

## THE DAWN OF HISTORY

### Study 1

#### In the Beginning

Read

**Genesis 1: 1-5; John 1: 1-3**

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth".* The Bible begins in this way. Notice there is no lead in to this clear statement. And there is no qualification of it, or apology for it, after it is given. I have read it many, many times and the bold clear facts of it always strikes me. Three questions are immediately answered.

When? *"In the beginning."*

Who? *"God."*

What? *"Created the heavens and the earth."*

There was a time among Christians when this opening sentence of the Scriptures was accepted without question. It was generally acknowledged that God was the Architect and Maker of the Universe. Today, if you say that you believe that God is the sole Creator of all things, you will find many who will question and oppose. Their ideas are readily accepted, often without debate or understanding.

In this set of studies we are going to look at the early chapters of the Bible and we are going to study together how early history took shape. It is a simple story to read, but let us say one or two things at the outset which are vital as the basis of the teaching we are going to give.

1. We accept the early chapters of Genesis as a vital part of God's Word. It is the way in which God has revealed to us the beginning of His works. Simple it may be - but we believe it is true.
2. Therefore, Genesis does not come within the sphere of writings which are called legend, or myth, or fable. There are many of these which you have read, and maybe a divinity teacher or college lecturer has told you that the Bible contains these kind of stories. We teach that all the Bible is TRUE, including **Genesis 1**.
3. We believe that the Universe is NOT the result of an ACCIDENT, but of DESIGN. Just as you could make models and create and build things to your design, so God made the heavens and the earth - the whole Universe - to His design. As we examine His works it is evident that behind them is the WISDOM of His supreme mind.
4. One more point which is quite important - God is greater than all He has made. He is not just a FORCE or an INFLUENCE. As you read your Bible you will notice that God is a PERSON, and as a person He made all His works and is in control of all that He has made. It is this personal aspect that speaks to us as people - we are not just dealing with things - He IS the LIVING GOD.

Look carefully at these four points and think about them.

The first five verses of Genesis tell us three clear facts:

1. God's perfect beginning in Creation.
2. God's purpose in Creation.
3. God's power in Creation.

#### 1. Perfection.

*"In the beginning"* - this could mean a very long time ago. Geologists and Scientists say that our earth - which is a very small part of God's Creation - could be millions of years old. However long ago it was, God was there and He made the Universe, and He made it perfect - we can be sure of this. Whatever comes from God must be, as He is without fault - perfect. (**See Genesis 1:31**)

#### 2. Purpose.

*"The earth was without form and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."* Some believe from this verse that chaos had taken the place of order in the Creation of God. That which was made with form, shape and beauty, is now a mass of disorder. It is covered with darkness. It could well be that between **verses 1 and 2** a "gap" ensued during which such chaos happened. Evil came in which spoilt God's work and robbed it of its beauty. Yet an AGENCY is at work to fulfil God's purpose in spite of this. *"The Spirit of God was hovering."* Whatever the extent of the damage, and however long the period during which the land lay in disorder, God's plan was not destroyed. His plan is to bring ORDER out of CHAOS. It has to be acknowledged that this is just one conservative interpretation of these verses. Such an approach to these verses would allow for the age of the universe, which Scientists claim, needs to be.

#### 3. Power.

*"God said; 'Let there be light and there was light'."* (**verse 3**) God began with a WORD OF POWER. This is significant. As the Spirit of God "moved" over the mass of darkness the silence is shattered by God's Voice. The power of God is impressive when we consider the ORIGINS of the universe. Everything begins with God. Emphasis is put upon ACTION which is decisive and dominant. God is powerful enough to take ALL in hand and bring things to a glorious conclusion. As we close our first study one point must be firmly kept in mind in dealing with the truth of Creation. The Bible as a whole, and the New Testament in particular, accepts without question the fact that God is the Creator of the universe. We can find evidence in each of the miracles of this fact. It is worth noting that in **John 1**, the work of Creation is attributed to the Lord Jesus Who is God. John tells us that ALL THINGS were made by Him. He is called the BEGINNING of the Creation of God. Look through for yourself and you will become convinced that to deny the truth that God is CREATOR - to accept the theory of evolution in any of its forms - is to deny the UNITY AND INSPIRATION of the Scriptures. Think carefully about this.

## Study 2

### The Perfect Creation



#### Genesis 1

In this lesson we are going to study the process of Creation. The work of God was accomplished in stages, each stage making a day in Creation - a day with evening and morning. Notice that it is **"the evening and the morning were the first day," (verse 5)** and so on. The Jews reckoned their day from the evening. This is made clear in the outlining of the "days" of Creation.

