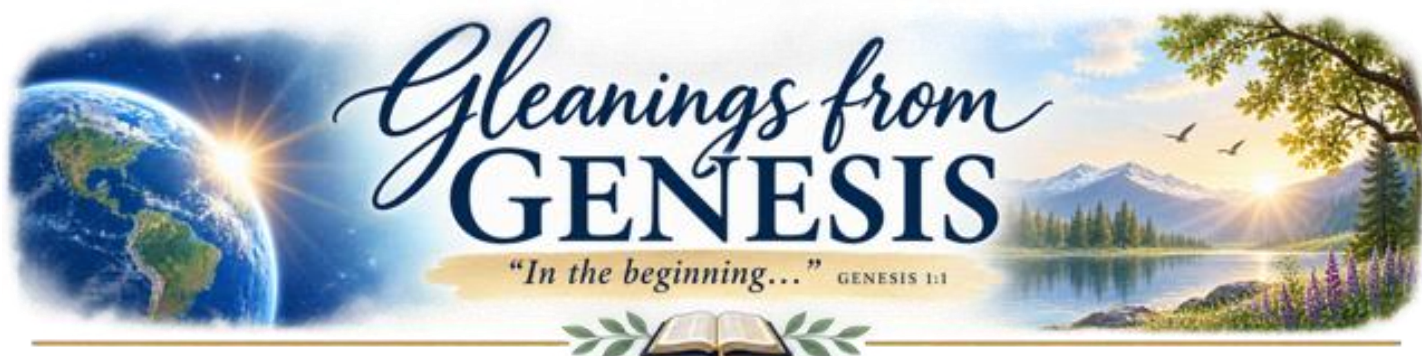




Genesis 1 – Where History and Theology Begin

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led by Mary Lowman

Introduction

Genesis is the foundation of the entire Bible, giving us important basic knowledge of God, who he is, what he is like, how he works, and how he relates to people. The purpose of this study is to look at how the stories of Genesis show us in germ form the great doctrines of Scripture—doctrines that are fully developed in the Old and New Testaments. Every Christ-follower needs to continually grow in her understanding of these doctrines.

- Knowing the doctrines of Scripture is essential to maintaining spiritual health, growing in your faith, and doing God's will.
- Knowing the doctrines will protect you from false teaching.
- Knowing the doctrines equips you to share your faith, to overcome temptation, and to love God more.
- The doctrines will shape your world view—and your world view shapes your thoughts and your actions.

Your growing knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible will ground you on a firm foundation—one that gives you security and strength, comfort and peace through all phases of your life.

What is a world view?

Your worldview is the foundational set of beliefs, values, and assumptions through which you interpret reality and from which you make decisions, choices, and determine the direction of your life. Even if you have never consciously articulated your worldview, you still operate with a worldview—an unconscious worldview.

How firm is your foundation?

If you personally don't have a firm foundation in your faith—if your knowledge of the truth of God's Word is shallow and very lacking, then you are open to the deceptions and lies of our culture—of our enemy, Satan.

1 John 4:1: *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

Acts 17:11: *Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*

Who wrote Genesis?

Most scholars believe it was Moses, but we are not directly told. However, considering that Moses had a very high level of education for his day, it makes sense that he was equipped to write Genesis.

Can you think of how the Lord equipped you long ago for a mission he has for you today?
Are you using the training and knowledge and experience you've received for God's glory?

Who was it written to?

First, to the Israelites before they settled in the Promised Land. They would have been familiar with pagan cultures. And they would have been very familiar with a hard life—as servants to the Egyptians, then wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, etc.

What do we learn about God in Genesis 1?

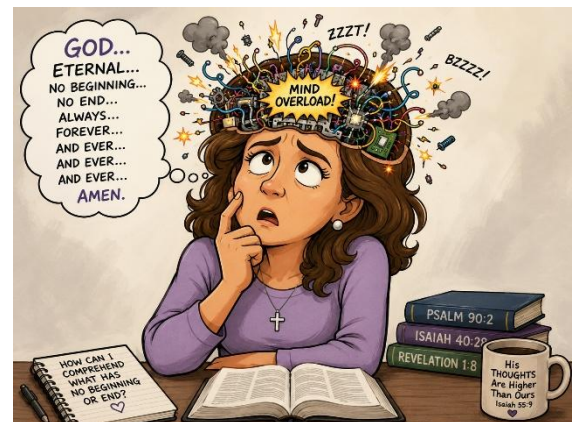
Genesis 1:1: *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

We learn that God is eternal.

