

The Book of GENESIS

Kevin Swanson



Generations
PASSING ON THE FAITH

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CHAPTER 1

The Creation

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Gen. 1:1

Summary of Events:

1. God creates the heaven and the earth.
2. While the earth is without form, the Spirit of God moves over the face of the waters.
3. God creates light, the firmament, the seas, the plants, the sea creatures and birds, the land animals, and man in six days.

What does this passage teach us?

Verse 1. The Bible gives us a worldview perspective concerning all of reality, truth, and ethics. From the very first verse in the Bible, we know right away what to believe about reality. What is real? God is real. He was the very first reality. Before anything else came into existence, God was there. Immediately, this raises a strong contradiction to the theory of reality taught by “secular” schools today: that God is *not* a factor in science and history. By summarily ignoring Him, they demonstrate their rejection of God as the first and most important reality. Christians, on the other hand, consider God as the first reality, because that is what they read in the very first verse of the Bible.

At the beginning, there was no space, no time, and no material creation—no sun, moon, and stars. There was nothing but God. Then, God made the universe and filled it with three-dimensional space and raw material. This raw material was ready for what God would do with it in the next few days. God was the One who created the raw materials at the beginning. We know that man makes his houses out of wood and nails, but it is God

who made the trees that men form into lumber, and the iron ore from which nails are made.

As human beings set out to learn about their reality, they see this material world and enquire about its origins. But enquire no further! The first verse of the Bible answers this question. God is the source of all things. Look around you. God made all that is material—all that can be seen, felt, smelled, heard, and tasted. He made all things in heaven and in earth, that which is material and immaterial, including angels, human minds and souls, gravity, electrical forces, and magnetism.

Verse 2. After creating the universe by laying out space and matter, we are told that everything was still without form. These raw materials had yet to be shaped into the sun, moon, trees, animals, and man. Apparently, the material creation at this point existed in a liquid mass, described in verse two as water.

Another personality is introduced to us in the second verse. The Holy Spirit moved over the face of the liquid mass. Immediately, we discover that God Who is One consists of multiple Persons. The word “Persons” is a word we can all understand. Persons are those who relate to each other and speak to each other. It is impossible to miss this element of the Godhead in Scripture from the very first chapter to the last. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit relate to each other as distinct Persons. Thus, the mystery of the Christian Trinity appears at the very beginning of divine revelation! In John 1:1-4, the Son of God appears in the Creation story as well. John writes, “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” Putting this data together, we conclude that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were all present at the Creation.

Verses 3–25. Beginning in verse three, Moses describes the formation of our world in detail. God began with the creation of light and time on the first day, and then proceeded with the rest of creation over a six day interval. On each day, God did something else to form this mass into a universe appropriate for His highest creation—man. Here is a simple summary of those six days.

Day 1 – Light

Day 2 – Separation of Firmament of Waters Below and Above

Day 3 – Seas, Dry Land, and Plants

Day 4 – Sun, Moon, and Stars

Day 5 – Birds and Fish

Day 6 – Animals and Man

On Day One, God created light. We do not know precisely the source of this light, but we do know that light is a product of chemical reactions like fire, and it is produced by the excitation of electrons in the atom. Prior to the creation of light, the material mass must have been static or without the excitation of these electrons. After the fourth day, the sun became the major light source, but with the first day came the motion of electrons, producing light.

Immediately, God decreed a light period and a dark period of the day. Remember, God was primarily creating this world of time and space for man. Before creating man, capable of work and sleep, He made a day for man to work and sleep in, dividing a period of light from a period of darkness. We recognize these periods to be about twelve hours in length. God called them “day” and “night.” To this day, most people refer to them as “day” and “night” as well. While there is some debate among Christians today over the length of the Creation days, the most natural interpretation is a standard twenty-four hour day. The day was made for man, even as the Sabbath was made for man. In any given 24-hour day, we work during a light period of the day, and we sleep during the dark period. God called these periods “evening” and “morning” on the first day of creation, and that is what we call them today! Also, Exodus 20:18 compares our week of seven twenty-four hour days to God’s week of Creation, and it would be hard to maintain this comparison without equivocating on the word “day” in that passage.