Look carefully, at each day's work. This chapter shows how in six days God worked to make the heavens and the earth, the animals, birds, fish - all the creatures that had life. The crowning glory of Creation came with the making of man.

Creation began with a command. Look at the number of times in this chapter that the words, **"God said,"** occur. The voice of God expressed His power. It is very important that we notice this! Thus God commanded that light should be, and it was. This was the first act of Creation. It is good to take the Bible, in its simplicity; and realise that God had power to do this. And as each day of Creation unfolded, different forms of life came into being.

We can summarise the days of Creation as follows:

- Day 1. Light- day and night. **(verses 3-5)**
- Day 2. The firmament or expanse - Heaven. **(verses 6-8)**
- Day 3. Waters gathered together - earth and sea, grass, herb, and trees from the earth. **(verses 9-13)**
- Day 4. Lights in the heavens to divide day and night. The greater and lesser lights to rule day and night - the stars. **(verses 14-19)**
- Day 5. Creatures and fish in the sea, winged fowl above the earth. **(verses 20-23)**
- Day 6. Living creatures on the earth, cattle, insects, man in His own image and likeness. Creation finished. **(verses 24-31)**
- Day 7. The Sabbath - God rested. **(chapter 2: 1-3)**

Study these carefully - but notice that God spoke and it was done. His was the mighty VOICE that could command. We notice, as we look at these stages of Creation, that God was in CONTROL. Nothing was left to chance and nothing went wrong. Very often, when even the most skilful of men do things, they can lose control. I remember the awful tension when in one of America's space-missions to the moon, the craft, for a while, seemed out of control. Although everything was so minutely planned, suddenly all seemed lost. Ground Control lost control. Fortunately, all ended well on that occasion. But as we study God's work, there was no doubt about it, He was completely in control. Try to get into your minds this atmosphere of the controlling power of God:

**"God said," verse 3.**

**"God divided," verse 4.**

**"God called," verse 5.**

**"God finished," chapter 2: 1.**

**"God rested," chapter 2: 2.**

As **Colossians 1: 16** says clearly, **"For by Him all things were created."** Then again, we see that God was content with what He did. At the end of every day we read the words, **"God saw that it was good."** Day by day, as the work took shape, there was not a flaw or a blemish, everything was according to plan. This unfolding of Creation is much more satisfactory than any idea of evolution - the movement of chance. We know that God's mind was in His work, and at the end of it all like an artist examining his canvas with the painting complete, we read that **"God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good". (verse 31)**

We can feel the sense of joy and satisfaction that was with God when, as a result of His handiwork, the Universe was perfect and complete. Creation then, was complete. God finished the work and then rested. What a great story this is. Perhaps we can learn, among other things this great lesson, that whatever God begins, He completes. The Bible is a book which tells of the finished works of God. This is why, when the Lord Jesus died at Calvary, He cried, **"It is finished."** (**John 19: 30**) The work of saving us from sin is a completed work.

Just one important remark as we close. Many intellectual people, find it difficult to accept that Creation was achieved this way. It seems that such truth is difficult to grasp. There is an important verse in **Hebrews 11** which gives the clue to understanding the meaning of God's creative power. It is simple. Among all the activities of faith described as coming from men who dared to trust God is the statement that, **"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God". (verse 3)** Evolution sounds plausible - even fascinating - but it leaves many gaps to fill. But FAITH accepts what reason often fails to understand just because such faith is placed in a God who is great enough to do everything. The universe is HIS because He made it. He will have the last word concerning its destiny!

## Study 3

### The Crown of Creation



#### Genesis 2

We have looked at the way in which God made all things. Each stage added to the beauty of Creation. And, on the sixth day, the whole work was crowned with the Creation of Man. It is important that you notice the place that the Bible gives to man. Evolution, in whatever form you study it, makes man just a stage in a developing process. It was Darwin, with his theory, who saw man as a mere development from apes, even though he could not find the final 'link' between the two. This theory gives nothing distinctive to man; he is just an animal - even though superior in his character to others. When you study the Bible teaching about man, you must always realise that man is not just part of the animal kingdom, religious, cultured, more advanced though he may be. To give him just this place in Creation destroys the whole idea of God's work and purpose. If at school or college you have been taught the idea of evolution in regard to man, just look very carefully now at this study of the Scripture.

This is how **Genesis 1: 26-27** describes the making of man; **"Let us make man in our IMAGE, according to our LIKENESS - so God CREATED MAN in His own IMAGE, in the IMAGE of God He created him, MALE and**

## **FEMALE He created them."**

This tells us very clearly **WHAT man was like** in his early days.

