

Genesis in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel of Christ from Genesis
God and Genesis – Genesis 1:1-2

This is the word of God. Genesis 1:1-2.

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. **2** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

May God bless this His Word to the heart of His people.

Twice a year men and women and some fathers and sons get on a bus with me and takes some trips. On one trip we study Christian character and on the other trip we study Christian leadership. We visit battlefield sites and Civil War locations and use the leadership from those times to illustrate Biblical principles of leadership and character. It is a great deal of fun. On one of those trips we cross over the Potomac River, go three miles and then we get to a little village called Sharpsburg that is only a couple hundred people bigger than it was during the Civil War. This is where the Battle of Sharpsburg or Antietam took place. As one approaches this area one is immediately struck with the beauty of the rolling land and the fertile fields; corn, barley and oats. There are so many fertile farmlands and fields there. Yet there was also a battle that was fought there and the most casualties recorded on one single day in the history of the Civil War took place there in Sharpsburg. Fertile fields that would bear fruit and sustain life became a battlefield in which there were 23,000 casualties that fell in less than five hours. Then it was a battlefield instead of a fertile field.

One drives another 30 minutes north from Sharpsburg and one will get to a place where seven roads converge and it is called Gettysburg. Again one is struck with the rolling land and fertile fields with apple orchards all over and yet here another battle took place. In the three day battle of Gettysburg it had the largest casualties recorded of any battle that took place during the Civil War. It also had more casualties than the Vietnam War. Some may say at this point, "What does this have to do with the series on Genesis?"

The Bible is a fertile field. It is here to bear the fruit of life. The Bible is bring a person to the God of life in whom there is life. Satan consciously makes the Bible, which should be a fertile field, a battleground. Satan opens this right up in Genesis chapter 3 when he says, "Has God said, can you trust God's Word?" The entire Bible is a battleground. The very thing that God has ordained to be a fertile field of life is actually a battleground and Genesis seems to be a more concentrated book of that battlefield especially chapters 1 through 11. In 1 through 11 chapters 1 through 3 seem to have even more of this battle. In 1 through 3 the most concentrated area of that battle is Genesis 1:1.

It is right here that the fertile foundation of all of theology, the knowledge of God, who He is and what He has done, is given. Theology is eternal life and in John 17:3 it says, "*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God.*" In Genesis 1, God has revealed Himself in the Word of God in all His glory

and majesty. So it is no wonder that this fertile field of the truth of who God is and how one might know and grow in Him has become a battleground. It is amazing to think that the Bible containing 66 books was written by the Holy Spirit through 44 human authors and it took over 1200 years to complete it. There is one message that consistently comes through in the Bible and it is the glory of God revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in creation, in redemption, and in God's providence. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit reveals His glory as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer all throughout the Bible. The fountainhead, the fertile field, the foundation is the book of Genesis.

In the book of Genesis the first 11 chapters are attacked the most and are crucial. In those 11 chapters the first 3 chapters are absolutely essential and they are attacked the most. Out of the first 3 chapters the verse that is studied in this study is attacked more than any of them. It is a simple verse. Genesis 1:1, *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."*

Before this first verse is studied some context on the book of Genesis as a whole is necessary for understanding these first few verses. The author of Genesis according to 2 Timothy 3:16, *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness"* is the Holy Spirit but which one of the 44 human authors is it? God used the first of the 44 human authors which is confirmed and affirmed continually inside and outside of the Bible which is Moses. Moses was affirmed as the author of Genesis by the Rabbis who taught the Old Testament and it was affirmed by those who even put together a Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint. The New Testament affirms Moses as the author as well as the early church. Moses is also the author of the first five books of the Bible known as the Pentateuch; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Moses is also affirmed as the author by Jesus Himself. Six times in the New Testament, Jesus not only affirms the historicity of the book but five out of those six times He affirms Moses as the author.

When was the book of Genesis written? Even though the book of Genesis starts out *"In the beginning..."* it was not written at creation. Moses was not there at creation. Genesis was written around approximately 1500 B.C. after Israel had been liberated from Egypt. It was written after the Exodus where God inspired Moses to write Genesis, Exodus (the deliverance from bondage), Leviticus, Numbers and then Deuteronomy (Duetero = 2, the second giving of the Law).

Where was Genesis written? The place was not conducive and probably not all that comfortable because Moses was in the wilderness when he wrote this book. He did not have a desk or offices like many do today who write. He certainly did not write it in the Promised Land because he did not make it there. He wrote the book of Genesis after the Exodus and before the arrival into the Promised Land which was in the wilderness. The first five books of the Bible were contained and given in the Ark of the Covenant for Israel.

