**Lesson 1**

**7, 8 June 2021**

**Genesis 1:1 – 2:3**

**Comments about THIS SERIES OF LESSONS**

1. My heart’s desire and my goals for this class is that we would all grow in three ways:
   1. that God would grow “bigger and bigger” in our eyes.
   2. that we would grow in appreciation for the Bible as a book that is “skillfully and wonderfully” written.
   3. that we would become more and more proficient at studying the Bible for ourselves.
2. Why study “the other book” *(*i.e. *Women of the Word)*?
   1. It resonated with my own heart at a time when I was burnt out, spiritually dry, and felt “bleah!” about the prospect of any kind of ministry in the future.
   2. I think it will be very beneficial for anyone who wants to learn more about the Bible . . . or who feels unsure about how to go about studying it . . . or who is perhaps slightly intimidated about studying it on their own at all.
3. Why study Genesis?
   1. It is one of my favorite books of Scripture. I love it, and I want you to love it, too. 😊
   2. The best way to lay a foundation is to begin at the beginning. Jen Wilkin describes Genesis as the “ultimate context giver” because it provides context for the whole rest of the Bible.
   3. The book of Genesis, like the rest of the Old Testament, was written for our benefit. Consider these three verses from the New Testament:
      * *Now these things (i.e. what happened to Israel in the wilderness) took place as* ***examples for us****, that we might not desire evil (things) as they did.* 1 Corinthians 10:6
      * *The Law of Moses…was written* ***for our sake****…* 1 Corinthians 9:9, 10
      * *For whatever was written in former days was written* ***for our instruction,*** *that**through endurance and…the encouragement of the Scriptures* ***we might have hope.***Romans 15:4

**Comments from Introduction to *WOMEN OF THE WORD***

1. On page 18 of her book, Jen Wilkin says that the book is intended to do four things in your life:
   1. *to equip you for Bible study,*
   2. *to teach you a study method you can use on your own,*
   3. *to challenge you to think and grow,* and
   4. *to change the way you think about Bible study.*
2. It is interesting that the Bible has those **very same four aims** in mind! God wants to use His Word in our lives:
   1. to equip us for life and godliness – *All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete,* ***equipped for every good work***. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17
   2. to teach us what is right and bring us to maturity – *But solid food is* ***for the******mature, for******those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*** *Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity...* Hebrews 5:14-6:1
   3. to challenge us to grow in our knowledge of God – *But* ***grow in the grace and knowledge*** *of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* 2 Peter 3:18
   4. to change the way we think about everything – *Do not be conformed to this world, but* ***be transformed by******the renewal of your mind****, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* Romans 12:2
3. Jen Wilkin also says on page 18 that “we become what we behold.” If that is true—and I believe it is—then it is vital that we spend more and more time beholding God, and that we behold Him more and more clearly. So, ladies, let us resolve to not let the mountain of our biblical ignorance remain unchallenged for one more minute. Let us grab our “spoons” and command that mountain to *move!*

**Comments About the Text – GENESIS 1:1**

**Archaeological Questions** – Before we jump into studying the text itself, we need to understand the background of the book of Genesis, to see how it fits within the context of the entire Bible. So let’s answer the “archaeological questions” found on the cream color sheet.

**The Most Profound Statement in History** – The Bible begins with a very short, very simple sentence presented as a statement of fact: *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* The statement itself may be simple, but it has implications that are profound. How we respond to this statement radically affects how we perceive ourselves and the world around us—and it diametrically opposes the worldview of our present day culture. For that reason we are going to spend today’s entire lesson on this one sentence alone. We may well spend eons in eternity plumbing the depths of its meaning; we will certainly spend *all* of eternity singing praises to the God who created all things! (See Revelation 4:11.) So let’s carefully scrutinize each of its four parts: subject, verb, object and adverb.

**In the Beginning, GOD** – I said that we may spend eons in eternity plumbing the depths of Genesis’ opening statement. In reality, we could put a period after “God” and spend eons just studying *Him*…and still never plumb His depths! But let’s see what we can glean from what Moses said about this Creator-God. The Hebrew word Moses used was *Elohim*, which tells us two important things about God:

1. He is tremendously powerful. *Elohim* could be translated as “powerful one” or “God Almighty”. He is omnipotent, which means that all power resides in Him. This all powerful One expended unfathomable power in creating the universe. Secular scientists talk about the “Big Bang,” and in a sense they are correct: when God said, “Let there BE!” a vast amount of energy burst forth from His mouth and resulted in the universe we see today. Now that’s power!
2. He is plural in being. Elohim is the plural form of the Hebrew word *el*, which can be translated either “God” or “god” (i.e. idol), so right from the opening line of Scripture we are introduced to the concept of the Trinity, one God existing in three persons. In the second verse of Genesis we are first introduced to the person of the Holy Spirit, who was involved in protecting and shaping the infant earth. Centuries later the apostle John would begin his gospel much as Moses began Genesis: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created.”* (HCSB) In the fourteenth verse of his gospel John reveals that this “Word” is none other than God the Son: *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* So all three members of the Godhead were present at the creation of the universe and were actively involved in the process.