Simply put, we can say he was like God. Maybe that does not convey much to us in our day, so many centuries afterwards. Notice that this is not said about any other part of the Creation. All was wonderful in its own way, perfect and complete. Yet, man was made like God. This does not mean that he was necessarily like God to look at. In fact the Bible makes it clear that it is impossible to see the face of God in this form. We can say this much to help us understand a little of what the image of God meant for man. God has a **mind** and we read about His **thoughts** (See **Psalm 139**) God has a **heart**, affections, for we read about His love. He also has a **will** by which He acts and works and we read much about His will. These are qualities of a real PERSON and make up true personality. If you think for a moment you will readily agree that these are true of your personality. So it is that **heart, mind and will** which were given to us from God as He made us in **"His image and likeness."** This stamps man with a dignity and glory distinct from the rest of Creation.

So we ask - **WHERE did man really come from?**

**Genesis 2: 7** makes this clear. **"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."** The thing that always strikes me about this account of God and man is that out of the dust such a wonderful product could come. Men become so proud and arrogant, even behaving as if they were greater than God Himself. Yet from dust we came - only God breathed His life into man and he became a living being.

I have watched a potter making pots. He begins his work with just a lump of grey, dirty looking clay. It looks so useless. But he begins to mould it on his wheel. In his mind is the design - on the wheel is the clay. By the time he has finished the work on the wheel and processed the clay through the kiln and painting, he has a work of some beauty. We know what men are capable of in this way, and we admire their skill. What about God? He took dust and formed man, filling him with the very breath of His life. Think about this carefully. We depend upon God for our life and breath. (**Acts 17: 23-25**) Thus it was that Adam, the first man, came into being.

We now ask the question, **WHY was man made?**

God has a reason for everything He does. Very little is said about this, but notice what is indicated in the chapter. God put His man in the garden of Eden to tend it and keep it. (**verse 15**) It must have been a beautiful garden with every choice fruit and possibilities of fertility. Then God gave Adam dominion over all the other creatures He had made. (**verses 19 & 20**) Two things we can therefore say about God's reasons. Man was made to **OBEY** and he was made to **RULE**. The second was really the consequence of the first. It was only when man obeyed God's commands that he was fit to rule as head of Creation.

The instructions given to Adam could not have been simpler. Yet the moment disobedience came in he fell from his high position. He no longer ruled - in the words of Scripture - **"he died."** So at this early stage of the history

of the world it is clearly taught that only in obeying God is true blessing to be found.

We close this lesson with noticing how God made woman. The story is told in a simple way. Deep sleep comes upon Adam and out of his body the woman is made. There is a very wonderful touch about it. Adam's helper and companion came as a gift from God. She was part of himself. No wonder he loved her. **Verse 24** is an important verse in relation to the Bible teaching about marriage. At a time when it is easy to get divorce and break up marriage, this command holds good. The ordinance of marriage and family life is as old as man himself. He must never treat it lightly.

We are not told how long the Creation remained in its perfect state. It must have been very wonderful while it lasted. Adam and Eve lived together in the enjoyment of the full beauty of a perfect Creation. We are only too conscious of the way in which this Creation has become marred. Can you imagine the world without the curse of sin and sorrow, and Creation without blight and decay? This was what God first made and what our first parents enjoyed. The greatest of all the blessings they enjoyed was that God walked with them in a close relationship. **Verse 8** seems to suggest this. There was a time of perfect harmony between God and His Creation.

## **Study 4**

### **The Serpent's Sting**

#### **Read Genesis 3: 1-9**

In this study we are going to look at the way in which the work of God was spoiled. To me, **Genesis 3** is the saddest chapter in the whole of the Bible. We can truly say that it records the event that changed the whole course of history, man's history. Again the narrative is simple - telling of the strange happenings in the garden. The cause of the trouble was the Serpent. We are told he was subtle, more than any other creature. He came to Eve in a cunning way. We soon find that He was the enemy of God, because immediately he attacked the commands that God had given. The events that day sadly proved that his intentions were only evil. Eve was led to disobey God and to do that which brought disaster to herself, her husband, and eventually to the whole of the human race.

You should study carefully this chapter and understand its full meaning. We can study in detail the course of events.

#### **1. THE AGENT - "The Serpent"**

Who was this intruder who interrupted the peace of the garden? Throughout the Bible there is a consistent picture of a personality of evil at work. At the end of the Bible, in **Revelation 20: 2** this person is given all his titles, **"The dragon, the serpent of old, the devil, and Satan."** He was obviously already in existence before Adam and Eve were created and he came to them as a serpent to tempt and deceive. One important fact we can learn from this incident is that evil came into our world through the energies of a person whose whole aim was to destroy the purpose of God. We must always think of Satan in this way.

