

Before and After the Beginning (Genesis)

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Date: 08 February 2022

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[0 : 00] So next is our Bible verse for this month. It's a new month and just as well as a Bible verse for today's sermon.

So let's all read this together. Three, two, one, go. And God said, let there be light, and there was light.

Genesis chapter 1, verse 1 to 3. Cool. Okay, I'll hand it over to Moksi. Thank you. Okay, Happy New Year to you all again.

Don't ask me for licensees. Ask someone in the congregation who are married. All right. In the beginning of the year, it's always New Year.

All right. A few weeks ago, it was New Year, and now the Chinese New Year. But we are all kind of in time.

[1 : 17] Okay. If we ever wonder, what is before time? You know, before the beginning of time.

Or space. We'll be studying a bit about this today. Starting today, this weekend, all four services, we started to learn the book of Genesis.

Okay. Okay. So when we think about Genesis, you might think about these sort of questions. Ever wonder? Ever wonder, you know, what is the book of Genesis?

How does it answer the question of evolution? Or when God created all these animals or beasts? Well, have they kind of left out the dinosaurs? Have you ever wondered about that? If it was a Garden of Eden, if there was, where was it? Can we identify that place?

[2 : 22] Or you mentioned about the flood. Was it kind of universal? Was it worldwide? Did it actually flood New Zealand, flooded New Zealand? Or a Tower of Babel, what did it look like?

Now, these may be some of the questions when we read the book of Genesis. And people might challenge us. Does the Bible really, you know, has evidences about all these archaeological or scientific research?

But let us remind ourselves again. Yeah, we need to think. We need to study. We need to know. But when we study the book of Genesis, we might need to ask other sets of questions.

Instead of using our present mind and means to try to understand something that was many thousand years ago.

Okay. Let me give it an illustration. Now, how many of you guys know this stuff? What is this? It's called telegraph.

[3 : 33] Anybody, your parents might have kind of used that or sent messages and received messages. Okay. Now, this is called telegraph. What it is, it's used the means of do, do, do, that's a.

And it's quite a creation, you know. B is do, do, do, do. And using all these, you can actually create 26 alphabets and also numbers one to zero.

Now, can you imagine you have to memorize all that? Of course you don't need to memorize all that. It was through this thing. You sent through the code. And on the other side of the world, they received the code.

There was a decoder. And put this in the writing. In something like, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do. And it was a sentence came out. Gary, I love you.

From Vicky. Okay. Now, of course, you won't send it that detail. Because it's very costly. So you could only end up, you receive a paper and then it would say, love you, G from V.

[4 : 38] That's it. All right. And today, when we have this, these, and you can talk anytime, anywhere, whatever.

WhatsApp, WeChat, MeWe, Signal, whatever, you have it. All right. And you can judge and you can criticize. How stupid using these sort of means to get something across.

What is it? Wasting all the time and money. Do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do. I'll go to sleep, man. But they will be very arrogant for us today to judge how they use, the methods they use to get the message across in those times.

Right? Can you imagine all these, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do? They could have won battles. They could have saved lives.

They could have affected many great creations. Things got done because of these, do, do, do, do, do, do, do. And because of these, we're here today.

[5 : 45] So, the point I'm saying is that when we read Genesis, we should not use our present sort of what we call logical, scientific things you need to prove, evidences to try to understand that the author was getting the message across many thousand years ago.

You know what I'm saying? So, let's humble ourselves and ask God to help us to really see what the book of Genesis was talking about.

All right? Genesis. What does the word Genesis mean? Now, in Chinese, it actually was Chong Sai Gei. Right? And what's that Chong Sai Gei?

It was creation account of the heaven and earth. But does the book of Genesis really, really talking about creation of the heaven and earth?

Now, if you have read the book of Genesis, you've got to realize that there's only two chapters that actually recorded things about creations, right? And chapter three was the sinning in the garden.

[7 : 02] And after that was nothing about the creation. So, we can't call the first book in the Bible, Genesis, as the creation record of that kind.

So, what's this book, Genesis? What does it mean? What does Genesis mean in English? You guys, your English is much better than mine.

What is... We have a newcomer. What is Genesis? You're the only non-Chinese here, right? I better ask you. What is Genesis? I don't know. I don't know.

I don't know neither. And because it's not English. Alright? Now, the first book of the Bible in the original text, Hebrew.

Alright? Now, I'm not doing expository preaching like Pastor William and what we usually do today. No. We will do it in the next few sermons.

[8 : 01] But today, it's more of an introduction of setting a framework of how we should see the book of Genesis. Okay? Now, we remember stories. We know stories about, oh, Cain and Abel, the serpent, and Isaac got, you know, nearly got killed by his father.

And how cunning Jacob was. Now, these were the events that was recorded in there. But we want to see, we don't want to see trees.

Okay? We want to see the whole forest. We want to see the whole, the book of Genesis we're talking about. Okay? Don't just go through one or two stories and just hang on it for the rest of your lives.