On Day Two, God put a firmament of water in the atmosphere above the earth, and also left some water on the face of the earth. At this point, water covered the whole earth.

Then, on Day Three, God established the dry land and the ocean(s). This prepared the earth for plants and trees, which He also created on the third day. Some have wondered how these plants and trees could have survived a day without the benefit of the sun, which was created on the next day. Of course, they could have survived a full twenty-four-hour period without a problem, just as plants survive throughout the night without the benefit of the sun. But God could have also provided an ulterior light source for the initial days of Creation.

On Day Four, God put the sun, moon, and stars above the earth, and by His wise, creative power assured that the light from these far-off bodies was visible on the earth, as He prepared the world for His highest creation—man.

On Day Five, He created the birds and the fish, and then on Day Six, He made the rest of the animals. If we reflect that God created sea and air animals inside of a 24-hour period, we must realize that this does not leave room for an evolutionary mechanism. According to humanist evolutionary theories, birds evolved from theropod dinosaurs, which are land animals. But from the biblical record we understand that these dinosaurs did not exist until after the creation of birds and fish, so it is not possible for birds to have evolved from land dinosaurs. While many Christians have worked hard to synthesize Genesis 1 with these evolutionary theories, their efforts have proven futile and even harmful, since they create doubt concerning the veracity and historicity of Scripture.

Verses 26–31. In these final verses, mention is made of the creation of man. Unlike the animals, man is a special creature of God, created in the image of God. This does not mean that a human is exactly like God, but that there are striking similarities. For example, we are created such that we may have a special relationship with God. As God's creatures, and as those adopted back into His family, we are accounted as children of our heavenly Father. Goldfish, dogs, and cats do not enjoy this kind of relationship.

Another reference to the Trinity is found in verse 26: "Let us make man in Our image." Curious clues such as these pull the curtain back a little from this mysterious doctrine that touches on the nature of God the Creator. If it is true that God is One (as He is presented in Scripture), then this use

of the first-person, plural pronoun must be a reference to the three Persons of the Godhead.

From this very first chapter in the Bible, we learn the basics of a biblical worldview. As the Creator of all things, God is the source of reality. But He is more than that. In these last few verses, we learn that God is also the source of ethics and law. Immediately after creating man, God initiates an ethical mandate (verses 28-29). When God tells man to do something, He makes an ethical mandate. If God is God indeed, then He must be absolutely authoritative in the area of morality and ethics. To this day, these first commands are binding on mankind. He still wants us to bear children and subdue the earth. Many unbelievers are concerned that the earth is over-crowded, and that God did not make the world large enough to accommodate His command. This manifests a lack of faith in God's wisdom, creativity, and power. Because God commanded it, we have to believe that God made an earth large enough to handle a good number of people and to produce sufficient crops and animals to sustain these people. It is our job to populate the earth by the womb, and to rule over the earth by making good use of the animals, plants, and minerals that God has created. This includes the right ordering of self government, family government, church government, and civil government according to God's laws.

Upon providing these primitive orders for man, God assigned a diet of vegetables to sustain him. Both man and animal were created to be vegetarians. So man was not to eat of the animal kingdom before the fall, for there was no death before the fall.

How does this passage teach us to walk with God in faith and obedience?

1. Each time God created something, He called the creation "good." This is another basic lesson in "ethics" from biblical revelation. If God says that giraffes, maple trees, and oceans are good, then we must agree, because God is the highest authority on what is good and what is evil. It may not come naturally for us to discern what is good and to enjoy it as God's good gift. But we must learn to think God's thoughts after Him, and enjoy the

things He enjoys for the same reasons that He enjoys them. How much do we enjoy God's creation?

2. If God created us, then it is natural that we should obey Him. In fact, it would be ridiculous to rebel against Him! Let us always keep in mind that God is our Creator. This will help us to listen to His Word, believe what He says, and obey Him.

3. We have a responsibility to take care of this world. We do this in different ways. We take care of our bodies by eating good food, or by taking good vitamins and medicine when we need it. We take care of our souls by participating in church and family worship. We take care of the property and the animals God gives us. We also protect property and people from robbers and murderers who destroy. Property is protected when good and righteous civil governments enforce good laws—those laws defined by God Himself.

