



Sermon Notes | In the Beginning | Genesis 1:1

## **INTRODUCTION**

On Christmas Eve, 1968, Astronaut Frank Borman, aboard the Apollo 8 spacecraft, and viewing Earth from orbit, read a message for the people on Earth. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

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

Twenty-five years later, while reflecting back on that moment Borman said this: "I had an enormous feeling that there had to be a power greater than any of us, that there was a God, that there was indeed a beginning, and that maybe, even our choosing to read from Genesis wasn't a haphazard thing. Maybe it had been ordained in some way."

Beholding the world from such a perspective would arouse enormous feelings, and we also know that 'our' opening of Genesis is under God's ordained Hand and is not a haphazard thing. It is all from Him! And so, approaching Genesis, and considering how to absorb it, really does cause enormous feelings. It is overwhelming, for this is the book of beginnings, the beginning of everything that is in this world. It is the book of firsts, the book of foundations, the book of origins and sources (which is what Genesis means). It is the book where all answers begin. The theology that begins in this book has no end.

Many acknowledge that Genesis is the most important book of the Bible. One commentator said:

"If we possess the Bible without Genesis, we would have a house of cards without foundation or mortar. We cannot ensure the continuing fruit of our spiritual heritage if we do not give place to its roots."

Take out that first Domino, Genesis, and we lose everything. Every other book that has been penned and preached was from the foundation of Genesis. Such is the weight of this book. So we turn to Genesis to read it and to study it with sobriety and seriousness.

We keep returning to Genesis. Why? We keep returning because so many keep removing it, abandoning it. It is therefore a formal and exciting study that we begin. There is much in the first verse, the first chapter, the first three chapters, indeed, in the first eleven chapters, dealing with all that Genesis provides, and establishing the

foundation. It will be a comprehensive study, for we do not want to repeat modern church errors, nor be Christians mishandling Genesis. Romans tells us that the unrighteous regenerates "suppress the truth" (Romans 1:18), therefore it does not surprise us that they reject Genesis. But how do we receive it to strengthen and fortify our foundation?

So then, WHY GENESIS?

1. Because, sadly, local churches are largely departing from this book, not just churches with rainbows painted on their steps, or churches that are putting land acknowledgments on their websites. No, by churches once known for their strong theological convictions in the past, churches with bastions of truth. But now the departures from Genesis teachings are getting closer and closer to us, on creation, sexuality, sin, and it is affecting us. How so? Why? It impacts the glory of God in the Church.

Ephesians 3:21

*...to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.  
Amen.*

"In the beginning God" is sadly being abandoned. It is not a secondary issue. It is a fundamental Genesis truth, and therefore we approach Genesis in order to fortify the Church, and deepen the Church family's understanding.

2. Because every 'important' question is answered in Genesis, and we need to be reminded of why and how we are here. Where do we come from? What is the meaning of life? Why is there so much evil in the world? What is sin? Do we all sin, or is it just the bad people who sin? Is there a punishment for sin? Why? Can humans pay the price for sin? If not, how can we be saved from sin's punishment? What is 'male'? What is 'female'? Is gender fluid or binary? What is marriage? Who is marriage between? How long is marriage for? What of race? Where did all the races come from? Is one race responsible for the world's problems? Are we responsible for our ancestors' actions? What about abortion? What about capital punishment? What about nations? Genesis answers these and other questions as well. We need to be reminded of the answers, and this is why we take time in Genesis.

3. Because Genesis is beautiful! We've lost our sense of beauty. We've lost our sense to behold. We've brought beauty down to our level, shockingly so. We are so easily amused by less than beautiful things. We are attracted to the lesser, attracted to such lacking beautiful things. Walk into an old cathedral, pick up an old classic piece of literature, compare a Van Gogh or Monet painting to modern art, compare a symphony to a modern radio tune, and something inside is stirred in the 'image of God' bearer, or it should be. We are conditioned to say that the world 'does beauty', but we cannot comprehend how 'God things' can be beautiful. Christian things cannot be beautiful. Christian movies, Christian songs, cannot be good. We are conditioned to thinking that only the world does it beautifully, and so we are attracted to worldly beauty. But this has theological implications. Case in point, opening the first chapter of Genesis.