We've got to know the book of Genesis. What's God talking to us? Okay? Now, this was the book of Genesis in its original context.

Okay? That is the word. Okay? We don't know about these Hebrew letters. But it's actually pronounced Bereshit. Now, be careful how you do use this word.

[9 : 09] Okay? Bereshit. Okay? Let's have a look at the first word. Now, because it's oriental language, so it's read from right to left.

Okay? Unlike English. Unlike Greek. Reading from right to left. Left to right. Whatever. Okay? That is the first word. Okay? Can you see any difference or similarity there?

Of course there are some dots there. Okay? Now, because Hebrews, originally, they don't have vowels. Okay? They only had consonants.

So these are the consonants. It's a B-R-A. That's in English, the pronunciation. There's Beit. There's Resh. Aleph. Shen. Yo. Toh.

Okay? So this Bereshit. Okay? Bereshit. So that's the same. B-R-A-S-Y-T.

[10 : 11] Bereshit. What does this word mean? You know. Of course you know. What is the first few words in the book of Genesis?

In the beginning. Okay. So they just used this word in the beginning for the title of the book. So it was not Genesis.

All right? Let's have a look. The second book in the Bible. We all can see Exodus. All right? But Exodus. What is the word? What is it? Ver-A-L-S-H-A-M-A-T.

Same thing. Ver-A-L-S-H-A-M-A-T. What do they mean? These are the names. These are the names. That's what it meant.

Nothing to do with Exodus. Nothing of. What does Exodus mean? Leaving. All right? It has nothing to do with that. But how come this word Genesis in the first book of the Bible?

[11:22] Now that is Greek. Okay? That's closer to us. Okay? And reading from that. Genesis in its original, I mean, it's translated in, translation in Greek as Genesis.

But it's not the first few words in the book of Genesis. In the book of Genesis. And R.K. Eposyn.

That's in the beginning. But where did this word Genesis come from? It came from, from this Hebrew Bible, when 70 of the Hebrew scribes, they translated this into this.

Genesis. They gave this word Genesis. It's much like Chinese when their parents or grandparents, when they migrated over here.

But you guys growing up here hardly know any Chinese. A lot of you are pretty good. But your children, I don't think they would know Chinese at all. And in order for them to know the will of God, they had to translate them, the Hebrew or Aramaic, into Greek.

[12:49] That was the common language at the time. And they found, as they were going through the book of Genesis, they have found there was a word that ran through the whole book of Genesis.

Okay. And that was this word. Toladot. And in the NIV Bible, it translated as account, generations.

And that word was Genesis. There's a lot of facts today, I'm sorry. But I want to put us into that frame so that we can see what the book of Genesis is all about.

Okay. If you're not following, you're kind of lost somewhere in the desert, that's fine. You will come out of Egypt sometimes. Okay. But we want to place us all in a context so that we don't, I don't want us just to know one or two stories in the Bible, in the book of Genesis.

I want us to know the purpose of God using the book of Genesis to let us know what is his will for us. Okay.

[14:10] All right. Eleven of these, these were Toladots. What are they? How they were recorded? They were recorded like this.

The first of these Toladots was chapter 2, verse 4. This is the account of the heaven and earth. All right. And then there was the written account of Adam's line.

The account of Noah. The account of Noah's sons. The account of shame, terror. And the account of sons of Ishmael and all these Abraham's descendants.

Okay. So Genesis really meant the account of God's doing with mankind. You know what I mean? So it's not just about creation. Creation was only one account. So when we look at that, it's more than, actually it's more than 11. And before chapter 2, verse 3, okay.

[15:13] It was chapter 1, to chapter 2, to 3. So chapter 1, 1 is actually another title for chapter 1, verse 2, to chapter 2, verse 3.

The first account was in the beginning God created the heaven and earth. And we can all count. It's 12 there.

Okay. So it was that 12 accounts, all right, ran through from the creation to the very last account of Jacob.

Why? Now there are certain numbers in the Bible that's very meaningful, very significant. 3, all right. 7, 12. What does 12, what kind of significance it had? 12. We all know that by chapter 47.

[16:18] Oh, Jacob had 12 sons. Israel had 12 tribes. You see, the author of Genesis was very skillfully, very purposefully recorded in that manner.

Now, these accounts, some were genealogies. Those, you know, we just fall into sleep when we read some of the names. We don't even know how to pronounce some of the names.

Very boring. But for them, it was very meaningful. They could memorize all these names. Okay. It's us, the problem. It's us, not them.

And out of these accounts, there were some narratives. Okay. Okay. So, the author of Genesis want to make sure God, for the readers to know that God's dealing with mankind right from the beginning and to the sons of Jacob.

Why? What is the purpose? That was God was right there in the beginning of time, in the creation, and his chosen, the choice, of chosen the family of Abraham.

[17:40] And through that, his purpose, his salvation was to work out. That is the purpose of the book of Genesis. So, in that, we understand.

Okay. We try to understand. There was some different authors, Bible commentators, who were trying to understand that there are themes in the book of Genesis.

