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# *Beginnings!*

“What’s the news?” The men sitting around the stove questioned the traveler coming in from the cold in rural Kentucky in 1809. He drawled, “It seems there’s this fella named Bonaparte over in France who’s causing a lot of trouble. People think all of Europe will be going to war and England may be going to war with France, too. Jefferson’s about to finish up being president and talk is that James Madison will be the next president. What’s the news in these here parts?” “Nothing much, I reckon,” answered one of the men nearest the stove. “Oh, the Lincolns, Tom and Nancy down on Nolin Creek near Hodgenville, got themselves a new baby boy. Gonna name him Abraham. That’s about it. Nothin’ important happenin’ around here.” Sometimes it is possible to miss the significance of events in history, especially at their beginnings, when they often seem quite small and insignificant.

Sometimes Christians dismiss the value of a careful study of the book of beginnings—Genesis. It contains a few stories familiar from childhood and numerous baffling genealogies. In simple language reminiscent of oral literature, Genesis recounts the stories of some rather ordinary people: a gardener and his wife, an aging shipbuilder, and several nomadic herdsmen and their wives, children, and grandchildren. We may doubt that such people or their conflicts and experiences would relate to our fast-paced, technologically sophisticated lives in the twenty-first century. We may wonder how reading this ancient saga could benefit us in any practical way.

Often, to understand something—an event, a relationship, a situation—we must trace it to its beginning. Genesis explains the beginnings of many things: the beginning of time as we understand it, the beginning of the universe, the world, mankind, marriage and family, and work. It also describes how God’s perfect creation became polluted by suffering and death—the grim results of man’s sin and, ultimately, of the great cosmic struggle between God and Satan. Genesis tells us about the beginning of spiritual life and death and of God’s plan to bring eternal life to fallen people who are suffering the consequence of rebellion against God. Genesis unveils God’s covenantal plan to reclaim His sin-damaged creation and restore His sinful, disobedient children to a relationship with Him, their Creator. Indeed it’s been said that every important doctrine in the Bible finds its seed thought in Genesis 1-12. Without the first chapters of Genesis, we simply cannot make sense of ourselves, our past history, our present environment, or our future destiny.

Most of us get excited about beginnings because they hold much promise—the beginning of a New Year, a new semester, a new job, a new relationship, a new Bible Study! Everything has a beginning (except God, of course). What would life be without beginnings? Perhaps you’re starting a new spiritual life as you’ve just recently come to faith in Christ. Or maybe you’re embarking on a new phase of your life as a disciple of Christ. Genesis is a great place in the Bible to begin a Bible study because it is about beginnings. After all, that is what Genesis means in Greek, “beginning,” taking its name from the first words of the book, “In the beginning, God...”

Welcome to the beginning of what we hope will be a new series of inductive, interactive Bible studies designed in a workbook format to enable you to get into God’s Word and into a growing relationship with God. So, let the adventure begin!



# 1

## *Roots*

### Genesis 1 Selected verses from Genesis 2

Recently I saw my doctor for a routine checkup. He asked many questions about my parents and grandparents. Why would he ask about them when I was the one in the office getting the checkup? He knew that family background can affect the following generation's well-being. One's roots impact and give insights into genetic makeup, potential health problems, certain medical conditions or predispositions, along with character traits, habits, preferences, desires, etc. In this first study in Genesis, as we study creation, we will explore the roots of everything.

If you have developed a family tree, you might bring it to the next meeting of the Bible Study Group. If not, think about one past relative who was a fascinating character or who greatly influenced his/her family for several generations.

Our beginnings must be important to God. He revealed those beginnings to Moses, who wrote Genesis 1 and 2. In religious and scientific circles, much debate still rages over these two chapters. The question remains: Does God give us an accurate description of our family tree and its roots in the creation account in Genesis 1 and 2, or is the theory of evolution correct in saying mankind developed from some simple life form? The answer makes all the difference in the world as we will soon see.

Only when we understand and accept our origins as given in Genesis 1 and 2 can we begin to understand God, ourselves, our world, and our place in the world.

Before continuing, we should clear up some confusing issues. First, it appears that Genesis 2 carries a different creation account than Genesis 1. Critics who wish to discredit the Bible argue that these two different accounts of creation prove the Bible is in error. However, if we approach these two chapters openly, we can easily see that Genesis 1 presents a step-by-step account of creation leading up to man. Genesis 2 picks up from Genesis 1 to elaborate on man's creation. In actuality, Genesis 2 is a commentary, or explanation, of Genesis 1:27.

The second issue concerns the length of the days in Genesis 1. Are we to consider these literally as 24-hour days, or was Moses employing a figure of speech? Although the arguments are too lengthy to reproduce here, we can summarize the major points of both. Long-day or epoch proponents contend that Genesis 2:4 in the Hebrew reads something like this: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." They argue that Moses was using the word for day to mean more than a 24-hour period. They find warrant for their conclusion when Moses, also writing in Psalm 90:4, says, "A day (in God's eyes) is like a thousand years (in man's reckoning of time)." Thus, it appears that Moses again uses day to mean more than just a 24-hour period. Proponents of the 24-hour day, however, believe that it is unnecessary to postulate longer periods and

that to do so simply accommodates current scientific beliefs. While the debate continues, both sides, if they still hold to the inspiration of God's Word, agree that God could have created everything in any time amount that he desired, even 24 seconds. And both sides agree that evolution is not an option.