So, what is written in the book of Genesis? The book of Genesis is in two parts. They are not equal parts in terms of number of words or chapters but the first part is Genesis 1:1 to Genesis 2:3 and it is the narrative of God's work of

creation and the covenant of creation with Adam. The outline of the first part of Genesis is as follows. The declaration of creation is Genesis 1:1, the description of the initial act of creation is in Genesis 1:2 and then in Genesis 1:3 to Genesis 2:3 is the ordering or the development of that creation which is identified as the six days of creation. The second part of Genesis begins at Genesis 2:4 which begins the covenant of grace, the covenant of redemption that God makes with a second Adam, Jesus Christ. The unfolding of the covenant of grace, the covenant of redemption through Jesus Christ begins in Genesis 2:4 and covers 10 more books. These 10 books are known as the "Generation's/*Toledoth's* (Hebrew word)" Narratives. Each of these books begins with a superscription. This phrase is not a subscription that ends a book but it is a superscription that introduces the book. The first book is in Genesis 2:4-4:26 and starts out, "***These are the generations*** of the heavens and the earth when they were created." The second book is in Genesis 5:1-6:8 and starts out, "***This is the book of the generations of Adam.***" The other books start with the generations of Noah, the generations of Shem, Terah, etc. The other eight can be found in the following verses; Genesis 6:9-9:29, 10:1-11:9, 11:10-26, 11:27-25:11, 25:12-18, 25:19-35:29, 36:1-36:43, and Genesis 37:1-50:26. So now that God has created the heavens and the earth what follows is what has generated from creation which was man being formed from the dust of the ground. Sin was also generated. Adam came out of the generations of the heavens and the earth and then in Genesis 5:1 the reader begins to find out what was generated out of Adam; Esau, Abel, Seth, and sons and daughters. Those are the narratives, the 10 books that begin to unfold the covenant of grace.

What was Genesis written? Genesis means "beginnings." It gives the reader origins. There are nine things that are brought forth as a beginning out of the book of Genesis. First there are the heavens and the earth, the creation. Secondly, there is man, male and female, that begins here. Thirdly, there is the genesis of work. Interestingly work comes before sin in Genesis. Work is not a sin and it is not the consequences of sin. The fourth thing that comes from Genesis is rest, the Sabbath. Fifthly is the origin of the family. The family is not something that evolved from society it was created by God. The sixth thing that is brought out in Genesis is the origin of sin. The seventh thing is the origin of grace and mercy for salvation. The eighth thing brought out is the origin of spiritual warfare, the enmity between God's seed of blessing and the seed of rebellion against God. Lastly is the origin of divine judgment.

In the narratives or the 10 books there are five things that are built into every one of them. One is man's sin. Two is God's pronouncement on that sin. Three is God's grace manifested to deal with that sin. Four is God's justice clarified on that which is apart from His grace and fifthly is the ten steps of the progress of God's redeeming work revealed.

To clarify at this point, the study on the book of Genesis will not be gone through sentence by sentence. It will only happen for this first study and these two verses. Some of the big narratives will take up more than a chapter per study but Genesis 1:1 is an unbelievable sentence. So much of one's foundation and one's confidence is found in this one verse. This one sentence gives one

confidence and encouragement in the midst of brokenness and sin. If one says, "Jesus has saved me" it is in this one sentence. When one says, "God's promises are wonderful" it is captured in this one sentence. Anyone can make promises but does that person have the character, power and position to fulfill the promise? Genesis 1:1 is a simple yet profound statement that is made in direct contradiction to literally thousands of years of creation myths that stood against the truth of God. When Moses wrote this book by the inspiration of the Spirit the world was not sitting there saying "Can we learn something about who we are, where we are, where we are going and the dignity of men and women?" No, the world had already produced its myths by this time out of paganism, polytheism and narcissism (self love, centrality of humanity). The Greeks had their myths. The Samaritans had theirs, the Babylonians had theirs, and the Egyptians had theirs. All these myths about how we got here are all centered on humanity and the creation myths were all over the place when Moses, inspired by the Holy Spirit penned Genesis. Notice there is not these large cones of philosophical reflections. It is simple. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."*

When one starts to read their Bible from the beginning they are immediately confronted with this truth. How is one saved? They are saved by faith. Hebrews 11:1-3 says, **1** *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the people of old received their commendation. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."* According to this passage how is one commended before God? It is not by one's works but it is by faith in Him who does the work. Also according to verse 3 creation did not make itself. Creation was made by the Word of God and by faith one believes the Word of God which tells us that all things were brought into being "whether visible or invisible" through Him who spoke it into being. Immediately world and life views are colliding. Immediately Moses is colliding with the polytheism of the day and the monotheism, the One God who creates and the paganism of the day that has no rhyme or reason in life but with clear direction that God creates for His own glory. The self-centeredness of the day is replaced by a God-centeredness and He immediately does this with the simple sentence in Genesis 1:1.

