Genesis 1-2:3 Study

What does the Book Name Mean?

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning” was “bereshith” in Hebrew, which was also the Jewish name for the book of Genesis. It was a custom to name a book after the first word or two of the book, hence “bereshith.” Many years later when the Bible was translated into Greek (which was called the Septuagint) the book was named “geneseos,” where we get the English “Genesis.” Geneseos has many meanings, including “history of origin,” “genealogy,” or “birth.” Whether you look at the Hebrew or Greek meanings of Genesis, you get a book of beginnings.

Authorship of Genesis

Even though this book describes the beginning of Earth and everything on it, it was actually written by Moses, who received the story from God! He may of also used archives and other stories that were passed down through the generations. Moses was also responsible for writing the first five books of the Bible which are also know as the Pentateuch, meaning a book with five volumes. Most Biblical scholars agree that Moses wrote Genesis during the 40 year wandering in the desert, most likely 1446 – 1406 B.C. This was probably a great time to write and distribute this book, as God’s people were wandering through the desert trying to keep unity and find a sense of purpose for themselves. They had just escaped slavery and oppression in Egypt, looking to journey to the promised land where they could live in a land blessed by God. The Jewish people in the New Testament also believed that Moses had written Genesis, and the Jews would often memorize many parts of the Old Testament, then called the Torah, including Genesis.

About the Story

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This first sentences pretty much sums up the first chapter and half of the Bible; or does it? In the Genesis account, God spends six days creating the heavens and the earth, then one day resting. The author uses just over a chapter to describe hugely momentous events that must have been amazing to see! So why isn’t there more in those first couple of chapters? Most scholars and theologian would agree that the creation story was not written as an owner’s manual, or how to seminar, but to convey the purpose of the whole thing. God created, and saw that it was good, and created us in His image and put us in charge! The author did not spend time talking about why where the dinosaurs are; each day could have been 1 million years. The specifics are just not the main idea of Genesis. God created the world “ex nihilo,” which means “out of nothing,” but as Christians we can see that God created the world out of love. As we can see, God is not selfish, he created the world for us to be a part of, and that is where the work in progress begins. Humans were created last in the story, kind of creating a sense that He saved the best for last. Our creation was special, for God wanted a special relationship with humans that will last forever. After the creation account, the Adam and Eve story shows the beginnings of God’s children trying to be in relationship with our Creator. There was certainly some trial and error in the beginning, and not much has changed. God put us in charge of earth, and with power comes selfishness which is hard to detach from. Since God created people, he has not been inactive like a child who watches an ant farm. God has and will be present in creation and in our lives. God called everything He made “good.” So as the ones on charge on earth, let us be good stewards to the creation, and to our creator. The beginning of the Bible is a good place to start to learn about the creation of all that we see, but more importantly how we were first called into relationship with God that will always be a work in progress, and a work made out of love.
Summing it Up

God put the world into motion. He created it and called it good. We are all God’s creation—his special creation, for we are made in His own image—no other plant or animal can say that! So we are God’s work in progress because every life is created by God and sent on a journey. As children of God, we choose to recognize His sovereign power over our lives, and choose to love Him with all that we are. We are not perfect, but since we are “under construction” we may make mistakes, but ultimately choose to receive God’s unconditional love!

Pray through the Week of Creation!

Spend one week reading what God did that day, and praying over that part of creation!

Day 1:  *God created the light and the dark- Night and Day.*  And God saw that it was good. Read Genesis 1:1-1:4. Say a prayer of thanksgiving that God created the heavens and the earth, when there was nothing. Pray that God continues to be a light in this world, and a light in your life.

Day 2:  *God created the sky. And God saw that it was good.*  Read Genesis 1:6-1:8. Thank God for the beautiful sky and all that is in it. Thank God for the blue sky and the gray— for it is all part of our world. Pray for everything that uses the sky—birds, bugs, planes, and space shuttles!

Day 3:  *God created the land, bodies of water, vegetation, and all the trees.*  And God saw that it was good. Read Genesis 1:9-1:13. Pray to God in thankfulness for the ground we stand on, and the water we drink and play in. We are thankful that we have millions of types of vegetation to make our world beautiful and give us nutrients to eat! Thank God for the trees that give us shade, and help keep the hills from coming down, and for helping us build the houses we live in!

Day 4:  *God created the sun, moon, and the stars.*  And God saw that it was good. Read Genesis 1:14-1:19. Thank God for the sun that warms our face on a summer day, and invokes the plants and trees to grow. Tell God how you love looking at the moon on a cold winter night, and how it helps guide your path on a clear night. Thank Him for giving us sparkling stars to gaze at.

Day 5:  *God created the living creatures of the sea and the air.*  And God saw that it was good. Read Genesis 1:20-1:23. Pray in thanksgiving for the fish, the whales, the crabs, the sharks, and all other beautiful creatures that live in the sea. Tell God thanks for the birds, hawks, bats, and bugs and bugs that fill the air with the flapping of their wings.

Day 6:  *God created the living creatures of the land, and created man in His own image.*  And God saw that it was good. Read Genesis 1:24-1:31. Thank God for all the animals that live on and under the ground. Thank God for humans, and that you were created in the likeness of God. God saved the best for last—us! Tell God how much you love Him, because He created you and loves you!

Day 7:  *God rested. He blessed the seventh day and called it Holy.*  Genesis 2:1-2:3. Thank God for a great job He did on creating the earth and everything in it! Pray that He continues to be present in His creation and show His love through his creation. Pray that He helps us take one day every week where we rest and praise God for the work that he has done and will do!

Works Consulted:

God’s “Work in Progress.”  The Potter’s Workshops.  2002