The Creation Account, the six days, is poetic. It is a literary masterpiece, but surely it cannot be literal. It's too beautiful to be real. However, this is wrong thinking. But through Genesis, our aim is to elevate beauty back to God. Truth is beautiful. Truth is elevating. Truth is stunning, because it is emanating out of God. The 'beautiful' world Creation, six days, one week, is seen as 'very good': the symmetry of a world formed in three days, the symmetry of a world filled in three days. The sweeping epic of a great global flood, and the evidence is there to prove it. The scrubbed glow of the Grand Canyon. A family preserved. A dove released. The drama of Father Abraham willing to sacrifice his son of promise, in faith of a Saving God. And what about the drama of the Joseph account, from the bottom of a pit to the top of the Egyptian court. Truth is beautiful. It grips your soul.

Genesis is the great beginning of a world created 'beautiful' and the compelling story of that 'beautiful world' fallen and cursed, and then the epic road that leads to restoration. At the end of Genesis, the last verses talk about Joseph's bones being carried from Egypt to the new land. It is a great story, so beautiful. Are we excited?

And so we turn to the opening verse, Genesis 1:1, and begin our study.

Help us now, Father, as we study this chapter, this verse, this Word. Illuminate for us, and help us as we begin. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Genesis 1:1

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

Genesis, a book of beginnings, beginning with the words, "In the beginning". These 'three' words in English are but 'one' word in the original language.

## **I. THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD:**

The beginning of the world was not an accident. It was the deliberate 'Creation' by God. Not only Genesis proclaims and testifies to this, other Biblical passages do so also. Consider this survey of references.

Psalms 33:6

*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,  
and by the breath of his mouth all their host.*

Isaiah 42:5

*Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out,  
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,  
who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it...*

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.”*

Acts 14:15

*Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.*

Acts 17:24

*The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man.*

Hebrews 1:10

*And,  
“You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands...”*

Psalms 102:25

*Of old you laid the foundation of the earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands.*

Revelation 4:11

*Worthy are you, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they existed and were created.*

Christian, this is elementary: GOD CREATED THE WORLD! To question God's Creation is to deserve receiving the same rebuke that Job received.

Job 38:4

*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
Tell me, if you have understanding.*

On this foundation we will study many beautiful Creation details: the creation of the sky, sea, plants, animals; the birth of nations and civilization; the origin of art and science; the beginning of technology; the beginning of mankind.

## **II. BEGINNING OF MANKIND:**

In this post-Christian world, most would still likely agree and affirm that God created man. The origin of confusion is not 'who' created man, but 'how' He made them, and extends to 'why' He made them. Did He only make male, or female, or as a continuum, somewhere between the two, gender fluid and fluctuating? Belief in God's creation may be claimed by many in the world, but under the surface, the issue remains

unbelief. Again, the unbelief is in the church, as we are taking in what the world is espousing over what the Bible clearly teaches. Church, did God make us, and then sit back and watch, or did God create man and give us a standard rule and law to live by? Or, did He allow for an 'if it feels good' then do it existence? If then God made us, what are the implications of that? Did He design with purpose and distinct rules?

Scripture sets forth that if God made us, then we are therefore God's possession.

Psalm 24:1-6

*The earth is the LORD's and fullness thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein,  
for he has founded it upon the seas  
and established it upon the rivers.  
Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?  
And who shall stand in his holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
who does not lift up his soul to what is false  
and does not swear deceitfully.  
He will receive blessing from the LORD  
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.  
Such is the generation of those who seek him,  
who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah.*

Are you living like God's possession? Are you living by His rule, by His standard and purpose? Does this leave blessing on your life? Did God create man with a specific design in mind, with unique roles and rules? Scripture states He did so. We read for example how to live:

Ephesians 5:15-21

*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

And we read of 'defined roles' between husband and wife with specific expectations assigned to both:

Ephesians 5:22-33

*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and*

*without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

#### 1 Peter 3:1-7

*Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external --- the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear --- but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.*

*Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

And there are also specific roles among the church leaders:

#### 1 Timothy 3:1-13

*The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

*Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.*

#### Titus 1:5b-9

*... appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charges of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover*

*of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.*

And what does the 'foundation' say? Genesis will help us.

### **III. THE BEGINNING OF SIN:**

This week, among the news reports, there was another school shooting, a deadly knife attack, and one teenage girl set another girl on fire, and the hostages were executed. Why is all this evil happening, we are asked by coworkers, unsaved family and neighbours? But these headlines are not new to Christians. We know why. But many people still ask why this happens. Why is sin so widespread? Was it because the father was at fault? Was the teenage girl bullied? Were they disadvantaged? Were they afflicted with disorder or disposition? If sin is simply the chains thrust on us from others, and thus we leave the womb 'free', as is suggested by Rousseau, then why is all this evil happening? Who is free then, and who is to blame?

