So, how do you KNOW that you (as a person) have value?  
Because God put His image in you.

So God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.  
Genesis 1:27

You are made in the image of God.  
You have intrinsic value to God,  
For that reason alone – you are WORTH a great deal to God, no matter your physical appearance or condition or current circumstances. God created you in His image, breathed physical life into you; He loves you and is seeking to give you a meaningful life.

Norman Vincent Peale told of seeing a tattoo parlor in Hong Kong. In the window were displayed samples of the tattoos available. On the chest or arms you could have tattooed an anchor, flag, mermaid, whatever.

He said: "what struck me with force were three words that could be tattooed on one's flesh: '**Born to lose.**'"

"I entered the shop and, pointing to those words asked the Chinese tattoo artist, "Does anyone really have that terrible phrase, Born to lose, tattooed on their body?"

"He replied, 'Yes, sometimes.'  
'But,' I said, 'I just can't believe — that anyone in their right mind would do that.'  
"The Chinese man simply tapped his forehead and in broken English said, "Before tattoo on body, tattoo on mind.'"

In other words: What you THINK you are shapes WHO you are. If you THINK you were born to lose, if you think you have no purpose or value, that's how you'll live.

**This lack of valuing life – yours or any other's - explains a lot the thinking behind these mass random shootings that are now happening all too frequently.** People who place no value on their life or others have no problem ending it with one last violent play of the game.

BUT if you realize you and other people have intrinsic value... you will tend to live up to that mindset. God says you have value because His image is tattooed onto your very soul.

But that's not the only reason we have value.

God also tells us that everything in this world was created for us.

In Genesis 1:26, God said

'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air,.' Genesis 1:26

*and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.*

That's our job description, the reason God built us into this world. We are stewards of the planet; God's creation has been placed in our hands to take care of. **No other creature in God's creation was entrusted with that responsibility and no other part of creation even thinks about preserving the world around them.**

Anyone who has ever owned a cat, knows that they instinctively live to hunt. No matter how well fed they are, if you let your cat roam freely outside they will end up hunting and killing birds and mice. After the kill, they may not even eat them.... If they like you, they may even bring their dead prize in and lay it at your feet.

Why do house cats do that? They don't need the food. It's not that they hate birds or mice ... it's just that anything smaller than them is something for them to hunt. And except for perhaps sleeping in a warm sunny spot, they live to hunt. That's why God did not entrust cats with the responsibility of preserving the world around them.

God gave that responsibility to us. That's how much God values us. He created this world FOR us and gave it us to care for in His behalf. God entrusted those created in His image with the stewardship of the entire earth.

Now for a couple of very interesting final details. I don't believe that God literally created the earth in just seven days. The creation story which we will look into in more detail next week was NOT intended as a historic record of how God did it, but as **metaphor** to teach those early Hebrews that unlike all the chaotic creation stories they had learned from other religions: that humans were an accidental byproduct of inter-godly warfare (springing from the blood of a dead Titan), or an escaped godly slave class that should do their best to avoid their former supernatural masters; but rather that they were lovingly created with a purpose and value by a singular God who thoughtfully put everything together in an orderly fashion.

God didn't need seven days, he could have orchestrated the formation of the earth through all the eons that scientist have attempted to count, or God could have simply snapped his finger – Like Thanos ( you young people may have to explain that scene from the Avengers movie to your parents).

But because the creation story is a metaphor, explaining God's purpose by creating a story of the process, it can speak of God creating light on day one, but not creating the sun, moon, and stars, until day four... after he had already created oceans, dry land and growing plants on days two and three.

So now notice, according to the creation story, **that God did not start with nothing.** He started with a chaotic, darkened, water-world earth. Why?

Because this is what the ancients most feared – CHAOS – as represented by the darkness of the night or the vastness of stormy seas. Do you realize that up until about 500 years ago, few ships ever sailed out of sight of land; the trackless ocean held a such a terror for them. So too the darkness of night where thieves and evil spirits roamed send them cowering into their safe abodes with locked doors. So the Genesis story begins with God contemplating the chaos of the ancient earth; pictured as darkness covering ancient seas. And God said, *Let there be light.*

**Did you ever realize that on that very first day God created only one thing: LIGHT!** This wasn't the Sun and Moon kind of physical light because God didn't create the sun, moon and stars until 3 days later - this light was a DIVINE light, a SPIRITUAL light. A kind of light that came directly from God to light our world.

You see, God wasn't just creating a physical world for just physical beings to dwell upon. From the very first day of creation God intended to create spiritual beings who could spiritually sense God's presence and have a relationship with Him. That first day's light was God's gathering up of all the chaos and filling it with His spiritual presence

That explains why Jesus was also described as God's light entering the world.

Jesus said "I am the LIGHT of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the LIGHT OF LIFE." (John 8:12)

And in John 1:4 we're told that "*in (Jesus) was life, and that life was the LIGHT of man, and that light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never overcome it.*" So now you have learned just as there is physical light and darkness, so there is a spiritual light indicating God's present Spirit in your life, and a spiritual darkness indicating his absence.

Jesus was THE light of the world. But what did Jesus do to give us that light, that spiritual life he would share with us?

He died for our sins. He was buried... and He rose from the grave. In when He rose from the grave Jesus conquered DEATH... and gave us hope of life eternal.

Now guess which day of the week Jesus rose from the grave and conquered death?  
The FIRST DAY!

On the first day, God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.  
God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.  
Genesis 1:3-5

When God created the world, The first thing he did was fill it with his presence (His Light). Without that spiritual light, the world would remain in complete spiritual darkness. There would be NO SPIRITUAL LIFE on the earth God created.

In the same way, Jesus is the Divine Light. Without His light the world having fallen into darkness would remain in the darkness. It is His light alone that can change the lives of people plunged in the darkness of a sinful world.

There was a woman named Rose Crawford who had been blind for 50 years. Then she had an operation. When the doctor took the bandages from her eyes she said, "I just can't believe it". She wept. For the 1st time in her life she actually see. And what she saw a dazzling and beautiful world of form and color.

The amazing thing about her story was that the last 20 years of her blindness was unnecessary. She didn't know that surgical techniques had been developed and that an operation could have restored her vision at the age of 30. Her doctor said, "She just figured there was nothing that could be done for her condition. Much of her life could have been different."

The Bible tells us that without Jesus people live their lives in spiritual darkness. They've failed in their lives and sinned so much that they begin to feel worthless/without value. They figure that nothing can be done to remove their shame and hopelessness. But

Jesus said, you don't have to live like that... "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The question now for many of you is – do you believe that? Do you believe that Jesus is the only true light of this world, and if so – do you care enough for your neighbors and friends to tell them of what God wants to do in their lives?

In the beginning God created the heavens and earth so that He could bring both physical and spiritual light into your life.

Think about that as we pray.