If we are to be good stewards of God's creation, let's be careful not to waste these resources. Before man fell into sin, God expected men to work and take dominion of the earth. This is no less important today. By faith, we continue to follow God's creation mandate, and we teach our children to do work for the Lord in their generation. We also manage our herds and flocks, such that these animals procreate and produce more food for the years ahead.

Questions:

1. What is the theme of Chapter 1? (Respond out loud as a family. See Appendix A for answers.)
2. What did God create on each of the six days?
3. Why did God create a day?
4. What did God say (towards the end of the chapter) that provides a hint of the doctrine of the Trinity?
5. How did God create man different from the animals?
6. What were the two ethical directives God gave man at the beginning?

7. What did the first men and animals eat?

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the ways our family engages the dominion mandate? Does our family have a vision for multiplying and filling the earth?
2. When we look at the world around us or when we look at our pets, do we think about the Creator who brought this all about? What does the Creation say about God?

CHAPTER 2

Man Created

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. Gen. 2:7

Summary of Events:

1. God rests on the seventh day.
2. More specific information is given about the creation of man on the sixth day.
3. God plants the garden of Eden and places Adam in the garden.
4. God gives Adam instructions.
5. God creates Eve from the rib of Adam.

What does this passage teach us?

Verses 1–3. After creating the universe, God rested on the seventh day from His labors. According to the Fourth Commandment (Ex. 20:8ff), God’s pattern of work and rest is an example for man, and it remains an example to this day. He sanctified the day and set it apart as a special day of rest. With due respect for the commandment and God’s example, we should also work six days and rest the seventh day. This pattern began anew after the resurrection of Christ, in which Monday became our first day of work and Sunday became the seventh day.

Verses 4–7. Beginning in verse four, the manner in which God communicates His revelation changes abruptly, as He introduces Himself as “the Lord God.” This is the personal Name for God, couched in His covenantal communication to man. If you were to visit with the President of the country, it is proper that you refer to him as “Mr. President.” However, this propriety would not apply to the president’s wife or close friends. Most

likely, they would use his first name “George,” or “Barack.” In a similar way, those not in close covenant relationship with God would probably refer to Him as simply “God.” Since God is a personal Being, it is appropriate that He bear a name, and His Name is Yahweh. Most modern translations follow the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the New Testament, which was also used by the Apostles) in translating Yahweh as “LORD.” Nevertheless, the important thing to note is that here God began to relate to His people in a personal way, by revealing His personal Name, Yahweh, to man. As you continue to read through the Old Testament, you should keep an eye out for uses of the word “Yahweh” or “LORD.” This is God relating to man in covenant.

Continuing through the rest of the chapter, Moses addresses the creation of man, the planting of the Garden of Eden, and man’s relationship with God, the Creator. Because there was no man prior to the creation of Adam, God planted the garden in preparation for Adam. Up to this point, God has laid out a universe, an earth, and a garden for the benefit of man, and He has appointed man as ruler or vice-regent over His creation.

Now, God made man out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his frame the breath of life. This is the manner of the creation of man, and it stands in direct contradiction to the theory that man evolved from monkeys and amoebas. Of course human beings did not inherit the capacity of breathing from a monkey, a bird, or a fish.

This passage also provides insight into the constitution of a man, the irreducible elements that constitute a human being. At the creation of man, there was dust, and there was whatever God breathed into the man. We refer to these basic constituents as the “body” and the “soul,” or that which is material and that which is non-material.

Verses 8–14. As we continue through this next section, we learn more about the character of Yahweh, the Creator of heaven and earth, and Yahweh’s relationship with man. First, He planted a special garden for Adam and Eve, a clear demonstration of His love and kindness for these personal creatures that He made in His image. “Eden” means “delight” or “paradise.” It was a beautiful garden stocked with everything man needed to live and flourish. Then, God placed two special trees in this garden—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They are

commonly referred to as “sacramental” trees. As long as Adam continued to eat from the tree of life he would live forever. But if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would die.