Here are three thoughts from that one sentence in Genesis 1:1. The first thought has to do with the subject, God. The word for God in this verse in Hebrew is Elohim. Elohim is a word that means God but it means God with plurality. This plurality is called an honorific plurality which is a plurality to honor something. It is something so great and glorious that it cannot be spoken in the singular. Therefore the Elohim is saying this God is majestic. He is transcendent. He is Holy Other and He has plurality.

The second thought from this sentence not only has a subject but it has a verb, "He *created*." The word created here means to bring into existence from nothing, everything. Another way to say it is it means to bring everything into existence from nothing. What does the atheist or evolutionist or atheistic evolutionist have to say? They say everything comes out of something. The text

says “no” to that. That neo-pagan myth which is a warmed over pagan myth of Babylon, Greek and Egypt is confronted head on in this simple sentence as they believe that everything came out of someone instead of something. God spoke (*bara 'asah*) and out of nothing brought everything. The Hebrew word *bara 'asah* is only used in the Bible as a verb when God is the subject. It is never used about us. We are made in God’s image therefore we can be creative. In our creativity we have never brought into existence something from nothing. We are always working with that which has been given to us. We were created but we cannot create. In fact this word *bara* meaning ‘create’ will be used five times in Genesis 1, 2, and 3 and it is always God who acts. In that time He creates everything and it will only be used one more time in the Bible and that day is coming when He will *bara 'asah* a new heavens and a new earth.

The third thought from Genesis 1:1 is the object, the heavens and the earth. Earlier in this study one might have asked “Since God is plural then why does it not say “Gods created” in the verse? The reason is because the verb is not plural, it is singular. So that is why the Elohim is translated God and not Gods. It is not “God multiple creates”, it is “God creates.” When the verb is singular the noun has to be singular. So it is “God (this One God exists with plurality and transcendence) does this one act of creation and the result is the heavens and the earth.”

Why is “heavens” plural in the phrase “the heavens and the earth”? When the Bible develops this one will find out that three heavens are talked about; the first heavens is what is called the atmosphere, the second heavens is beyond the atmosphere into space, the universe and the angelic realm of life and ministry and then Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:2 that he was caught up into the “third heaven,” into the very presence of the glory of God. Now when the Bible uses the word earth it is always used in one of three ways. It is either referring to the planet earth or the land on the planet earth or it is used in connection with the word “heavens” in order to tell us everything. It is a comprehensive term. Many want to interpret the Genesis 1:1, “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*” as God *began* to create the heavens and the earth and that is not correct. It is a once and for all act. The beginning began everything. It began it all. What does everything exist of? Time, space and matter. “*In the beginning (time), God created the heavens (space) and the earth (matter).*” All time, space and matter invisible and visible was brought into existence by God’s once and for all Word when He spoke.

Now here are three themes from this text. The first theme is this one sentence is so simple yet so profound. It tells the reader some profound things about God. Romans 1:18-20 says, **18** “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*” Now Genesis 1:1; “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” So what does one know about God here? First of all forget the

pagan notion of polytheism. God is one. God is one and secondly, dwells with plurality. As the Bible unfolds that plurality, it is defined and understood as the Godhead, the Tri-unity of God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. That is accommodated and anticipated in that one sentence. The third thing this sentence tells us about God is that God is eternal. It does not say "God began..." It says "in the beginning, God created..." God is self-existent, eternal. If God is self-existent before the creation then that tells us that He is self-sufficient. We are not here because He needs us. We are here because He made us for His own glory. That sentence also tells us that God is almighty. God spoke and there it was; the heavens and the earth came into existence. That is what happens, God speaks and it comes into existence.

Immediately one is confronted with the paganism of the day. Is it the something by chance that produces everything in this order or is there a God who can be known, who is personal that does it? God is personal, eternal, everlasting, self-sufficient, and almighty. One can know Him and communicate with Him! He made us to have a relationship with Him. He displays Himself. He speaks through His Word and by His works. All of this is wrapped up in this one simple sentence, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*"

The second theme from this text is that it tells one something about the creation. All of us so easily live by and are absorbed by this creation yet the things of this world in comparison to God are only temporary, inferior and only exist as long as He upholds it by His Word and power that created it. So why would one choose to be a pagan idolater of the world when one ought to be a worshipper of God, who is not someone that is invented, but is someone who reveals Himself to each one? God tells us who we are, being made in His image and declares and reflects His glory through us. One can know God but one cannot know some dumb idol. A person can have a personal relationship with God but not an idol. So why would one stoop to worship the creation when one can know God personally? The creation is glorious but temporary. It is transient. It is only here because He spoke it. It is here for His purposes and it is upheld by His Word. All of creation is here for that purpose. There is this simple truth about time, space and matter which is utterly dependent upon Him who made it.

