

LESSON 1: THE CREATION STORY

Genesis 1:1-2:3

Guiding Thoughts on the Creation Story: Lecture to the Teacher

Dr. Paterson Smyth included a 15 page *Lecture to the Teacher*¹ prior to beginning his first lesson on the Creation story. He was writing in a day when liberal theology was on the rise and science had become antagonistic to religion. The emerging “Higher Criticism” of the Bible was causing many to believe that the Bible was not a reliable text. He felt strongly that, “Many [of the] difficulties that have been found by superficial readers in the story of Creation arise from misunderstandings which should have been corrected in our childhood and which it is our business to correct in the pupils of our days. I don't mean that we should necessarily speak to them of doubts and difficulties; but that we should avoid the teaching and correct the misapprehensions which lead to such doubts and difficulties.”²

I encourage full reading of this lecture, but have chosen to address his chief concern to the student with the following line: “This simple story, in all its grandeur, remains our eternal framework that answers the important *why* question which lies behind the Creation story. Science attempts to theorize *how* Creation was accomplished. Many thinking Christians may disagree on the *how*'s, but we all cling to the *why* of this most important story.”³

Lesson 1: The Creation Story

Transition to Text: Think back to a long time ago—to a time when you were not here in the world. How long ago was that? Seven, eight, nine, ten years? Was anybody else here then—your dad? Your mom? Grandparents? Were there animals? Trees? Rivers? All without you! How could they have gone on without you? Now let's go back even farther, before your mom, dad, or anyone else you know. Let's go back to the time of the apostle Paul. Back to Isaiah. Back to Moses. Back to Abraham. Back to Noah. Back behind all; before men, women, trees, or anything else existed. Back when the earth was a mass of cloud and mist and darkness and confusion.⁴ This is where we are going to start our story today—at the beginning. A very good place to start.

Reverently Read: Genesis 1:1-2:3 (Note: This longer passage can be broken down into two smaller readings followed by a narration of each reading. I would recommend Genesis 1:1-13 and Genesis 1:14-2:3.)

Children Narrate: “What did you hear?” OR “(Child's name), will you begin to tell back the story that we have just heard using as many of the actual Bible words that you remember?” and then “Now (another Child's name), what happened next?” and so on until the story is finished.

Discussion Questions:

1. When the earth was without form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep, who was there? Was there ever a time when God was not in the world?⁵

- a. God was there when the earth was without form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep (Gen. 1:2). No, there was never a time when God was not in the world.

2. What do you notice about how this story was taught?⁶

- a. One thing we notice about this story is its simplicity. It is easy to remember, to teach children, and to remind those wandering in the wilderness. However, this simple story, in all its grandeur, remains our eternal framework that answers the important *why* question which lies behind the Creation story. Science attempts to theorize *how* Creation was accomplished. Many thinking Christians may disagree on the *how*'s, but we all cling to the *why* of this most important story.⁷ One easy way to keep the first six days of Creation straight is to remember that God first created the "form" and then he filled that "form" with "fullness."⁸ (Write or illustrate on a board.)

- Form
 - Day 1: Light
 - Day 2: The Sea and the Sky
 - Day 3: The Earth and Vegetation
- Fullness
 - Day 4: Filling the heavens with luminaries
 - Day 5: Filling the sea and sky with birds and fish
 - Day 6: Filling the earth with land animals and humans

3. When the earth stood ready for its final purpose, who then did God make?⁹ How did man know that he was not like the other parts of God's Creation around him?¹⁰

- a. God made man. We were made in God's image, we bear His likeness (Gen. 1:26-27).

4. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?¹¹

- a. We can compare and contrast humans to other parts of God's Creation, like animals for example, to get an idea of what makes us the crown of God's Creation. By doing this, we can come up with some categories of what makes human beings unique. Some examples would be that humans made in the image of God have an innate consciousness of God, a feeling of His great eternal rule over what is right and wrong stamped on our very souls. Humans also have a unique ability to reason, to sense, to enjoy beauty, etc. Some humans can do these things better or worse than other humans, either because of a disability or a particular gift of their nature. Maybe even because that human life is just a few hours old in the womb. Nonetheless, being made in the image of God is not something we have by degrees, it is a

gift given to all humanity by God. It describes all human life by its very definition.¹²

5. Why did God create us in His image?

- a. Pastor John Piper says, “images are created to image.”¹³ He goes on to say that “if you were to create an image, or make a sculpture of someone, you do it to display something about that someone. You put it in the square in the middle of town, and you want people to look at it, notice it, think about that person.”¹⁴ He then asks the question of what it would mean if someone put billions of statues of oneself all over the world. It would mean you would want people to notice you. “God created us in His image so that we would display or reflect or communicate who He is, how great He is, and what He is like.”¹⁵ Though God does not have a physical body like us, we represent Him in the physical ones He gave us. And in spite of the Fall, which we will soon read about, the image remains. “It has been defaced, but not destroyed.”¹⁶

6. How does knowing that all humans were made in the image of God impact how we think about ourselves and others?

- a. We find our purpose in life, our significance, our identity, in our Creator—in Him of whose image we bear. And not just ourselves, but everyone else too. As C.S. Lewis says in *Weight of Glory*, “There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.”¹⁷ Therefore, we honor them, as fellow image bearers, with respect and dignity that is implicit to being made in the image of God.

7. What happens if God's image bearers decide that they no longer want to reflect His image?¹⁸

- a. We will discuss this answer in depth next time, but this is exactly what happened in the Fall of Man. Because we are made in the image of God, we are responsible to Him for our proper reflection of Him. He is right to hold us accountable for our improper reflection of Him.

Optional Timeline Entry: “Draw a picture in your timeline to remind yourself of this story.”

1. J. Paterson Smyth, *The Bible for School and Home: The Book of Genesis* (Yesterday's Classics, 2017), 13-27.
2. Smyth, *The Book of Genesis*, 20
3. Anne E. White, *A Walk Through the Glen: Kingsley's Lessons in Earth Lore, Volume 1*, (self- pub., AnneWrites, 2019), 30-32.
4. Smyth, *The Book of Genesis*, 28.
5. Smyth, *The Book of Genesis*, 28.
6. Smyth, *The Book of Genesis*, 29.
7. White, *A Walk Through the Glen: Kingsley's Lessons in Earth Lore, Volume 1*, 30-32.
8. Jen Wilkin, *God of Creation: A Study of Genesis 1-11* (LifeWay Press, 2017), 52-53.

9. Smyth, *The Book of Genesis*, 30.
10. Smyth, *The Book of Genesis*, 32-33.
11. Smyth, *The Book of Genesis*, 32-33.
12. Joni and Friends, "Imago Dei: Why Every Person Has Inherent Value," YouTube Video, May 25, 2023, 5 min., 56 sec., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJoeQ3FmLXQ>.
13. John Piper, "What Does It Mean to Be Made in God's Image?" *Desiring God Foundation*, August 19, 2013, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-does-it-mean-to-be-made-in-gods-image>.
14. Piper, "Made in God's Image."
15. Piper, "Made in God's Image."
16. Piper, "Made in God's Image."
17. C.S. Lewis, "Weight of Glory" in *Weight of Glory*, ed. Walter Hooper (HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 46.
18. Piper, "Made in God's Image."