

In the Beginning

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 May 2011

Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] Genesis. Where we're going to be, and if you already picked up the notes, these are not notes that you have blanks to fill in.

I decided to do it a little bit differently this time. And so, you know, I'll give you some things, some information or some teaching that's not on the notes.

That'll kind of be in between the various main points that I've provided for you. And as we go through this study of the first 11 chapters of Genesis, it's going to take us some time to do that. And we're going to skip a few things along the way, and don't worry about that. But as we go through that study, you know, we're going to deal with some biblical, very strong biblical points that are made that support not only what is written there in those 11 chapters, other supporting passages in the Bible.

Also going to look at scientific discoveries that very clearly support the claims of Scripture. And then added to that, or intermingled with all of that, we're going to make some very, I think, some very important, very significant spiritual applications.

[1:38] Because Genesis 1-11 is not just simply history of, you know, albeit supernatural events. And I believe there were.

But there is God's redemptive purpose that is woven in to the text. In fact, from cover to cover, you have God's redemptive plan unfolding before us.

And so we need to look at the history. And Genesis is a book of history. We need to look at the history with eyes, with spiritual eyes.

And through kind of the lens of God's grace and redemption. So we'll be doing that. Now, Genesis 1-1. And I hope we'll get through all of these notes tonight.

If we don't, then that's all right. The Bible says, in Genesis 1-1, the very first verse of the Bible, at least in my translation, it says it this way.

[2:51] In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. All right, there it is. There's verse 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Now, if you've ever done any writing, and right now I just am so sick of writing. If you've ever done any writing, you know that, because every writer knows, that the very first words that you put down on paper, those first words set the tone for everything that you're going to write.

The first words are important. In fact, most writers spend hours upon hours, and I can tell you that's true. Hours upon hours, trying to construct just the right sentence or right combination of words.

I know this full well. To put it together just right, to word it just right, so that you'll not only introduce the subject in the proper way, but so that you, at the same time, you will hopefully entice the reader to read what follows, to keep on reading.

And you know, and every writer knows, that that is a very important thing, very crucial thing, whatever you're writing. And so, that brings us to this kind of concluding statement or assumption.

[4:25] A good first sentence invites the reader into the story with the promise of good things to follow.

Now, what does that have to do with Genesis chapter 1, verse 1? Well, the Bible begins here with a tremendous statement. I mean, what a sentence.

What a first sentence. An incredible first sentence this is. In fact, I would even say that in my judgment, my opinion, I think you would agree with me, that this is the greatest first sentence ever written.

Now, I want you to think about this for a minute, and I think I put this in your notes. In the English version, and I don't know, I didn't go back to check the various English versions, but I, at least in mine, and I think probably is true in most, this first sentence contains only ten words.

That's the first sentence of the Bible. Remember, all writers want to present the subject just right, and they want to entice the reader to read on.

[5:43] And I've already said, and I believe it's true, this is the greatest first sentence ever written, and it only contains, in English, only contains ten words. In the Hebrew text, it only contains seven words.

Just seven words. Now, in the English, seven of the ten English words are just one syllable. I'm going to make a point here.

I mean, I really am. Seven of the ten, just one syllable words. One of the words contains two syllables, and then there are two that contain three syllables.

But none of the words in this sentence are complicated, or complex, or difficult, or unusual words. Not anything in there. Not any word in that first verse compels you to go find a dictionary to find out what it means.

It's very simple. There are no subordinate clauses in this first sentence. No pronouns. Only one preposition in the entire sentence.

[6:57] Now, what's the point of that? I'm about to tell you. The point is, it would be difficult to write a simpler sentence that would say as much as this sentence says.

In fact, I couldn't do it. And you know me well enough now to know that that's true. I couldn't do it. You know. Put it in such concise terms.

And simple, easy terms. As Moses, I believe Moses wrote the book of Genesis. Wrote the first five books of the Bible.

But what a simple sentence. And to say all that it says. One of my favorite musicals. And I do like to watch musicals. Some of them. I'm not a fan of all of them.