#### **2. THE APPROACH. "Has God indeed said?"**

The passing of centuries in time has not changed the picture. Satan is still the AGENT of all that is evil. Unseen,

subtle, relentless, he leads the forces of evil, to attack and if possible, destroy God's people and God's purpose. You will probably find that people will deny the existence of a personal devil yet admit to the serious problem of evil in the world. The Bible insists on and describes the character of a person who is the PRIME AGENT in all evil work - Satan himself - the serpent who visited Eden.

The very first question asked in the Bible was asked by the Serpent as he tempted Eve. And it was a question regarding God's authority. The thing that is so striking about this question is its attack on the character of God. This was Satan's approach, and always has been. There was deceit and lies to follow as he gradually sought to steal Eve's allegiance. She told the Serpent what would happen if she disobeyed God's command. Then the lie came, "**You will not surely die**". (verse 4) He just undermined her sense of God's truthfulness. She could not trust God. It has always been Satan's work to destroy man's trust in God. Read what the Lord Jesus said about Satan in **John 8: 44**.

There is a serious challenge in his words. "**Your father, the devil**" - "**a murderer from the beginning**" - "**He is a liar and the father of it.**" What are we to make of this? In Eden he was smooth tongued and plausible although ruthless in his attack on God's Word. Paul & Peter have described Satan in two ways which illustrate two different approaches in his work - "**an angel of light**", (2 **Corinthians 11: 14**) and "**a roaring lion**". (1 **Peter 5: 8**) He is flexible in his strategy but deadly in his consistent aim. Study the approach of Satan as he attacks.

### 3. THE APPEAL. "**You will be like God**"

Satan's appeal to Eve is worth careful thought. It was an attack on her mind. It was an appeal to her desires. Behind what she saw, were seeds of doubt and pride which the serpent carefully sowed. After an outright denial of God's Word there is an attempt to discredit God's motives. If they ate, possibilities would be realised which God wished to deny them. It suggested that God was withholding from them the highest good. How cunning, and what a terrible thing to say. Yet **verse 6** tells the sad story that the appeal worked. The forbidden fruit became the most desired food. Eve partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil. Remember that pride is man's greatest weakness and it is at this point that we are most vulnerable. In the quiet of your mind Satan will put thoughts which discredit God's purposes of wisdom and love thus tempting you to fall.

### 4. THE ACHIEVEMENT. "**She took its fruit . . .**"

The saddest reflection upon the events of the fall is that Satan triumphed - he achieved his end. Does it surprise you that evil can be so attractive? The fruit may have tasted sweet but the trouble is, it was DISOBEDIENCE and many other poisonous effects followed which we are suffering from today. It was REBELLION - the opposition of man's will to the will of God. It was TREACHERY - Adam and Eve betrayed the trust that was put in them - they dishonoured their God. But summing up it meant DISASTER. A usurper took over the hearts and lives of people created to serve and love their Creator. Such is the seriousness of sin. Satan emerged triumphant.

Is this the end? Thank God, although He drove Adam out of the garden He devised a plan to bring him back. The sin

begun in Eden was overthrown by the sacrifice of Calvary. Only the power of the Lord Jesus could effectively deal with the problem of sin.

# Questions

## Study 1 IN THE BEGINNING

1. Give the three questions that **Genesis 1: 1** answers.
2. How can you tell from the passage of Scripture that the work of Creation was not an accident?
3. What was God's purpose as His Spirit moved upon the face of the waters?
4. 'God is greater than all His works'. Say what you understand this statement to mean.
5. Give reasons for believing that **Genesis 1**, is absolutely true.

## Study 2 THE PERFECT CREATION

1. How do we know that God was satisfied with the things He had made?
2. "**God divided**" - we read this of at least two of God's acts in Creation. What were the things that He divided from each other?
3. What happened on the sixth day of Creation that was so important?
4. We notice that God spoke and Creation came into being. What does this tell us about God?
5. God finished the work of Creation. What other finished work do we read of in the Bible, and where was it finished?

## Study 3 THE CROWN OF CREATION

1. Why is man so different from animals in creation?
2. What do we mean when we say that man was made in the likeness of God?
3. Say in what way you think God is like a potter.
4. Why did God make man, according to our study of **Genesis 2**?
5. Why was the woman, Eve, given to Adam by God?

## Study 4. THE SERPENT'S STING

1. Give the four names which the Bible gives to the great enemy of God.
2. What do we learn about Satan from our chapter?
3. What is Satan's object?
4. What was the question "**has God said?**", an attack on?
5. In our lesson we have described several things that sin is. Give two of them.