

Sermon Notes

1. Genesis 1:1-25

2. Who is God?

3. What is God's work of Creation?

Discussion Questions

1. What do we learn about God from Genesis 1?
2. What do we learn about creation from Genesis 1?
3. What is the relationship between God and his creation?
4. Why do you think Genesis 1 begins by simply assuming the existence of God rather than making a case for his existence?
5. Why do you suppose God decided to create the heavens and the earth in the first place?
6. Do you believe in God? Why or why not?
7. How would believing in the Creator-God of Genesis 1 change how you view the world around you?



Lesson 1 / February 5, 2017

CREATION: Genesis 1:1-25

Key Verse: Genesis 1:1-2

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 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.”

Question 1: Who is God?

Short Answer: *God is the eternal spirit, the creator of everything.*

Full Answer: *God is the eternal spirit, the creator of everything, being infinite and unchangeable, and possessing in his being all wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.*

Question 2: What is creation?

Short Answer: *Creation is all that God has created by his word out of nothing.*

Full Answer: *Creation is all that is not God, namely all that God has created by his word out of nothing and that God orders, sustains, fills with life, and declares to be good.*

Summary

The opening lines of any story are arguably the most important. A strong and gripping opening line compels us to read the rest of the story. We may meet an interesting main character, or learn about a mysterious situation, or sense a problem that needs to be resolved. Consider these classic first lines. “All children, except one, grow up” (Peter Pan). “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit” (The Hobbit). “It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen” (1984). These opening lines capture the essence of the entire story, and they make us want to read the story again and again.

The first words of Scripture have the same effect. In Genesis 1:1, we read the classic words, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Scripture begins by introducing us to God as the main character and teaching us about who he is and what he has done. The presumption of these opening words offends our modern conscience by simply stating the existence of God as an established fact. No need to try to convince us skeptics and atheists that God exists – he just does! And these opening words offended the ancient conscience by simply stating the existence of just one God as established fact. Into the ancient world where polytheism (= many gods) was the most common belief, Scripture presents monotheism (= one God). There is only one God, the eternal spirit, who himself has no beginning. In the beginning, God is already there.

Genesis 1:1 also describes the first action taken by God. In the beginning, he *created* the heavens and the earth. This activity establishes the primary relationship between God, who is spirit, and the heavens and earth, which are material. The relationship is not pantheistic, where god exists within the material world, nor is it deistic, where god is remote and indifferent to the material world; instead, Scripture declares God to be both distinct from creation and also attached to creation as the Creator. God himself is not a created being, yet God cares for and sustains his creation, even manifesting his presence within creation (e.g. Psalm 19:1-6) and revealing himself to his creatures (e.g. Psalm 19:7-11).

The rest of Genesis 1 details how God goes about this work of creation. God determines it to be, he speaks, and it comes to existence. In his determination, we see God’s creativity whereby he can envision what has never before existed. In God’s speaking, we see his ability to communicate and to use language to relate to his creation. And in his words, we see God’s power as his words alone bring into existence what formerly did not exist.

And God not only creates creation, but we also see him organizing the “formless” (Gen 1:2) creation, making it functional, and filling it with life. Consider how the first three days parallel the final three days of creation. On the first day God creates light and separates it from darkness (Gen 1:3-5), and on the fourth day God creates the heavenly lights – sun, moon, and stars – that order days, months, seasons, and years (Gen 1:14-19). On the second day God creates the seas and the heavens (Gen 1:6-8), and on the fifth day God fills them with life, placing living creatures in the seas and birds in the heavens (Gen 1:20-23). On the third day, God creates the dry land of earth and the vegetation that grows upon it (Gen 1:9-13), and on the sixth day God fills the earth with living creatures and appoints mankind as the ruler over it all (Gen 1:24-31). God appreciates a tidy and ordered creation overflowing with vibrant life.

Finally, Genesis 1 introduces us to the moral character of God. At the end of each day, he declares the creation he has made to be “good,” and when he is completely finished on the sixth day, he surveys the entirety of creation and declares it to be “very good” (Gen 1:31). God inherently knows and defines what is good as opposed to what is evil. Everything God creates is good because God himself is good. He is a very good Creator who uses his extraordinary power to create his very good creation. And thus the scene is set for the rest of the Biblical story.