

Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 Study Notes

Christ Church Winchester

We will be looking at the first chapter and a bit of Genesis in January and February 2024. We suggest you read the whole of Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 together each time you meet; there's a lot going on!

Study 1 - Genesis 1:1-2 (Sunday 7th January in our services)

1] Share some of your family's origin stories - classic tales that get re-told at key moments to explain why you are who you are.

2] 'In the beginning, God ...'

Do these verses help us with that keenest of children's questions 'who created God?'

3] 'In the beginning, God ...'

Four words into Genesis 1, we meet God for the first time. What picture of God are we given in these first two verses? And how do you see these truths about God coloured in through the rest of the Bible?

4] 'In the beginning, God created ...'

Discuss some of the things that you create in your home or work life. Is this the same, or different, to God's creation in these verses?

5] 'In the beginning, God created ...'

It's a bit early to decide, but do you think God's creative power is seen only in the past, or also in our present and future?

6] 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.'

'Heavens and earth' seems to be a Hebrew way of saying 'everything.' What English words could we use instead of 'heavens and earth' to give the right sense of what God created?

7] Genesis 1:2's description of this original beginning is of a formless and empty darkness, with the hovering Spirit. Do you find this description scary, strange, beautiful, exciting, or what?

8] The spirit of God in Genesis 1:2 is from the Hebrew 'ruach' which means wind or breath. It's a bit early in the Bible for a fully developed doctrine of the Trinity, but what does this early description of the Spirit tell us?

Study 2 - Genesis 1:3-13 (Sunday 14th January in our services)

Start by reading all of Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

- 1] How did you feel the first time you issued a command to a smart speaker? How does it compare to your experience of getting tired children, pets or co-workers to do something?
- 2] Have you had a memorable experience of light suddenly shining into actual darkness?
- 3] What does it tell us about God that He creates with his words?
- 4] What image from your experience best represents the repeated refrain 'God saw that it was good'? Who can you hear saying it, and what have they just finished?
- 5] What happens twice on Day 3 that only happens once on Days 1 & 2? Why do you think this is?
- 6] Look at all the verbs that describe God's creating in Genesis 1:3-13. Who or what in your experience does all these things?

Study 3 - Genesis 1:14-25 (Sunday 21st January in our services)

Start by reading all of Genesis 1:1-2:3

- 1] What piece of music would you use for a film version of Genesis 1?
- 2] How does what happens on Days 4, 5 and 6 mirror and complement what happens on Days 1, 2 and 3?
- 3] Does the sun and moon only appearing on Day 4 help us to decide what kind of writing we have here in the early chapters of Genesis?
- 4] The people of Israel grew up in and around cultures fixated by the sun, moon and stars (as parts of our culture still are). How do these verses put the sun, moon and stars in their rightful place?
- 5] There's much emphasis in these verses on God's creation being 'orderly.' Why does this matter in our chaotic world?
- 6] What do God's creative actions on Days 4, 5 and first half of 6 tell us about his purpose and intentions?

Study 4 - Genesis 1:26-31 (Sunday 28th January in our services)

Start by reading all of Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

- 1] How do you know when something you're making is complete?
- 2] Work through Genesis 1:26-31 together and list all the things that are different or distinct compared to the rest of Genesis 1.
- 3] What do these differences or distinctive tell us about what it means to be human?
- 4] 'Made in the image of God' - as far as you know, what did this mean to the people of Israel?
- 5] What is humanity's place in the world, and relationship with God, from these verses?
- 6] Women and men together reflect God's image. Neither is dominant, self-contained or superior. How well (or not) do we live this out in our culture?
- 7] Should we be trying to get back to Eden - vegetarian, naked and equal?
- 8] What's the effect of God's declaration at the end of Day 6 that 'it was very good'?

Study 5 - Genesis 2:1 - 3 (Sunday 11th February in our Services)

Start by reading all of Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

- 1] Share an experience of finishing a project or reaching a goal - how did it feel?
- 2] Did God need to rest, or is this about God setting us a good example?
- 3] Does this suggest that God is now uninvolved in the day-to-day of our world ? (And take a look at John 5:17 as well)
- 4] What does 'God blessed the seventh day and made it holy' really mean?
- 5] How has our culture's attitude to 'sabbath rest' changed in your lifetime? How much of the wider culture's thinking on sabbath rest have you picked up along the way?
- 6] What does good and holy Sabbath rest look like in our culture? What might it mean for a Christian living undercover in North Korea?
- 7] How does God's gift of the Sabbath help us with perspective on any of the following?
 - our work
 - those who can't work
 - those who are retired
 - how much we are involved in church ministries