But I've often said that my wife lives a musical. Because she just thinks of a song that applies to anything and everything in life.

[7:52] She'll just start singing. One of my favorite musicals would be The Sound of Music. I've always liked that. And part of it is because I attach it with my grandparents that I love so well.

So much. And they're with Jesus now. But when I was just a little kid, I would go and visit their house and stay for two or three weeks out of the summer. And they would always take me to a movie.

It was a big deal. Big deal. And we went to see The Sound of Music. But I've watched that thing numerous times since. And I just love it. But now, in that story or in that movie, Julie Andrews, who played the part of Maria, is teaching.

Remember that she's teaching the children how to sing. And she says, let's start at the very beginning. A very good place to start. Do, re, mi.

And then she sings, do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do. I'm not going to sing it. Now, the incredible thing about that is with that song, just that song, Maria teaches the children the most basic principle of music.

[9:02] The scale. Do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do. And every musical composition, be it Chopsticks or Mozart's Fifth Symphony or anything else you might be able to think of.

Every musical composition is built upon that simple musical scale. Do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do. Now, Genesis 1.1 is the very beginning of the Bible.

That's where you start. And everything that follows in the Bible after that verse flows from this incredible declaration.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And so this is the very first great truth God wants man to know. I mean, put it first. And if we consider that the Bible is not just a collection of various writings that kind of loosely fit together.

If we consider it as a unified book, just like an author would sit down and write a book and start with page 1, paragraph 1, sentence 1, word 1.

[10:17] And again, that setting the tone for the rest of the book, if we consider the Bible in that sense, and I think we should. Then we have to understand that this is the first great truth God wants man to know.

That in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And so, then, know that truth.

Believe that truth. And everything else makes sense.

Have you ever thought of Genesis 1.1 in that way? That if you will start there and believe that to be true, then the entire universe makes sense.

And everything else makes sense. You talk about the foundation for a biblical worldview. It begins with Genesis 1.1. In the beginning, God created the earth.

Now, if you deny or doubt or ignore or outright reject that truth, then obviously you're going to miss the central and most important truth about God and about creation and about life itself.

[11:22] Alright? Now, that's why the first 11 chapters of Genesis, not just Genesis 1.1, but the first 11 chapters are such a battleground between unbelievers and Bible believers.

I mean, it's a huge battleground. And especially the first chapter of Genesis. In fact, even this first verse is, I mean, people have waged war.

Not physical war, but wars of words and so forth. But just from this first verse, for over a hundred years.

Matter of fact, from the time of Charles Darwin, and I know you're familiar with that name, from Darwin to the present time, that's a pretty good mark of time there where this battle has been raging.

Since Darwin, unbelievers and skeptics and doubters and all sorts of every kind have leveled their biggest guns at Genesis 1.1 and all the way through chapter 11.

[12:34] And they have attacked this section of God's Word from about every possible angle. And we're told over and over again that science has proven all these things to be false.

That is in the literal sense. That these things cannot be true. That's what we're told, aren't we?

Based on science, these things are just myth. You know, maybe there is some, and some might at least give us that these things, though they're myth, they have some kind of spiritual value, spiritual application or so forth.

But when it comes down to historical fact, that's nonsense. And that's what we're told. And we're also told that evolution must be accepted as fact.

That's what we're told now. It started out as a theory, but now it's fact. We're told that it is a fact.

And really that no intelligent person, educated person, could ever actually believe in a literal Adam and Eve.

Or a literal serpent that taught. I mean, come on. Surely you don't believe that. And we're told this.

We're told it's just absolutely ridiculous to believe in a literal Garden of Eden.

[14:02] Maybe some spiritual concept of that or some figurative sense of that, but certainly not a literal Garden of Eden. And Cain and Abel, a literal Cain and Abel.

Oh, come on. Or a literal Noah and the Ark and the flood and the Tower of Babel. You surely don't believe that these things really actually existed, do you?