### **The Origin and Meaning of the Universe — Genesis 1:1-25**

1. According to this passage, how did the universe, including our world, come into being?
2. What repeated phrase hints at God's purpose for creating the universe (1:9, 12, 18, 21, 31)?
3. As you consider creation, what can you learn about God? (See Romans 1:19, 20 and Psalm 19:1, 2.)
4. In I Corinthians 14:33 we read that God is a God of order. In what ways is God's love for order revealed in Genesis 1:1-25? What patterns do you observe there?

Remember the "What do you get when you cross a ..... with a.....?" jokes. What do you get when you cross a kangaroo with a mink? A fur coat with pockets. What do you get when you cross a midget fortune teller with an escaped convict? A small medium at large. The point of the jokes is that you never know for sure what you will get; you can only guess. Not so with God's creation. There's a pattern. Each species of the plants and animals crosses only with its kind and produces according to its own kind. Gregor Mendel, the Austrian geneticist worked for years cross breeding varieties of peas—smooth with wrinkled, tall with short. But he always finished with peas, not carrots or beans. That's because of God's pattern and plan.

5. Now consider Genesis 1:26. What order, design, or plan do you notice? What does the method reveal about God?
6. Evolution teaches that our world came through chance happenings; Genesis teaches that our world is the result of an orderly, logical plan carried out by a supremely intelligent Designer. Which explanation do you think more accurately reflects creation and our world as we see it today? Give an example of orderliness that you see in nature.

Careful study of the world around us increases our appreciation for the complexity of the created order. Dr. Thomas Sharp, an advocate of creation, in his book, *Science According to Moses*, tells the fascinating story of the bombardier beetle. This beetle possesses a unique defense. He shoots out a chemical at 212 degrees that fries any enemy pursuing him. The beetle has two chambers in the back—one with hydrogen quinone, the other with hydrogen peroxide. He also has a combustion chamber where the two chemicals mix and explode and then shoot out of two "barrels" that can rotate 360 degrees. The beetle also has two enzymes—catalase and peroxidase. One inhibits the two chemicals from forming. The other enzyme inhibits the inhibitor so that the two chemicals can pour into the combustion cham-

ber and fire out. Evolution contends that the different species have adapted, evolved, and developed to survive in their environments. It is impossible for the bombardier beetle to have developed such an elaborate defense over time. He would have had to develop everything at once or else he would have blown his posterior off! And so much for his species!

Even the numeric pattern and complexity found in the Genesis narrative point to intelligent design. The number seven in the Bible usually represents completeness or perfection. Genesis 1:1 begins with seven words in Hebrew. Seven times in chapter 1 God pronounces creation "good." "Heaven" appears seven times. God's name appears in the Hebrew text thirty-five times, which is seven times five. The number of days of creation, seven, also implies completeness; no new species appear after that. There may perhaps be hybrids or mutations, but no new species.

Further patterns occur within the language used in Genesis 2:1-3. Allen Ross in his commentary on *Genesis, Creation and Blessing*, states, "Indeed the pattern of words and clauses seems to underscore this emphasis on seven. There are thirty-five words in the Hebrew text of these three verses, a multiple of seven. The three middle clauses (2:2a, 2b, and 3a) in the Hebrew original have seven words each, and the adjective 'seventh' is within each clause. The reader receives a strengthened impression that the seventh day is a celebration of completion." (pg. 103)

### **The Origin and Meaning of the Human Race — Genesis 1:26-31**

7. How does Genesis 1:26-27 describe the creation of the first two people? In what ways were they like God?
8. How does Genesis 1:31 evaluate what God made, including mankind?
9. If you look at people in general or individually today, would you say that the human race still mirrors God's image? Why or why not? Point out some ways we no longer fulfill God's intent for us.
10. How do we differ from the rest of creation (Genesis 1:26, 27)?
11. According to Genesis 1:26-28, what is mankind's God-given work? (Hint: the Hebrew word for "rule" means to "make something to serve.")
12. What are some of the ways Adam and Eve might have exercised their rule? What are some ways we can exercise rule today?

13. From Genesis 2:7 and 2:19 describe some ways in which man is like the rest of creation. Considering our similarities to and our differences from (see question 10) the rest of creation, how should we relate to God's world and creatures?

14. Evolution teaches the survival of the fittest (an antagonistic relationship among living things). Genesis teaches unity and harmony within creation. Evaluate which you think promotes better care of our world and why:

15. What is your response to the following questions and answers from *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*? (*The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, along with the *Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism*, were written in 1643-1646 at Westminster Abbey in London by over 100 English, Scottish, and Irish clergymen. These continue to be the standard of beliefs of the Presbyterian Church in America, as well as of many conservative Presbyterian churches in the world.)

Q: "What is the work of creation?"

A: The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good."

Q: "How did God create man?"

A: God created man male and female, after His own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures." (*Westminster Catechism*, Q. 9 and 10.)

### Further Application

16. What does the fact that God spoke everything into existence, tell us about the power of His Word? What does this awesome feat reveal about His ability to keep His Word, particularly His promises to His people?

17. Is it possible to see and worship God through creation? If you answered "yes," tell how this might be done.

