



Genesis: In the Beginning - Study 1

Background

The importance of studying history is so often overlooked, but Scripture emphasises time and again the importance of looking at where we came from, where we are now and where we are going. All of this is with the insight that God provides, and is an integral part of theological reflection. Indeed, Christians look at the whole flow of world history from a very particular perspective. We believe that this great ocean of events has both its 'origin' and its 'end' in God. We believe that its ultimate goal is 'salvation' (wholeness), and that this is the key that ties all the parts together and gives history its dynamic thrust.

There are several reasons why we should give time, effort and reflection to the study of salvation history:

- It gives a foundation for our faith
- It reveals precedents
- It gives warnings

The history of our salvation has three main elements:

- It is the story of the God who acts
- It is the story of the people of God
- It is the story of the purposes of God

We should gain much comfort from considering scripture in this way. This history begins in the book of Genesis, a book that is so beautifully written; it is a 'book of beginnings and origins'. This theme colours every part of it. The first eleven chapters form a prologue, not simply to Genesis, but to the Bible as a whole. There is a clear symmetry between the scenes, images and ideas of these chapters and the book of Revelation, the 'book of ends and fulfilment'.

Over the next few studies in this series we want to begin to explore something of our salvation history, to touch the tip of the iceberg, and hopefully encourage you in your faith and walk with the Lord. In this first study we want to begin by looking at Genesis 1: 1 - 3. Even in these first three verses there is so much that can be said!

The Message

Creation was 'out of nothing' (Genesis 1:1). "In the beginning God". Just think about that for a few moments. It is talking about our beginning. God was already there. How can we fail to be challenged to obey God's command "*Be still and know that I am God*" (Psalm 46:10)? The



Hebrew for this phrase probably means 'Enough!' or 'Stop!'. Like Job, we begin to learn the 'fear of the Lord'.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; and the earth being without form and empty, and darkness on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moving gently on the face of the waters, then God said..." (Genesis 1:1-3).

Because this passage is laying foundations by describing our 'beginning', we can expect that it will reveal the character of God as He brings creation into existence. In verse 1 we have 'God created', verse 2 'Spirit of God', verse 3 'God said'.

'God created' is incredible to comprehend. We know that God is love. Many attributes describe fundamental aspects of God's character, but in the beginning 'God created'. Too often we deny both God's creativity and suppress our own. We were created to be creative! We would urge people to meditate on this truth.

"The Spirit of God moved gently on the face of the waters." Don't let us forget that the Spirit of God is the third person of the Trinity or Godhead¹, and as a person should be addressed as He. What does this picture of God moving gently over the face of the waters mean to you? Compare it with the evolutionists picture of a barren accidental earth where only the fittest can survive in the struggle for life. So often in Scripture we are presented with a picture of God covering us with His wings to shelter us (Psalm 91:4). The sense conveyed in Hebrew from the word 'ruach' in Genesis 1:2 is one of a mother bird gently moving her wings and brooding over her creation to nurture and protect. It gives me comfort to consider the love and care with which God's creating came into being.

Creation was 'by His word' - 'the perfect expression of His thought' (Genesis 1:3,6,9,14,20,24, and 26). *"And God said"*. Biblically what we say is an extension of ourselves - Matthew 12: 34 tells us that *"Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks"*. The very words we speak are like a window on our heart, our inner person. So God's word is the very communication of Himself. We do not have to be afraid of truth because all truth is from God. Turn to John 1:1-2, 14. We have Jesus in His rightful place as God author of our beginnings.

Psalm 139 vs 15-16. Can you see how the beginning of Genesis is describing the birth of our earth and heavens? What struck me when I was reading this passage was that it was not just describing the birth but the actual conception. Psalm 139 vs 16. Even looking at our planet in this embryonic state we can see that it was planned, there was expectant waiting and perfect preparation. If this is how God was preparing the earth think about the perfect preparation He has

¹See also our study on Why you should believe in the Trinity.



made for each of us.

We cannot take Genesis 1:1-3 out of the context of the rest of the Bible. We would like to finish with the following passage:

“To whom then will you compare me, or am I equalled says the Holy One? Lift up your eyes on high and look: who has created these? Who brings out their host by number? By greatness of vigour, and might of power, He calls them all by names - not one is lacking” (Isaiah 40: 25 - 26).

Meditation.

Read through the first 3 verses again and spend some time meditating on them.

Questions

- 1 In what areas of your life do you feel most creative? What are the barriers to your creativity, or what stifles your creativity? In what ways do you think you could be more creative in your life?
- 2 Spend a day when you really concentrate on what you say, and think before you say anything. Compare what you have said throughout the day to the kind of things you normally say. Are there any aspects that stand out in sharp contrast as you look through the window on your heart? What lessons do you learn from this? Bring this before God in prayer.