

## Purpose, Place, and Position

### Genesis 1:1-2:3

Why Genesis and why now?

Who is God and what is humanities **place** in relationship to God.

John gives us the meaning of the good news of Jesus in the prologue to his gospel.

- John uses the language and theology of Genesis to discover the meaning of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- Jesus is the word of God and present from the beginning.
- Jesus is the light of the world.

In addition, John adds fresh perspective to the narrative of Genesis.

- Jesus is life and this life is the light of all people (1:4).
- Jesus is the word, the active creative agent who brings the world into being (1:10).
- Not only did Jesus create the world, but he continues to create it anew.

Genesis is the first book of the Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy).

Context: Throughout the OT God's people experience captivity, exile, and renewal.

If you had experienced these life circumstances, how would you read Genesis 1-3?

Despite difficulties, How do we embrace our **position** as God's representatives and hold onto the truth that God brings renewal?

As we read the first creation account we must understand its aim.

It is a proclamation.

It is an act of faith.

It is an invitation to hope.

- The words beautifully written in Genesis are not in opposition to modern science.
- A key objective of the text is to strongly contrast the creation account of other ancient civilizations (Babylonian / Enuma Elish, Egypt and Mesopotamia / Akkadian, Sumerian).

"Most of the cultures surrounding ancient Israel had elaborate creation stories, highlighting the birth, sexuality and violent uprising of the gods. The Genesis narrative has taken such old mythological motifs as battle with the primeval (female) waters or with sea monsters and eliminated or neutralized them. What remains is both utterly simple and radical in its time." ~ Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy* (Schocken Bible; Dallas: Word, 1995).

- The text opens our hearts and mind to the wonder of a creative and personal God. When we read about the cosmos coming into existence we are amazed, curious, and moved to ask questions.

Preliminary observations of chapter one.

### **7 Days** (1:1-2:4a)

**Days 1-3**, Creation of a habitat (Light & Darkness, Sky & Sea, Land)

**Days 4-6**, Creation of its inhabitants (Sun, Moon, Stars, Birds, Fish, Plants, Animals, Humans)

**Day 7**, Rest

What rises to the surface and becomes more and more clear after reading the seven day arrangement?

- Intentionality (**Purpose**) and order (each day builds upon the previous day)
- Interdependence - there is a beautiful integrated existence between habitat and inhabitants.

## 7 Days

The first verse has seven words.

The second verse has fourteen words (7x2).

The last section in regards to the seventh day (2:1-3) has thirty-five words (7x5).

God speaks ten times with seven commands for creation and creatures.

“It was good” is spoken by God seven times.

This numerical repetition speaks to the literary unity of the narrative and emphasizes the idea of perfection and completion in God’s finished creation.

God and God’s creation are bound together.

This relationship is motivated and connected by love / covenant.

The good news of grace is that God pursues his creation (renewal and restoration).

The point is that God created, but not how he did so.

The objective of the text is not scientific.

Its focus is theological and pastoral addressing real historical problems.

The text is a statement of faith!

- In the overwhelming circumstances of human existence, how can we have hope?
- Is there **purpose** to my breathing?

Are you a literalist? Or, Are you a rationalist?

Is it historic? Is it scientific?

The objective is an explanation of the character of God.

Its focus is theological. God spoke and it transformed reality!

This is high level poetry for the purpose of proclamation.

What was of concern to Israel at the time of writing?

A world of chaos has become a world of distinct intentionality through the mystery of God’s gracious, empowering speech.

- Genesis 1 speaks of substance out of formlessness and structure from chaos.
- It is good news to the exile. We can experience life as a joyous and grateful response to a loving and relational God.
- God created and within his creation there was a garden and within that garden was humanity. Humanity represents God to the created world. Humanity was created to be in relationship with its creator.

A pattern of poetic form rises to the surface. Words and phrases are repeated for each day.

Then God said, “Let...”

God separated

God made

God created

And it was so

God called

God saw that it was good

Evening came and then morning

More things to ponder and consider:

Genesis 1 reveals that humanity as male and female were created through divine blessing.

Genesis 2-3 gives the sociological perspective of a husband and wife now alienated from God’s blessing by their disobedience.

But God...He promises to establish his kingdom through his grace that overcomes human sin (which is a major theme of Genesis).

Apart from God's grace, even in the most pristine and ideal environment, humanity on its own cannot and will not listen to God's instructions (Genesis 3:6).

**God is all powerful.** Through the lens of Jesus (Mark 10:42-45).

**The one who rules is the one who serves.**

Humanity has been given dominion over the remainder of creation.

Joining Jesus in the work of re-creation (on earth as it is in heaven).

**God governs by gracious self giving.**

Women and men have not been subjugated by God, we have been adopted as agents (representatives) of God to whom much is given and much is expected.

Read Genesis 1:1-2:3 every day this week.

Allow yourself to be drawn into the beauty of the poetry.

What observations do you have concerning purpose, place, and position?

What is revealed through the text concerning the character of God?

Do I have presuppositions about Genesis that I need to lay down at the feet of Jesus? What are they?