

Sermon: Genesis 1. “The beginning...”

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Sermon text and audio available for download at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

• Evolution versus Creation?

Were we created or did we evolve? Or both? There are a million different opinions on this question. Here are three quick examples:

- Creationist, David J Stewart says: The *fossil record*, our only documentation of whether evolution actually occurred in the past, lacks any transitional forms, ... The evidence that "pre-men" (ape-men) existed is dubious at best." (http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/Evolution%20Hoax/Evidences/lonely_world.htm)
- Scientist John Horgan says: "If I were a creationist, I would cease attacking the theory of evolution-which is so well supported by the fossil record-and focus instead on the origin of life." ("The End of Science: Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age," [1996], Little, Brown & Co: London, 1997, p138
- Christian Physicist, Sir John Polkinghorne says: "There isn't a conflict between science and religion... and there never has been." (http://www.polkinghorne.net/ganda.html#Conflict_between_science_and_religion)

The book of Genesis often starts discussions or arguments about science, evolution and creation. Some people believe Genesis is literal – that creation happened over six 24 hour days. Others believe that Creation happened over millions of years and some say that man evolved from apes. There are so many opinions on this but what does Genesis actually say?

• What does Genesis say?

Genesis makes 1 thing clear: whatever happened, however it happened, however long it took, whatever the processes were... Genesis 1 does not aim to give us all the answers! What Genesis 1 says to us is this: God is the one behind it all. God is the creator.

Whether you believe Genesis 1 is literal or not, it's not really the purpose of this chapter to answer **how** God created. Genesis 1 tells us two things: firstly **WHO** created the universe - that's the very first verse!

- ¹ *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*
- But the rest of Genesis 1 also tells us **WHY** the universe was created.

So let's have a look at the rest of the chapter now. First, we'll look at the **creation of the world**, and then we'll look specifically at the **creation of man and woman**.

• The creation of the world

³ *And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.* ⁴ *God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.* ⁵ *God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.*

In Genesis 1 there's a **pattern** for each part of creation. God says let there be... (something) and there was. He creates by his **Word** and he creates with a **purpose**. The light separates the darkness. The sky and the land separate the waters and the lights in the sky govern the day and night, the vegetables produce, the living creatures fill the water, the sky and the land.

God creates everything with a **plan**, and with an **order**. Creation is not random and pointless. God has put creation together intentionally. It's not an accident.

And then after each day we hear these words: “And God saw that it was good.” Everything God creates is good. Everything he makes has a place in his creation and is good when he creates it.

III – I remember once when I was 15 or so in year 10 at school I made a step ladder. And it was good. And it didn’t just look good - it worked! It had a purpose and a function and it worked! It was put together with deliberately and with an order and a purpose and it worked – it was good!

God intentionally brings creation into existence with order and purpose. It works and it’s good and it all comes from him.

Then God creates man and woman – and this part of creation is slightly different, and it tells us WHY God created:

- **The creation of humanity**

- *26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Again, God speaks to create, but this time it’s different: He says: “Let **us** make man **in our image**”

God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the “us” he refers to, makes mankind differently. He makes us **in his image**. Mankind is different to the rest of creation because **we** are made in the image of God. God doesn’t say “let there be people.” He says: “Let us make them **in our image**.” And that’s the difference. We are created in a very special relationship with God. Different to the rest of creation. We share his likeness in a way that allows us to relate to him personally.

And then God gives us that purpose –

- *28 God blessed them and said to them, “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 every living creature that moves on the ground.”*

We’re told to fill the earth and subdue it and to rule over it. We are **UNDER God’s** rule, but we rule **OVER** His creation.

And this is the heart of Genesis –God creates us differently to all of creation. He makes us in his image to be in a special relationship with **him** and in a special relationship to the rest of creation. We remain under His rule, but he’s given us the responsibility to “rule” and “subdue”. **Not** to do whatever we like. But to rule and subdue. To manage it. To look after it. It’s not so much a position of authority, but a position of privilege and responsibility.

And then notice what God says after mankind is created:

- *31 God saw all that he had made, and it was **very good**.”*

It’s not just good. It’s **very** good. It’s **very** good because it’s **completely** finished. Imagine you’re building a house (or a church!) You might look at the land you’re building on and think “This is good land!” You might look at the plans and think: “These are good plans!” And while it’s being built, you might think: “this building work is good”. But when it’s all finished, and you stand back and look at the whole thing you might say: “This is **very good**!” Why is it “very” good? Because it’s finished! Because people can now move into the house and the **good** house becomes a “**very good**” home because it can fulfil its purpose for being built.

And what do you do then? You stop working. You stop building, and you rest. And that's exactly what God does. He stands back and looks at it all, with man and woman "moved in", and it is VERY good. Because it's finished. It's complete. And it's being lived in – it's fulfilling its purposes. And God can finally rest from creating.

Genesis 1 is about God creating a world that is in a relationship with him. He creates everything with a plan, an order, a purpose, AND a relationship. And in the whole of creation, **we** are the ones created in his image. **We** are the ones he speaks to. And **we** are the ones he relates to personally through Jesus. Jesus didn't come to earth as a plant, or as a cow, or as a glass of water- he came as a human. In the image of God.

- Genesis 1 teaches us the "who and why" of creation – that God is the **creator** and God is the **relater**. He **creates** us to **relate** to us.

And then,

- **God rested**

On the seventh day, God rested from creating. And this day of rest is actually one of the most important parts of creation. In the Ten Commandments, (Exodus 20:8), God commands us to have a day of rest each week. But he doesn't command this just because it's a healthy thing to do. The day of rest is a constant reminder to us of the rest that we WILL have with God in the future.

You see, after God creates, man sins in Genesis 3, and things go bad – and we'll look at that next week. But after Genesis 3,

- **the Bible is the story of God restoring us to a place of rest with him**

The Old Testament is about God wanting to give **rest** to his people, Israel. He brings them out of slavery in Egypt into the Promised Land to give them rest. But because of their disobedience, they **never find rest** in the Promised Land.

The New Testament is about God wanting to bring rest to all of humanity through Jesus. God sends Jesus to deal with our sin so we can REST in heaven with him forever – because that is God's purpose for us.

Today, God is resting from creation. He still sustains us and looks after us. But the day of rest he commands us to have each week is a constant reminder of the eternal rest that we are looking forward to having with him forever. In the words of an old church liturgy called the Westminster Confession,

- **Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever.**

That's why we were created. And that's Genesis 1 – It's the **WHO** and **WHY** of creation. God created us, in his image, to rest with him. To enjoy him forever. That's the theme of the whole Bible!

- Some of you may remember Eric Liddell, who was an Olympic athlete, a runner, known as "the flying Scotsman".

He was famously remembered as a Christian for refusing to run in the Paris Olympics on a Sunday, because it was his day of rest. Liddell once said:

- "I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run, I feel his pleasure."

Our purpose is to find our rest, our comfort, our peace, in God. When we find our rest in God, when we are satisfied in Him, and in Him alone, then we will be completely satisfied. Then we will find true pleasure. Because that is our eternal purpose – to rest in God.

Let's pray.