Verses 15–20. Upon creating Adam, God connected with him right away by way of verbal communication. Adam was not left to function apart from “special revelation.” From the beginning, he understood himself and the world around him through the lens of God’s revealed words. Man is not meant to function apart from a relationship with God. He is not alone in the universe. He should rely on God’s communication with him, and live according to God’s commands. Man’s relationship with God is governed by certain “expectations.” These come in the form of ethical commands. Adding to the original laws given in the previous chapter, Yahweh provided several more requirements for Adam. First, He commanded Adam to work hard and take good care of the garden. Then, He told Adam to categorize the animals by naming them. And finally, He instructed Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the threat or sanction of death.

Verses 21–25. In verse 18, God declared that it was not good for man to be alone. Therefore, in the following verses He proceeded to create a “helpmeet” for him, or a “helper appropriate for him.” A woman completes a man when they are married. A man without a woman is like an ax head without a handle. If you have ever tried to chop trees with an ax without a handle, you know that it would take a very long time to cut through a single tree. God knew that man needed a woman to make him effective in the work he was going to do. So He put Adam to sleep and took a rib out of him and created the woman. Adam called her “woman,” which means “taken out of man.” From this story about Eve being created out of Adam’s rib, we find a startlingly vivid picture of God’s intention for marriage. God made two human beings out of the one, and then He brought them back together into one in marriage. When a man and a woman are married, they really do become one flesh. True, they are not joined together like conjoined twins: connected at the hip. But the picture is unforgettable. As Adam lost his rib and regained it in the person of another; there is a part of the man in the woman. This is why a man leaves the home of his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they are one flesh. If one were to

try to separate the two, it would be akin to ripping a rib out of the chest of the other. In marriage, a man and a woman live together, they depend on each other, and take dominion over God's earth as a team.

Before Adam fell into sin, he had no need for clothes because there was no guilt and no sin. Since the fall, however, we are ashamed of our nakedness because it is a constant reminder of our sinful condition and our guilt. While many people are reticent to admit their guilt verbally, the very fact that most people do wear clothes while appearing in public does testify to their guilt before God.

How does this passage teach us to walk with God in faith and obedience?

1. This passage provides the first command in Scripture to work, and to this day God has not suspended this requirement. In fact, throughout the Bible, you will find many reaffirmations of this original mandate. We are warned about the sluggard and sloth in the book of Proverbs, and the Apostle Paul tells the Thessalonians that a man who does not work, should not eat.

2. After working six successive days, we are to take a seventh day as a day of rest from our labors. For twenty-four hours, we should lay aside our normal dominion work. This is also the day when we worship and fellowship with brothers and sisters in the church. Elsewhere in the Scriptures, this rest day is referred to as a "convocation," or a gathering of God's people. This convocation continues into the New Testament church (Lev. 23:3; Heb. 10:25).

3. Divorce is a terrible evil that has eroded the integrity of the family in our country and has produced great misery in the lives of millions. Of course, marriage was never designed to accommodate divorce. This was not God's optimum design for a happy and blessed life. From the beginning, a man and a woman were designed to come together as one flesh in marriage, and there was no original provision for dissolving that unity. If you were to super-glue two pieces of cardboard together, you would create one piece. If you were to try to take them apart, you could not make a clean break of it. The original intention in the action is important, because anybody who

glues two pieces of cardboard together does not intend to separate them, ever again. And that is the way God designed marriage. Divorce is the destructive consequence of sin.

4. As societies progressively descend into paganism, natives shed their clothes and lose their standards of modesty. When missionaries and Christian families appear in these societies (whether they be the South Sea Islands or California beaches), their examples of modest dress will inevitably reveal something of the shame of those who failed to cover their bodies. The purpose of clothes is to cover our bodies. Unfortunately, modern clothing designers are committed to displaying and highlighting certain parts of the body that ought to be hidden. It would be prudent to keep these things in mind when shopping for clothes.

Questions:

1. What are the themes of Chapters 1 through 2?
2. How many special trees did God create in the Garden of Eden? What were they called?
3. What special instruction did God give Adam concerning eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
4. What were the tasks God assigned to Adam in the garden?
5. What do we mean when we say that a wife is a helpmeet for her husband?
6. Why do we wear clothes?

Family Discussion Questions:

1. How is our family doing with our work ethic? Are we working six days and resting a seventh? Is this rest a joy or is it drudgery to us?
2. What are our standards of modesty? How does this compare to the world around us? Does the world have the same philosophy of clothing as we do?