The third simple theme, yet profound truth from this text is how this is declared in contrast to the lies and myths of Satan in this world. Here Moses takes on the polytheism, the paganism and the hedonism of its day, not with shrillness but simplicity, not with complexity but with simplicity, not with meanness but with grandeur. "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*" Immediately one is thrust into this age. There are people like Carl Sagan. His book Cosmos begins this way; "The Cosmos; space, time and matter. The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be." The translation of this is Carl Sagan by faith is telling the reader that space, time and matter are his eternal trinity. That all of this that is here is what produced all that is here by chance. If I am created by chance than I am just three mutations further than a maggot. In this belief there is no design, no purpose. By faith, Sagan who was not there at creation, believes the trinity is space, time and matter and eternally existent and if one gives space and matter enough time "poof" mankind is here.

There is no scientific experiment where order ever came out of disorder. The second law of thermo dynamics states the opposite; 'leave it alone, it runs down.' That is the faith commitment.

How does one confront that today, with meanness or with clarity? Does it require great profundity? No, it requires simplicity. All one has to do is look at this creation and it is known from every cell to every galaxy that it declares the hand print of God. The creation declares His majesty. It speaks forth the knowledge of who He is and the problem is not information but according to Romans 1:18-20 the problem is because we suppress the truth and unrighteousness. One does not have an information problem but a moral problem. People are basically saying, "I will not have this God to be over me." That is a sin problem yet Moses states so clearly how to interact with the culture, not with meanness but with grandeur, not with shrillness but with insightfulness, not with complexity but with simplicity.

Then there is the Nealist. This is the person who says there is no God yet this something came from nothing. Then I say "Define nothing." If the person says "nothing is..." and the next word is not nothing then whatever is just said is absurd. The only way to define nothing is with nothing. If nothing is nothing then how does something come from nothing? That is a leap in the dark to believe that. The nothing cannot produce something. Nothing is nothing. The atheist evolution materialist says, "There was no God but there was something. Space, time and matter is eternal and we'll give it enough time and this is all here." Moses has laid glorious truth in this simple sentence about God, the creation, how it is used for God's glory and how man is placed over it for His glory. Then there is a glorious pattern for interaction.

Here is the takeaway for this study. The subtitle under this Genesis series is the Gospel of Christ revealed. One may say, "How does that fit in here?" The takeaway for this study is for one to take Jesus away from this study. In Luke 24 there is a passage which talks about two disciples on the road to Emmaus who are depressed and Jesus pastorally calls them "foolish." The two disciples were all upset because Jesus had died and they thought He was the Messiah. Luke 24:25-27; **25** "And he (Jesus) said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" **27** And **beginning with Moses** and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Any text of Scripture, any theme of Scripture must begin with and end with Christ. The phrase "beginning with Moses" includes Genesis. Further down in that same passage Jesus opens their mind to the Scriptures. Luke 24:44-48; **44** "Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." **45** Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, **46** and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, **47** and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses of these things."

Jesus explains His death, burial and resurrection using Moses and the Prophets and as He does this He explains Himself in all the Scriptures.

So how does one walk away from here with Jesus? John 1:1-5; **1** *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."* This text is saying that the Word of God has come and faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17) and in the Word of God it says, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* Here is this rag tag group of nomads that have been delivered out of Egypt. God called their father Abraham and made promises to him. Then that God delivered them out of Egypt and has them in the wilderness. That God has given them a Promised Land and promised them a Redeemer, a Messiah. God also promised that He would save His people from their sins. Can that God do that? Yes He can! He created the heavens and the earth with His Word. Who was the Word? Has one ever wondered what He said? Jesus was the Word. Now God has finally spoken in His Son. In Jesus Christ, the Word of Life, one can have life. One does not need this polytheism that has to keep reinventing itself but the truth of who God is, who brought into existence everything has made a promise that through the same Christ, when one trusts in Him, He will give one eternal life and He brings forth the power of the Gospel in that Christ. Christ was the one who God created the heavens and the earth through as the Holy Spirit hovered upon it. How does God redeem? God redeems through His Son. How will He sustain one today? All are facing physical issues, emotional issues, and social issues and one's hope to get through all of these things is in Christ who is the Sustainer, the Redeemer and the Christ for which everything came into existence, visible or invisible. He spoke and it is. You can trust Christ for everlasting life. He is the living God.

Prayer:

Take a moment to reflect on the truth found in Colossians 1:16; *"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible."* God has promised you and God can do it. The same God who spoke through His Son and brought into existence everything now has spoken finally in His Son to give us eternal life. Glory to His name. Lord, we trust you. You have not only made promises, You are in position, You are God, You have the power Almighty who created everything and You have the trustworthy character. You are always faithful to Your Word. So today we put our trust in You. We ask O God that we would hold fast to the One who holds us in His hand, the One who made us, redeems us, sustains us and our confidence is in. Nothing or no one can separate us from Him, the Lord our God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Amen.