Do you? I hope you do. But we're told this and said that these things, this is just nonsense, this is foolishness, and no intelligent person could actually believe in these things.

Well, I consider myself at least halfway intelligent and I do believe in these things. Just like the Bible says. And so our study of these chapters is going to reveal why I believe and I believe why you believe or at least if you don't believe, you ought to believe in the literal truth of these chapters.

I mean literal. These are historical events. These things actually took place. And I hope to answer some of the typical questions people have about Genesis, the Genesis account.

[15:21] And I've kind of listed some of those there so I'm not going to read them. Give a look at those. And I hope that by the time we're done we'll at least touch on all of these and try to give an answer from Scripture on these things.

And try to answer the question that's on everybody's mind. Did Adam have a belly button? I know you were all very interested in that, weren't you?

Answer to that. Maybe we'll get to that. Okay. But really, and I put this in your notes, there are really just three questions that everybody must answer when they approach Genesis.

Really the entire Bible. Question number one is where did I come from? Why am I here? And where am I going? Those are three crucial questions that everyone must answer.

And I believe Genesis will give us that answer. Because you see, you cannot answer the last question correctly until you understand the second question. Until you answer it. And you cannot answer the second question correctly until you answer the first question.

[16:33] And that's why the Genesis account is so important. Genesis tells us where we have come from, where we came from. And Genesis tells us why we are here.

That is, we were made by God and we are here to know Him and to love Him and to serve Him and to worship Him. All those questions hinge on our conclusions about the Genesis account and

specifically Genesis 1 verse 1.

And if you miss that, then you're going to miss everything. You'll miss where you were intended to go. That's the third question. And we were intended to go and will go, if you know Jesus, to a place of eternal communion with God, the God who made you and the God who loves you.

Now, with that said, we're ready to look at verse 1. And we've got plenty of time. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now, let me make this very clear.

And I think it's important for us to know this, to acknowledge this. Genesis 1.1 is not an argument. An argument for the existence of God.

[17:53] Now, I say argument, I don't mean like two people arguing over the last piece of bread at Sunday's dinner or something like that. I'm talking about presenting an argument, presenting a case.

Genesis 1.1 is not that. It's not an argument. It is a declaration. Very important we understand that. It's a declaration. This is what the Bible declares. That is, God declares through His Word.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And in reality, the Bible never, ever presents an argument for the existence of God. Now, we can go to places in the Bible where that doctrine or the existence of God, the one true God, where the Bible speaks of that and supports that truth, but it's never presented as an argument.

It doesn't present a case for the existence of God. Never. What does it do? It just simply begins with it. It just simply begins with God. It says, in the beginning, God.

Do you understand what I'm saying? You can't go to Genesis 1.1 and say, well, now, here's the argument. Now, it is proof in a sense, but it is a proof to be believed or it is a fact to be believed.

[19:15] In the beginning, God. And that's just where the Bible begins. And, the Bible does not present an argument for God as the sole creator of the universe. It doesn't present an argument for that.

It simply begins with the statement of fact. And you can take that or leave it. That's just the bottom line.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. There's the fact. God created it all.

Believe it or don't believe it. But there it is. Now, if you take it as fact, and I hope you do, then here's what you believe.

And here are several things I'm going to give you here tonight. This is what you believe. If you believe what I just read there, Genesis 1.1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. If you believe that to be true, then this is what you believe.

Alright? Number one, the universe, really I could say, all created things had a definite beginning. That's what you believe.

[20:20] This isn't complicated. Is it? Really not? And you do believe that, don't you? Everything, every material thing, every created thing, every thing on this earth, on this planet, you, me, the chairs you're sitting on, tables, the air we breathe, the atmosphere, the stars, planets, the entire universe, known and unknown to us, had a definite beginning point.

And, that's what he means here. What the Bible means to tell us. In fact, the word Genesis, that's what it means. In, or excuse me, the beginning.

The beginning. The Hebrew people named this book Genesis for the first word of the book in the Hebrew text.

