

THE GOSPEL : PART ONE // CREATION

Genesis, *including the first two chapters*, is not a science textbook and it is important we do not read it that way. The creation account in Genesis was written for a specific purpose. That purpose was not to explain in micro detail how the cosmos came to be as it is but to set the scene for the great story of the Bible.

The story of where humanity came from...we were purposefully *created*, not accidentally formed during the evolutionary process.

The story of how we separated ourselves from our Creator through our own choices and unwillingness to believe His word.

The story of God, holy and righteous, filled with love, mercy and grace, beginning His centuries long pursuit of His creation.

So, with that in mind, let's turn to Genesis 1. Take some time and simply write down the order of creation.

Day	What He created

What phrase is repeated in verses 3, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31?

God looked over all He had made and what He saw delighted His heart. This is the cosmos existing in perfect harmony with it's Creator. We have never known such a time but take a moment to think what that would have been like...everything *being* exactly as God intended it to be. One day God will restore the cosmos to that state but we are getting ahead of the story!

Read Genesis 1:1. **Who created the heavens and the earth?**

No it was not a trick question and yes God was the right answer! The Bible simply accepts the existence of God. He existed when there was nothing. When Genesis 1 says 'In the beginning...' it simply means when the world began. For the Biblical writers there was never a moment when God was not there. He is not a created being. He exists outside of the created world. The theological term for this is God's *transcendence*.

Read Colossians 1:15-17. **What do these verses tell us about why God made the cosmos?** (read again the end of verse 16)

God did not decide to make people and then had to design a place for them to live and so the earth came to be. We can often think of it like that but that is placing *us* at the centre of the story and that is not where we belong. The cosmos was made by God but also for God.

Paul says it a little differently in Romans 1:20. **What does Paul say about the created world in this verse?**

This is often called 'general revelation'. The idea that God revealed Himself in a general way to every human being that has ever lived because He showed who He is through His creation.

In the Psalms we get another way of looking at this idea. Read Psalm 19:1 and 97:6.

The writers of these psalms see the created world as a declaration of God's_____.

But go back to Colossians 1 for a second and re-read verses 15-17. Focus in on the very end of verse 17. **What does Paul tell us?**

God created the cosmos and Paul is telling us that He is also sustaining this creation. At the very centre of this story is **God**. This fact may require a shift in thinking for us; it may serve as a reminder of who we are and who we are *not*. The creation account clearly sets out the pre-eminence of God. He created the cosmos, it was made for Him, it declares who He is and He holds it all together.

But we *are* part of this cosmos and so we also have been made *by* God and *for* God. So let's look again at Genesis 1. Read Genesis 1:26-28. **Write down anything God says about humanity and to humanity.**

How does Genesis 1:27 show us that there is a difference between human beings and the rest of God's creation?

The idea that we are made in the image of God has been called for centuries *Imago Dei*. The created cosmos would declare the glory of God but humanity was to bear His image. **How does this guide our thinking on the value of a human life?**

Think about 21st century culture. **In what ways do we see God's image bearers not being valued as they should be?**

I wonder if we, the church, are doing any better than the society around us? Do we grasp our own intrinsic value and the value of every other person we interact with? Who are we allowing to set our value...our Creator?...or the culture we are living in?

God also handed humanity responsibility for the rest of His creation. **What words in Genesis 1:26-28 show us our God-given responsibility?**

Depending on your translation you will have found slightly different English words but the root ideas are the same. We have authority over the created world (words like *rule*, *govern*, *subdue*) but it is authority that we are to wield as image bearers of the Creator. **In what practical ways would that impact our behaviour?**

We are also to multiply. The primary idea here is about having children but there is also just this thought of extending the purposes of God. God's purposes and plans did not begin and end with Adam and Eve. We are a part of His unfolding plan. How are we doing at multiplication? How far are we carrying the *Imago Dei*? When people encounter us do they see God's image within us?

Read Genesis 2:15-17. God speaks to His image bearer and establishes some boundaries. God is defining the relationship. He is God, not us. **What choice does God give to Adam?**

God speaks as the final authority. The question for humanity was whether or not to submit to that authority and live freely under it. We still face that same question today.