

THE STORY — Week 2

Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

CRITICAL TRUST

I. A CRITICAL INTERPRETATION (A must-have for a correct Frame of Reference)

A CRITICAL SET OF INTERPRETIVE PRINCIPLES

1. The Bible was written for me but not to me.
2. The Bible is a library with different literary genres (**Narrative**, Poetry & Discourse)
3. The Bible must be read in Context (Biblical, Ancient, & Situational)
4. The Bible must be read with an understanding of language and words (Repeated words drive dominant themes)
5. The Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus

Implication: Narrative literature has characters, setting, plot, a climax and a resolution.

II. A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

An introduction can be a prelude to something that follows, the first meeting of something, or introducing one person to another person or persons.

1. Genesis 1:1 Introduces us to four important/critical words/terms:

- *God/Elohim*
- *Created/Bara* To create, fashion, shape & is used exclusively of God.
- *Heavens/Shameyim* is used to describe the sky above, the spiritual realm, what is high vs low/up vs down & the space that represents God’s space.
- *Earth/Erets* In contrast is land, dirt, the physical world and what is man’s space vs God’s; what is down vs up/low vs high.

The combination of Heavens and Earth are often mentioned together and refer back to Genesis 1:1.

Implication: These two spaces make up the overall **setting** of the Biblical story/narrative, and it is God’s agenda to bring heaven and earth together.

2. Genesis 1:1 Introduces us to **God/Elohim** (the main **Character**).

Elohim is a title given to God in Genesis 1

The word *elohim* is plural and occurs 2596 times, but when used of God is singular. English example: for “sheep,” the context determines if it is singular or plural.

Implication: The first readers (The original audience) would have immediately concluded that there is a supreme spiritual being over all others, and it is this being, God, who is being introduced.

Rule of Context: The ancient people groups (AC), the Egyptians (SC), and the scriptures (BC) all point to a reality (Belief) in spiritual beings.

Deuteronomy 4:35-39 “You were shown these things so that you might know that the **LORD is God**; besides him there is no other... Because he loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength... the **LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below**. There is no other.”

1 Corinthians 8:5-6 “‘There is no God but one.’ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in **heaven or on earth** (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), yet for us there is but **one God, the Father, from whom all things came** and for whom we live; and there is but **one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came** and through whom we live.”

Implication: Jesus is equal to and coexistent with the Father the creator of heaven and earth.

Colossians 1:16 (NIV1984) (About Jesus) “For in **him** all things were **created**: things in **heaven and on earth**, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created by him and for him.”

3. Introduce us to what this chapter/literary unit (**Genesis1:1-2:3**) is about.

Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

III. A CRITICAL INVITATION

Those who **meditate** on the scriptures discover 5 invitations to trust the God who created the heavens and the earth.

To TRUST God's:

1. **Control**

1 Chronicles 29:11-12 (TLB) “**Everything** in the **heavens and earth** is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as being in **control of everything**. Riches and honor come from you alone, and you are the ruler of all mankind; your hand controls power and might, and it is at your discretion that men are made great and given strength. O God, we thank you and praise your glorious name...”

2. Power

Jeremiah 32:17 “Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.”

3. Wisdom

Proverbs 8:6, 27-29 (Lady Wisdom) “Listen, for I have trustworthy things to say... I was there when he set the heavens in place... and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.”

4. Goodness

James 1:16-18 “Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.”

& Spiritual birth

5. With our Heart (LIFE)

Psalms 51:10 “Create (Bara) in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Implication: By learning to TRUST God (Jesus), the creator of heaven and earth, we can experience God’s control, power, wisdom, goodness, new birth and a purified heart.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

Take a few minutes to check in with each other to see how everyone is doing, then do the following mixer and questions.

Ice Breaker/Mixer Q: As a group share with one another how important trust is to “your story”.

1. In narrative literature the setting is often an important piece. Why do you think it would be important to see how heaven and earth give us the setting for the whole narrative of scripture?
2. Do any of the critical interpretive principles to interpreting scripture stand out to more than another and if so, why?
3. Pastor introduced us to four critical (important) words from Genesis 1:1. What new insight did you receive from any of those words and how might it affect your relationship with God (your spiritual story)?

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Implication: These two spaces make up the overall **setting** of the Biblical story/narrative.

4. **The Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. We looked at several passages that make a big deal of Jesus being the creator of heaven and earth. Why do you think this is so important to the Biblical writers?**

Colossians 1:16 (NIV84) “For in **him** all things were **created**: things in **heaven and on earth**, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created by him and for him.”

Hebrews 1:2 “In these last days he (God) has spoken to us by his **Son**, whom he appointed heir of all things, **and through whom also he made the universe.**”

John 1:1-3 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. **Through him all things were made;** without him nothing was made that has been made.”

5. How does the idea of a God who created heaven and earth (& has revealed himself in Jesus) influence you to trust in God's control, power, wisdom, goodness and new birth (with your heart)?
6. Look over the "Quick Questions" at the bottom of your notes and pick one to answer together.

Point out the list of passages below to meditate on (read, think about and pray through/maybe even SOAP) this week. Close your time by encouraging everyone to try and engage the scripture line up for this week and then ask someone to close your time in prayer.

Monday, Read Genesis and look for the things that are repeated on each day of creation and compare the first three days with the second three days (compare days 1-3 to 4-6). What might we discern about God from Genesis 1?

Tuesday, Read Deuteronomy 4:35-39 (feel free to read the larger context) and think about the children of Israel being freed from slavery in Egypt. What was the important discovery the passage is saying they need to know and how might this discovery be applied to your life?

Deuteronomy 4:35-39 "You were shown these things so that you might know that the **LORD is God**; besides him there is no other... Because he loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength... the **LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below**. There is no other."

Wednesday, Read and meditate on the following passages (feel free to read the larger context) and write out (SOAP or Journal) an application and prayer for greater trust in Jesus.

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Thursday, Read Psalms 8 and look for any images, words or ideas that might remind you of Genesis 1. What does this chapter tell us/you about God's wisdom that is available for you?

Friday, Read and meditate on James 1:16-18 and record as many things that James speaks of that remind you of the first three chapters of Genesis, then write down what good gifts you have received from The Father of heavenly lights.

QUICK QUESTIONS, for a friend or family conversation:

What does looking up at the stars, or a beautiful full moon do to your faith/trust in God?

If God is the creator of all things (if he can do that) why do you think it's so difficult for us to trust him with our lives?

What are a few ways that we either trust or fail to trust in God?

Which of the following areas is the easiest and most difficult to trust God in and why?
God's control, power, wisdom, goodness, new birth or to purify your heart.