And the first word is Genesis. Genesis. And it means the beginning. And, and so the point is, here is where and how all things began.

And not how in the sense of, I'm going to spell it out, just how God did it. But this is how it all began. God did it. And, and so that's, that's what we have.

[21:42] And so, the fact, that fact helps us understand that the material world is not eternal. I mean, that's, that's what you must assume from the statement.

That the all things, the heavens and the earth are not eternal. They had a definite beginning point. There was a time when matter, material things, did not exist.

The universe is not eternal. There's a time when the heavens and the earth and all the planets and all these things did not exist. And the things that we see here on this earth, like the trees and, you know, everything, all of those things had a beginning point.

None of these things have been around here forever. And so, with that fact, which is more than just implied in the verse, with that fact established, then there's only one thing that is eternal.

And that's God. Because in the beginning, God was there. Alright, so, see, He is eternal. The great Augustine was asked one time by someone, asked what God was doing before He created the world.

[23:00] Have you ever had that question put to you? Or maybe you've entertained the question. Or maybe a child has asked you that. Well, if God was there before everything was created, what was He doing?

And someone came to Augustine and asked him that question and he thought for a moment and then he replied. He said, He was creating hell for people who ask questions like that. That might be a little harsh, but that's reportedly what he said.

But, anyway, the idea here is, or the truth is, that only God is eternal. God exists in eternity. Everything else had a beginning point. And, is that important?

Yeah, it is. And it has some pretty important implications related to other theories and beliefs of the origin of all things, namely, Darwinism or evolution, that theory of evolution.

And we'll get into that, hopefully, next time. Number two, the second thing, that you believe, if you believe Genesis 1.1, is that the universe, really all things, were created by God out of nothing.

[24:09] That's what you believe. Do you believe that? Yes. Okay. Everything was created out of nothing. Scientists tell us that there are 400 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy alone.

400 billion. That's a rounded off number. There may be many more than that, I don't know. 400 billion in the Milky Way galaxy. That's our galaxy. Yeah, did anybody count that?

All right. That's a valid question. But that's a lot, isn't it? 400 billion. And also, scientists estimate that there are more than 100 billion galaxies in the universe.

Now, think about that. And each one of those galaxies has at least 100 billion stars like our sun.

Now, can you get your brain around that? And then consider that God created all that. Or as one preacher I heard put it, God hung all those things out there.

[25:22] He put them out there. together. And also, believe it or not, God calls each one by name. I mean, we're thinking in our mind, how could anybody even count them?

But not only does God know how many there are exactly, but He's named them. And Psalm 147 tells us that. He counts the number of stars. He gives names to all of them.

That's incredible. I don't know what those names are. If you get to heaven, maybe we can ask Him. I don't know that we'll care. He kind of shows how much He cares about His creation.

Yeah, exactly. And, you know, I won't mention that He knows the number of hairs on our head because that might offend somebody here.

But here's how King David got his brain around it. He said, the heavens declare the glory of God. And the sky proclaims or the expanse proclaims the work of His hands.

[26:28] And how else can you rationally explain it? God has left His fingerprints on everything in this universe, everything in creation, and you'd have to be blind not to see that.

Now, if you believe Genesis 1-1, then you believe, as I've said, that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. Out of nothing. The technical term is ex nihilo.

Did I put that in there? Yes. Alright. Meaning out of nothing. Out of nothing. And that's a Latin word, by the way. Ex nihilo. Ex is a preposition out of.

Out of nothing. And that's how God created all things. Out of nothing. Now, in the sense of the word, man can create things.

We do use the word create in that sense, don't we? I could go down here to the grocery store and buy a Betty Crocker cake mix and take that home and go to the kitchen and take the contents out, read the instructions.

[27:37] Hopefully, I would do that. Put all that together, mix it all together, and pour that mixture into a pancake pan and put it in the oven and leave it in there the right amount of time, the right temperature, and lo and behold, out would pop a cake.