The Bible does not begin by proving God. It simply assumes his existence. An eternal God cannot be explained or proved by mortal, finite people! The earth—the world we know—had a beginning, and God was there.

This truth about God is simply mind-blowing. Try to put it in your head. You'll blow all the circuits in your little brain!

The person who chooses not to believe that there is a God and he created everything, simply has no foundation in her life.



Psalm 53:1: *The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."*

Psalm 90:2: *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

Isaiah 40:28: *Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.*

Revelation 1:8: *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

We learn that God is Creator.

Genesis 1:2: *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.*

Genesis 1:3: *And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

God made everything that is non-God. That means that everything in the universe that is not God is finally dependent on God.

Isaiah 45:18: *For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it. (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the Lord, and there is no other."*

We have further confirmation about creation in the New Testament.

John 1:3: *All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. (CSB: Christian Standard Bible)*

Colossians 1:16 – 17: *For all things in heaven and on earth were created in him—all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers—all things were created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him.*

Hebrews 11:3: *By faith we understand that the worlds were set in order at God's command, so that the visible has its origin in the invisible.*

Romans 1:18 – 20: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness, because what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, because they are understood through what has been made. So people are without excuse.

Genesis 1 teaches that the physical universe was spoken into existence by God out of nothing (called *ex nihilo* creation).

We learn that there is only one of him.

Deuteronomy 6:4: *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."*

To this day Jews reverently recite this; it's called the Shema. From the beginning Israel was taught this truth—that there is but one God, and their God was the true God.

In Genesis 1:26 we read: *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" This us and our are plural: who does it refer to?*

We learn that God is sovereign over everything.

Genesis 1: 2 – 5: *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. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*

Notice the phrase: "And God said..." Creation responds instantly. God speaks...Light appears. Land appears. Life appears. His word accomplishes his will.

Foundational doctrines:

- God's authority – he has total authority over creation
- God's sovereignty - he was then and he is now totally in control. He reigns over all.
- God's omnipotence – he has all power to do whatever he wishes.

This prepares us for everything God says throughout Scripture.

We learn that God created out of nothing, and everything he created was good.

There is no hint in Genesis 1 and 2 to death or decay, or hatred or murder or arrogance or pride or selfishness. Everything God created was good. The foundation of this claim is found here in Genesis 1.

Psalm 73:1: *Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.*

Psalm 84:11: *For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.*

We learn that God is a talking God.

Once Adam and Eve are created, God actually speaks to them. The God of the Bible is not some abstract spirit impossible to define. He has personality and discloses himself in words that human beings understand. You see this "talking God" through all of Scripture.

We learn that God is a God of order.

God separates:

- light from darkness
- sea from land
- heavens from earth

Then he fills what he formed. God is not the author of confusion. He still brings order into disordered lives.

God's Story of Creating the World

Everything we read in Genesis 1 is divinely given to Moses to write down for us.

Romans 15:4: *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.*

"The more we know about the created order—its vastness, its complexity, its physics, the ability of a tiny hummingbird to travel 1500 miles in migration and return to the same tree. . . the more our response ought to be adoration and genuine awe before the Creator." (*The God Who Is There* by D. A. Carson, p. 21)

Psalms 19:1 – 4: *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

Science and the Bible

Many people – including some Christians – have the impression that science deals with truth, whereas religion or the Bible deals with fantasy. "However, saying that Scripture has scientific implications does not mean the Bible is a scientific treatise from which we can deduce Newton's laws, Einstein's equations, or the chemical structure of common salt." (*Seven Days that Divide the World* by John Lennox, p. 25).

Even though the Bible is not a scientific text, we believe and are assured that the Bible is God's revealed word, and we can trust that what it tells us about the nature and origin of the world and of human beings is true.

There are differing ideas among true believers as to what the "days" in Genesis represent.

- Some believe them literally – that the days in Genesis represent the 24-hour days we now know. Therefore the universe is young – created around 6000 years ago.
- Others believe the days represent long periods of time, and therefore the universe is ancient—very old.
- Others believe they are neither literal 24-hour days nor do they represent long periods of time, nor are they necessarily sequential. They are simply a diagram of sorts that uses symbols to show the plan of a system. It leaves out unneeded visual details to make how things work easy to see and understand.