**In the Beginning, God CREATED** – What was the process God used to create everything? Over and over in Genesis chapter one we read that God said, “Let there be \_\_\_, and there was \_\_\_.” In other words, God just spoke and whatever He wanted came into existence. Psalm 33: 6, 9 makes this very clear: *The heavens were made by the word of the Lord, and all the stars, by the breath of His mouth…For He spoke, and it came into being; He commanded, and it came into existence.* (HSCB)

I find it very significant that God used words and the breath of His mouth to create. What is the purpose of speech, anyway? We speak in order to communicate something, right? So when God created the universe by speaking it into existence, He didn’t just *make* something, He also *communicated* some things about Himself and about what He had made:

1. Absolutely everything belongs to Him. – *The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the Lord; for He laid its foundation on the seas and established it on the rivers.* Psalm 24:1
2. Creation reveals His glory. – *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims the work of His hands. Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge.* Psalm 19:1, 2
3. Creation reveals God’s eternal power and divine nature. – *What can be known about God is evident among (all people), because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made.* Romans 1:19, 20

It is no accident that the apostle John made this same connection between the WORD of God, the CREATION of God, and understanding TRUTH about God. Jesus Christ is not only the creator, but is also the Word of God, the one who can reveal God the Father to us. Do you want to know what God is like? Look at Jesus. As He explained to Philip the apostle, “The one who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9) Paul also wrote much the same to the Colossians: *He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by Him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible–all things have been created through Him and for Him.* Colossians 1:15,16

**God Created the THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH** – I have been intrigued by the phrase “the heavens and the earth” for a number of years now. Why did God say it that way? Why not simply say “God created the universe”? Or “God created everything”? Certainly there is a poetic ring to “the heavens and the earth”, but could there be more to it than beauty of expression? I personally believe that God always has a reason for the way He words things, and that there may be benefit in thinking about this phrase a bit. I cannot quote “chapter and verse” and so want to be careful to let you know that I am offering my personal opinion here. For what it is worth, here is what my study of the Bible has led me to conclude:

The phrase “the heavens and the earth” seems to set planet earth apart from all the rest of the universe, i.e. it seems to indicate that the earth is unique, and that God takes a special interest in it. Earth is just a tiny speck in the vastness of the cosmos, and yet God seems to focus His attention on it in a very special way. Two things we do know for sure: what happened on earth when man sinned affected the entire rest of the universe AND when God totally eradicates sin at the end of time, He plans to bring His throne down out of the heavens and place it in New Jerusalem right here on planet earth. He plans to dwell with His people for the rest of eternity HERE. On earth. Wow!

**IN THE BEGINNING, God Created…** – Both Moses and the apostle John began their writings with the phrase “in the beginning.” The beginning of what? Certainly not the beginning of God, because He is eternal, with no beginning and no end. Moses and John are referring to the origin of time and space and the material universe we perceive. Man has always been curious about the origin of life and matter and has come up with many theories about how it all began. Moses and John offer no theories, just a simple statement of fact: The origin of everything is God Himself.

**Does It Matter What We Believe about Creation?** – I stated earlier that how we respond to the opening statement of Genesis radically affects us. **Romans 1:18-32** spells out the consequences of rejecting the truth that God created everything. (Open your Bibles to this passage now.) People who do so actually suppress truth in their minds (verse 18) because they do not want to acknowledge God as God. They are “without excuse” because creation itself makes God’s eternal power and divine nature abundantly clear (verses 19-20). They do not honor God or give thanks to Him, which leads to a downward spiral of ever increasing wickedness:

1. They become “futile in their thinking” (vs 21). That is, they cannot think straight, and their hearts are “darkened”—no light is allowed to shine in and lead them to the truth.
2. They think they are wise, but they are actually fools who choose to believe any other theory—anything!—rather than to acknowledge that God exists and created everything (vs 22).
3. They become idolators (vs 23).
4. This inevitably leads to sexual lust and perversion (24-27).
5. Because they do not “see fit to acknowledge God”, He no longer acknowledges them, but “gives them up to a debased mind” (vs 28).
6. They become filled with every conceivable manner of evil (vs 29-31). Verse 31 gives this bleak summary of their character: they are senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless.
7. Even worse, they are arrogantly proud of their conduct and “not only do (such things) but give approval to those who practice them.” (vs 32)

**One Last Question** –Why did God create the universe?He certainly didn’t need to do so, because He has never lacked anything. We know that creation brings glory to Him (Psalm 19:1-4) and that He wanted or willed to create everything (Revelation 4:11). Other than that, we really don’t know why He chose to create us and everything around us. I like what Jen Wilkin says about this matter on page 28 of her *God of Creation* Bible study, “God created to display His glory. God created because it pleased Him to do so. Beyond that, we are left to marvel at the mystery.”

**TAKE AWAYS:**

* Let us “marvel at the mystery” indeed. This week we will be studying the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3. As you read it and mark it and look at the wonders of Creation around you, allow it all to speak to your heart and lift your eyes to the One who spoke it all into existence. May you find fresh hope this week as you consider Him, the One who made us and loves us and has power to bless us.
* We looked at the negative results of choosing to suppress the truth that God created the universe. In contrast, how does acknowledging and worshiping God as Creator cause us to live righteous lives? What godly behaviors might result from this belief? Are our hearts flooded with gratitude as we consider that we belong to Him?
* I like what Bible Study Fellowship says about the earth in its course *A Study of Genesis:* “God’s intentional focus on planet earth deserves attention. The infinite God targets earth and its people as the place He can be known.A mere speck in the unmeasured vastness of creation, our planet takes center stage . . . **Genesis 1 presents all of creation in direct relationship to planet earth.** God created earth as the scene the Son of God would enter. And one day, God will restore the earth when the Son of God returns.” (page 5)