

## Genesis 1:1-2:3 (New International Version, ©2011)

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

<sup>3</sup> And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

<sup>6</sup> And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” <sup>7</sup> So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

<sup>9</sup> And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup> Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

<sup>14</sup> And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup> God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” <sup>21</sup> So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule

over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

<sup>29</sup> Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. <sup>30</sup> And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

<sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

## **Genesis 2**

<sup>1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

<sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup> Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

## Oasis: In the Beginning, God Created... Genesis 1-2

Preface: Welcome to our 1st LC Bible study in our new sermon series "Living God's Story." This year we will be working our way through the Bible, from Genesis through Revelation. So fasten your seat belt, as it will be quite a ride. These LC studies will complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts, and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application.

Possible starter question: Think about something that you made that you really enjoyed doing and gave you real satisfaction. Take a moment to describe it. What gave you the idea to do it? What sets did you follow? What about it pleased you? (If your group is large, either just have several do this; or better yet, subdivide into small clusters of 4 or 5 so that everyone can get an opportunity.)

Transitional comment: Today's passage introduces the Creator, our Creator. We will be able to learn about God's overall approach, design and response. (Pray for the Holy Spirit to lead your study, if you haven't already prayed.)

Let's listen as our passage is read: Who would like to read this aloud for us? (perhaps break it into 8 parts—the 7 days and the summary).

Personal time to re-read: Take several minutes (2-3) to read this again on your own. What words and ideas are repeated or similar? What key contrasts do you note?

Overview together: What repeated words and ideas did you observe? What key contrasts?

Study discussion:

### **Observation:**

1. What do we learn about God and Creation from this passage?

*Incredible order, creativity, power, excellence, beauty, purpose, goodness – God gives man a special place among all the creation – made in God's image, with the potential for relationship*

2. What is the thesis of this passage? (the teaching point)

*The thesis is in the first sentence: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." – that is the message of this chapter*

3. Find the repeated words & phrases in this passage. Use colored pencils to circle them on your text.

Write them here and count the number of times each one is used:

*"And God said" or "Then God said" (9x)*

*"Let" or "Let there be" (10x)*

*"And it was so" (5x)*

*"And God saw that ... it was good" (7x)*

*"And there was evening, and there was morning – the \_\_\_\_ day" (6x)*

*"according to" or "according to its/their kinds" (9x)*

*"the heavens and the earth" (2x – at the start of the passage, and at the end)*

*"created" (5x – at the beginning and at the end)*

*"blessed" (3x)*

*"in our image" or "in his own image" (2x)*

4. Now find the contrasts – words and concepts that are different.

*First – Light*

*Second – Sky*

*Third – Land and vegetation*

*Fourth – Sun, Moon, Stars*

*Fifth – Water creatures/Birds*

*Sixth – Land creatures, Man*

*There is a polarity described in the Creation order between the heavens and the earth. Days 1, 2 & 4 are heavenly creations and Days 3, 5 & 6 describe earthly creation.*

*Days 1, 2, & 3 are divinely forming acts (creating the light, sky and land) and Days 4, 5, & 6 are acts of divine filling (filling the heavens, the sky and the earth).*

### **Interpretation**

5. Do you think this passage is more concerned with describing:

- The process used in creating (Science)?
- The character of the Creator (Poetry)?

Explain your position.

*Genesis 1 does not attempt to be a science manual. It does not tell HOW.*

*Instead, it tells WHO and WHY.*

*People often disagree about what kind of writing this chapter is.*

*Some people think it is **History**.*

*Others think it is **Poetry**.*

*Understanding the use of “genre” is an important factor when dealing with the Bible. We as present-day readers must always remember that the Bible is a divinely inspired document first received by an ancient audience.*

*Both the History writer and the Poetry writer are interested in communicating truth, but they focus on different kinds:*

*History is concerned with the process used in creation: the HOW.*

*Poetry is concerned about the character of the Creator: the WHO and the WHY.*

6. Think back on our opening question today – when you had to remember something that you made that you really enjoyed doing and think turned out well. In what way might your desire to create be an example of how you are “made in the image of your creator”?