I'm not sure if it would be edible, annoying me, but that's possible. And so we say I created a cake there. But you know, God did not create the heavens and the earth the way that you and I might create a cake or create anything else.

Because he took nothing and with nothing he made everything. Now, only God could do that. And it's a pretty awesome thing.

And I'm sure you've heard this story before. But one day a scientist came to God and this scientist said, you know, listen, God, we scientists decided we don't need you anymore.

And because, you know, we know now how to extract stem cells and clone people and transplant hearts and all kinds of things that were once considered miraculous.

[28:43] and God patiently heard him out. Then he said, all right, I'll tell you what let's do. Let's have a little man making contest. And the scientist said, okay, that'd be great.

But God said, but now, we're going to do this the old way like I did with Adam. All right? The scientist said, fine. Fine. And so he bent down, scooped up a handful of dust, dirt.

And God said, what? Wait a minute. You get your own dirt. You see, that's ex nihilo. Ex nihilo, out of nothing, is how the Bible says that God created the heavens and the earth.

And there are several references in the Bible. I think we've got time to look at a few of those. John 1, 1 to 3. You don't find, by the way, don't find the word ex nihilo in the Bible.

But you have the concept taught. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And he's speaking of Jesus here.

[29:51] All things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made. Without him, nothing was made that was made. That is, he did it all, out of nothing.

Romans, chapter 4, verse 17. As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations, in the presence of him whom he believed, God who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.

That's a perfect description of ex nihilo. God calls into being things that don't exist. that there's no substance for. And makes them into something.

Let's see. Hebrews 11, 3. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. Now that's not the way you would put it if...

We don't have time to get into the actual word, the word study here. But the way this is worded means that God spoke everything into existence.

[31:07] That there was no bringing together of things. Or, you know, pulling this together and that together. Not even taking things and changing them. God, with the word, created all things.

All things came to be. That's the idea of ex nihilo. Psalm 33, verse 6. By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

Not by the combining of things and substances and created things and materials and elements and such. Just by His mouth.

Just with His word. And that's how God creates. All right, let's consider a third thing that we must believe if we're going to believe Genesis 1.1. Number three, all created things belong to God.

You see, it's not enough or it's not the end of the discussion to just consider what the Bible is saying there.

[32:15] There's also an application and an assumption. There is not an assumption but a conclusion that must be drawn from this declaration that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

And one of those conclusions is that all created things belong to God. Now, were you created? Of course. And so you belong to God, don't you?

That's a conclusion we must come to. And it's an important one. It's one that God demands. If God is the sole creator and if God created all things out of nothing, that is, he didn't borrow anything from anybody else or anything else or anywhere else, he created all things and all the materials he created himself, then the conclusion is everything he created belongs to him.

Alright? Now, here's the problem behind the theory of evolution. The main problem. The root problem. evolution. That is, evolution for most people is just an excuse to reject God's sovereignty. In fact, for many, it's just an excuse to reject the existence of God altogether. Not only, just his sovereignty. Because of the sinful heart, people want to be free.

[33:39] I mean, this really is at the root of evolution. If people want to be free, they want to do their own thing, they want to go their own way and live the way they want to live and they don't want to be told what to do or where to go and so forth.

That's the fallen nature, the heart of fallen man. But if God created us, and that's what Genesis 1.1 says, and then he's going to spell all that out in more detail as you get on into chapter 1.

If God created us, and we didn't just evolve over time, then he owns us. He owns us. This is really a point of the gospel, a point of evangelism.

In fact, I believe in Acts chapter 17 when Paul spoke to the Epicureans and Stoics, those Greek philosophers and those highly intellectual, at least they thought they were, people, when he

presented the gospel to them, he went back to creation, went back to God creation, and worked his way up to Jesus, and he said to those Stoics and Epicureans, those Athenians, he said, this God demands that you repent.

And so, this is really part, can be an element of our gospel message. God created all things, and therefore he owns all things, and you owe him everything.

[35 : 13] everything. And one of those things you owe him is to believe him, and to trust him, and to follow him, and to accept his provision of salvation, and so forth.