The interpretation of the days is not a central doctrine. There is room for different opinions.

"If we believe in the inspiration of Scripture, we must take the text seriously, because it is Scripture that is inspired and not our particular understanding of it.. ." (Lennox, p. 59)

Genesis 1 and 2:

- These chapters portray God as a creative craftsman going about his week of work, taking rest each night and then having a day of rest at the end.
- God's work of creation was vastly different from human work.
- Human rest is not the same as God's rest. God does not get tired as we do.
- God's creation week was never repeated, whereas our work is.

The New Testament does not mention the seven days of creation, but consider what it does say:

John 1:1: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Hebrews 1:3: *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

Hebrews 11:3: *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.*

Each of the days of creation—however long they were—began with “And God said.” This is far more important than the length of the days in Genesis 1. God spoke! It was not some mindless, unguided process as Darwin and others would have us believe.

“No major doctrine of Scripture is affected by whether one believes that the days are analogical days or that each day is a long period of time inaugurated by God’s speaking, or whether one believes that each of the days is a normal day in which God spoke, followed by a long period of putting into effect the information contained in what God said on that particular day. What is important is that on each of the days, God spoke—which is not a description of a natural, unguided process.” (Lennox - p. 73)

“What we claim as Christians is that, when all the facts are taken into consideration, the Bible gives us true knowledge although not exhaustive knowledge. Man as a finite creature is incapable of handling exhaustive knowledge anyway.” (*Genesis in Space and Time* by Francis A. Schaeffer, p. 35)

“The Bible is a most efficient book. . . The Old Testament gave men what they needed from the Fall till the first coming of Christ. The Old and New Testaments together give all that men need from the Fall until the second coming of Christ.” (Schaeffer p. 35)

“As we look at the differentiations that occur when God says ‘Let it be this way,’ we can have confidence that this is true history, but that does not mean that the situation is exhaustively revealed or that all our questions are answered. . . Indeed, as we stand before God in time to come, even as we see him face to face, his communication then—certainly being more than what we now have—will still not be totally exhaustive, because we who are finite can never exhaust the infinite.” (Schaeffer, p. 36)

The Take-Away

1. Do you believe that God—the Triune God—has no beginning and no ending?
2. Do you believe that God spoke the world into existence, that time began when he spoke, and that he created the universe out of nothing—ex nihilo?

(Ex nihilo is a Latin phrase that means "out of nothing" or "from nothing." It describes the creation or appearance of something without any prior raw materials, physical elements, or background causes.)

3. Do you believe that God created all living, breathing creatures—animals and people? That mankind did not “evolve” from lower life forms?

If so, how do these doctrines—these beliefs—inform your worldview?

- What is your worldview on abortion?
- What is your worldview on euthanasia?
- What is your worldview on the whole “trans” belief that many hold to?
- What is your worldview on marriage?
- What is your worldview on your stewardship of your time, energy, money and creativity?

How do you respond to these kinds of ideas:

- "The universe began with natural processes like the Big Bang."
- "Life is the result of evolution through natural selection."
- "If everything needs a creator, then who created God?"
- "There is no testable evidence for a divine creator."

Here are some suggested ways a believing Christian can respond to each perspective using biblical principles:

Responding to scientific origins (The Big Bang & Evolution)

"I completely understand why science is compelling. For me, studying the complexity of the universe doesn't disprove God—it makes me marvel at how he chose to design it. Honestly, I think it takes a lot more faith to believe that it just happened than to believe an almighty God created the world."

Psalm 19:1: *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

Responding to "Who created God?"

"It is a mind-boggling concept, but I believe God exists outside of time, space, and matter entirely. Because He created time, he isn't bound by a beginning or an end."

Revelation 1:8: *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

Responding to the desire for empirical evidence

"I value evidence too, but the evidence I see is found in changed lives, historical accounts, and the personal relationship I experience with God every day."

Hebrews 11:1: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

Responding to secular meaning and purpose

"I deeply respect your commitment to finding purpose and showing empathy. My faith gives me a sense of purpose that is secure because it comes from being uniquely known and loved by my Creator."

Ephesians 2:10: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Recommended books:

Seven Days that Divide the World by John Lennox

The God Who Is There by D. A. Carson

Genesis in Space and Time by Francis A. Schaeffer