But the Bible confirms that no one is free from sin and no one does good, including the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Psalm 14:3

*They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;  
there is none who does good, not even one.*

Ecclesiastes 7:20

*Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.*

1 Kings 8:46a

*If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin...*

The beginning of 'sin' happens in Genesis. It explains why the news headlines are like they are, and it explains why we all partake of that sin. The opening chapters of Genesis explain the beginning of 'sin' and why we are prone to 'sin'. And with the beginning of 'sin' is the beginning of 'suffering'. Sin and suffering go hand in hand. We will 'suffer' from the effects of our own sin, and from the effects of the sin of others. We need a proper view of 'suffering' for there is no escaping 'sin and suffering'. We will take note of the implications of the suffering for the Christian.

Genesis unveils 'sin' and teaches that 'sin' is always addressed by God accordingly, from Adam's expulsion from the Garden, to Cain's mark, to a 'generation' wiped out by the flood, to language confusion, each 'sin' is dealt with. Sometimes the discipline comes locally and benevolently, as was in Cain's case. Sometimes the discipline proves greater, as happened in the Flood, being widespread and intense, but always 'sin' is dealt with accordingly.

#### **IV. THE BEGINNING OF SALVATION:**

Genesis teaches about 'human accountability' for 'sin', and also teaches about 'divine forbearance' as God administers grace. The 'grace of God' supersedes 'sin' in Genesis. And it is important to note that the beginning of salvation begins in Genesis also, alongside 'sin'. God was not chuckling, but He was not surprised when 'sin' occurred. God is Sovereign, and His plan was always in place. He knows you. He knows your weaknesses. He determined your days. But He loves you, and God's saving work was always in His plan. He knows your sin this week, and you must repent.

The 'beginning of salvation' was seen early on. The first Gospel arrow was previewed in Chapter 3. Luther said of the verse, that it was the "Gospel in miniature".

Genesis 3:15

*I will put enmity between you and woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.*

Our God is a 'saving God' as we see in Genesis. The 'saving work' of the Cross for His people; preserving mercy, on the very undeserved, God's rascals in Genesis, yet His grace is upon them.

We see the grace upon Adam, who deserved instant death for his sin, for he was warned by God, yet he was not put to death, but was exiled from the Garden. And we see grace on the hesitant Lot despairing Sodom, on Abraham who lies, on Sarah who doubts, on Jacob who deceives yet remains blessed. Account after account, God is seen working salvation in people, so undeserving, in people just like me and you.

#### **V. THE BEGINNING OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE:**

The birth of the nation of Israel is not found in Genesis. It is found in Exodus with the commendation of them as a nation. The first named Israelite, however, is found in Genesis with Jacob's name change.

Genesis 32:28

*Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed."*

The beginning of the 'called ones', the 'elect', 'the chosen ones', is introduced in Genesis 12 where we are introduced to the first family of the 'called ones', first with Abraham, and then later, Isaac and Jacob, and then later still, the family is extended through to the fourth generation via Joseph and Judah.



Genesis 12:1-3

*Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'*

This same 'first' family comprises eighty percent of the Book of Genesis. We focus on the first twenty percent of the book, however, because we get it all wrong.

Moses, who writes Genesis, says, Look at this family! His point is that God blesses and promises things to this family. This is their story, as God's 'chosen'. Look at this family who God has 'chosen'. And so, the point of Genesis is: The Promises of God to His People. God will bless all nations through this very family. The Promise of Blessing. The Promise of Seed. The Promise of Land. And all begins here for God's people, here in Genesis.

## **VI. THE BEGINNING OF THE END:**

And not the least important, Genesis is the 'beginning of the end'. Genesis sets the table for the 'beginning' and for the 'end'. Genesis 2-3, the Garden Exile, sets the table for a Garden return set for Revelation. The cursed snake cannot continue to temp forever. The snake is crushed.

Through Abraham, all nations will be blessed. And we are provided with a preview sampling of this along the way in the stories of Uriah, Naham, Ruth, the Syrophenecian woman, all pointing to what is to come, a nation of peoples all bowing to the one true God. And Genesis ends with Joseph's preservation through the famine, 'the remnant preserved' in Egypt, and Joseph's bones to be taken back . There is so much ahead in this study. And it will become clear that 'an end' is already in motion. All things that begin have an end, all except God Himself. God has no beginning and no end. He Himself is the beginning and the end.

Genesis 1:1

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

Revelation 22:13

*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.*