So this is part of the gospel. And so if he owns us, what I'm saying is, then we are accountable to him for everything we say and we do. And that's not really a very happy thought for a whole lot of people.

But if we believe Genesis 1, 1, then we are duty bound to love and obey and serve and honor and worship the God who created us and owns us.

Alright, one more. If you believe Genesis 1, 1, then you believe that true wisdom begins with Genesis 1, 1.

True wisdom begins there. Because if you say you believe, the Bible, you do say that, don't you? You do mean that, don't you?

[36 : 20] Thank you. If you say you believe the Bible, then you must start where the Bible starts. You can't just pick and choose the parts you want to believe.

You're going to either believe all of it or none of it. And so if you believe the Bible, then you're going to start where the Bible starts. And that's with the very first verse.

And so that's why I say that wisdom and truth and the search for God really ultimately begins right here in Genesis 1, 1.

heaven. And so here's kind of the rationale for this. If you want to end up where the Bible ends up, where God creates the new heaven and new earth, I mentioned Revelation 22, then you have to start where the Bible starts.

In the beginning, God created the first heaven and the first earth. I mean, you have to make that connection. Going to get to the right destination, you have to start at the right place and then follow the Bible all the way through.

[37 : 29] But you can't just pick up somewhere along the line and say, well, I'll start believing here, but I'm going to reject the first part of this. You can't do that. It just won't work.

There are some basic fundamental truths. Not that there's a truth that's any more true than other truths, but there are fundamental foundational truths that you must begin with.

Like this Jehovah's witness that I've been talking to lately, and going to have a little time with him this next week sometime, and he needs to understand that he's starting in the wrong place.

He's making a major grave error at the very beginning, and therefore everything else he believes is wrong. Now, in his case, it's not creation.

But it's the person of Christ. It's who Jesus is. And if you get that wrong, then you're going to get the rest of it wrong. And that's what they've done.

[38 : 34] And that's true of all false religions. They've started at the wrong place, or they've made the wrong conclusion, or have embraced an error, a foundational error.

God, and I would submit to you that Genesis 1-1, and really the creation account itself, and as we go on into Genesis, is foundational.

If you reject that and don't believe that, then you're going to end up in the wrong place. So that's where wisdom begins. It begins in Genesis 1-1. Let me put it this way. If you believe Genesis 1-1, then you won't have any problems with the rest of the Bible.

if you can believe, for example, that God could miraculously create everything in the universe, if you believe that to be true, then you won't struggle over the other miracles that are mentioned in the Bible.

Now, if the Bible gets it, but if you do reject it, and the Bible is wrong there, then how can you trust it anywhere else? Now, I know this is reasoning, but it's a valid way of reasoning.

[39 : 44] I mean, why should you struggle over the virgin birth? Should you? Not at all. Not at all. Should you struggle over the virgin birth? Why would you struggle over the virgin birth if you're willing to believe that God spoke and all things were created?

Looking at it from the reverse side. Or the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here's the bottom line. The Christian faith starts with the very first verse of the Bible.

And it's important to know that. And I emphasize this because maybe not anybody in this room, but I have encountered Christians who want to believe certain parts of the Bible and at the same time disbelieve this part of it.

And say somehow that doesn't matter so much. But it does. man's choice then, if we just kind of bring this down to the bottom line here.

Man's choice really could be thought of in this way. His choice is either God or dirt. Either God or dirt.

[40 : 55] Either man was directly created by God or we evolved over billions of years by the random acts of a mindless, purposeless, materialistic evolution where nothing plus nothing equals everything.

And I tell you, that takes an incredible amount of faith to believe that. I would rather use the word it takes a lot of stupidity. It takes a whole lot more faith than it takes to believe the simple yet profound truth of Genesis 1.1.

But these are the two choices. Either we came from the hand of God and we're created in his image or we came up from the mud over eons and eons of mindless evolution.

So it's either God or dirt and there's really no choice in between there. Thank you.