*Even though we each might want to make different things – I like woodworking, and my wife likes making quilts – our impulse to create is exactly what God modeled in this powerful and exciting first chapter of the Bible!*

### Other issues that may come up:

“**day**” – this word is translated from the Hebrew. In the Hebrew it also means “ages” – which means that the units of time do not necessarily mean a 24 hour day in terms of our time – but might mean “an unspecified amount of time.”

**Other Ancient Near East accounts** have been found that are similar to the Hebrew narrative. Some ancient cultures have included similar occurrences like: “gods creating the heavens and the earth and all who inhabit it,” a worldwide flood, and sacrificial systems and codes to appease the gods.

The Hebrew account stands in contrast in a number of areas. First, Judaism introduces monotheism in an exclusively polytheistic world. Second, the Genesis account depicts God as a sovereign and benevolent deity who loves His creation and regards them as good. This also is in sharp contrast with other ANE accounts as human lives were seen as disposable and arbitrary by the gods. The Hebrew narrative gave Israel not only an origin story but also an identity. They were a people created, called and loved by God.

About **evolution** - There is disagreement – Sincere Christian people who read this text come away with 3 different views of Creation:

- ✓ **SHORT EARTH THEORY** – God created in 6 24-hour days
- ✓ **LONG EARTH THEORY** – God created in 6 eras of time that were longer than 24 hour days
- ✓ **THEISTIC EVOLUTION** – God is in charge and used evolution (gradual change over time) in making his Creation

As Christ followers committed to living with one another in unity, we must always be sensitive to never attack (or break fellowship over) a rival belief/conviction on matters were the Church has held different perspectives through the ages. Many devout believers have held a variation of these beliefs through the ages and that is welcomed in the Body.

Sometimes we must accept that there is mystery involved. Our human brains are not adequate to comprehend everything we WANT to know about Creation. However, God has given us enough information in this passage to enable us to comprehend what we NEED to know to have a relationship with him. Here are the key lessons from this text today that we can all agree on:

<p><b>God created. What God created is good.</b></p>
--

### **Application**

- Even though “the Fall of man” has left a stain and altered creation, how do we as Christ-followers honor what God created and deemed as “good”?
- God has still called us to have dominion over creation. How can we as LIFE Communities be faithful stewards of creation?
- If we are created “in the image of God,” how should we see ourselves?

- If other are created “in the image of God,” how should we see/treat others?
  
- How does identifying yourself with an origin story make a difference in how we live our lives?

Prayer together: Pray for one another and for the heart, mind, and strength to follow Jesus radically.

---

Text notes (you can access biblical texts via [www.Biblegateway.com](http://www.Biblegateway.com))

- a. BIG idea: We were created by God and find our best self, when we find our place in His grand Story.
- b. Key verse: Genesis 1:1, 31a: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.”
- c. KEY: O = Observation; I = Interpretation; A = Application (or C = Challenge)  
Advice to study leaders:
- d. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- e. Determine the core questions you’ll ask (know which ones to skip if pressed for time).
- f. Always reword questions in words that are comfortable for you (and, if the question doesn’t make sense to you, then discard it.) You want to “own” each question.
- g. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- h. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- i. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- j. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.
- k. Doug recommends the 1 vol. New Bible Commentary, Revised (21<sup>st</sup> Century ed, IVP). Well worth \$35.
- l. Tim recommends *Science, Creation, and the Bible: Reconciling Rival Theories of Origins* by Richard Carlson & Tremper Longman III (IVP).
- m. At Oasis, there was further discussion on the idea of “genre” and “myth” (as that is helpful in understanding how the ancients understood the Genesis narrative) and the similarities/differences between the 2 respective Creation accounts in Gen. 1 & 2. Please contact [tghali@grace.org](mailto:tghali@grace.org) if you are interested in these notes.