Okay. No matter it was order versus chaos or grace over sin or creation versus destruction. But it seems to be there are two kind of forces that were trying to combat each other.

All right. It was the godly force, the power of God, in insisting, creating, building orders. Okay.

And there was this evil, negative, sinful force that is trying to come against the power of God. Okay.

[18:51] When I was, maybe 30-something years ago, when I was studying lay law, the first year I was there, I had to, we had to study the introduction of the Old Testament.

Okay. Okay. And because I never studied very much prior to that, so it was hard. Trying to understand the book of Genesis.

And for me, it was all chaos. Okay. I was, I picked up this book, one of the textbooks. I could remember, the author was Klaus Westermann.

Okay. Okay. Okay. And the book, the title of the book exactly was Chaos Versus Order. And it was talking about the book of Genesis. And I was in the library, I was trying to, trying to digest the book. I mean, the whole week. I couldn't even run through 20 pages. It was pretty much like the description of the Bible. I was, I was void and formless.

[19:53] Chaotic. Dark. Darkness in my, in my brain and mind. Okay. Couldn't understand. But over the years, as I was trying to understand the concept of this chaos and versus order, I realized that, that exactly that was what it was saying in the book of Genesis.

First, first, first, the God has created, in the beginning, God created the heaven and earth. Okay. That is the introduction. That's a statement. But in verse 2, it says, the world was formless and void. Okay. And God was determined to, to exert his order into this chaotic situation.

Okay. When it was void, it was formless. God separated the mess, light and darkness.

Okay. God separated the, the, the, the water and the sky. And God places something.

[21:06] There was nothing there. God placed, placed the fish and the creatures in the sea. And he placed the animals and, and, and, and the beasts in the field and birds in the air.

And in that six days, God has transformed that chaotic, formless void into something we could all live there happily.

That was the order of God in his creation. Okay. Okay. But, this sinful, this negative, this evil force was at work.

When all were well in the garden of Eden, then sin came. Man listened to the serpent and they all sinned and fell.

Man, that was chaos at work. But then God's order was determined. And when the judgment came over to the serpent, salvation announced.

[22:12] God said to the serpent, your descendant and the descendant of the woman will be in enmity with one another.

And your, you will crush, you will hurt his feet, but he will crush your head.

That was the salvation firstly announced in the book of Genesis. And later on, the first murder, Cain murdered Abel.

All right. And God's order maintained. And he, he will put a prohibition onto anyone who kills Cain.

Right. And then later, there was the flood, but God provided the ark. And then, the Tower of Babel, God has confused the language. Okay.

[23:15] So, it was all the, it was these two powers in coming against one another. But, always, God wins.

And it's not just in the book of Genesis. It's right through, right through the rest of the Bible. No matter it was order versus chaos or grace over sin or creation versus destruction.

It's, it's this kind of struggle. Okay. But all these, in the midst of all these, God is there. God is on top. So, what does it say to us?

The book of Genesis reminds us today, we're in a sinful world. Yes, at times, we experience chaos. And we may give in to sin ourselves.

And in this sinful world, there are calamities, there are sufferings. Surely. We can't get away from that. Recently, our family experienced another trauma.

[24:19] Okay. But we remember, God is there. We trust in the God of creation. We trust in the God who takes care of mankind.

There's no evil forces, no chaos can overcome him. Do we believe that? This is the message of the Bible, the book of Genesis given to us, loud and clear.

So, the purpose, when God given us this book of Genesis, okay. Now, we have put this in the church Facebook, okay.

So, it's about the Bible projects. It was two links, two videos about understanding Genesis. I hope you can click into it and just get yourself familiar with that, okay.

So, the first video was about the first 11th chapter of God's dealing with the world, okay. And then the second video is about 12 to 50.

[25 : 25] God's chosen someone, Abram. And within that someone, it developed into a nation. And God's purpose was to work through his purpose through this nation.

And out of this nation, out of this people, the Messiah will come out from that. And Jesus, the Christ, was in God's timing, he came and fulfilled the salvation that God has planned.

Okay. So, this is the book of Genesis that when God allowed that, God wanted this in the Bible, it has a very important purpose.

It's an introduction of the first five books. There's the five books of the book, what they call the Pentateuch as the five books of Moses, okay.

They also call the law, okay. And also, it provides the history and the background for the people of Israel and also for us to know, oh, there's Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and how they came as a chosen people.

[26 : 42] Okay. And, yeah, just imagine, if there is no book, there's no Genesis, when the Jews, when they had just read about Exodus.

Well, how come we were in Egypt? Why? When we were supposed to be blessed by God, how come we ended up in Egypt? Okay. And for us, you know, if we just open up the first book, it was Exodus, and we just think, oh, okay, there was a bunch of Hebrew slaves who was in Egypt who was being treated badly, and somehow God has released them through the sky, Moses.

And, oh, it was very spectacular. It was good. It was hero stories. And that's about all. But what has it got to do with me? I'm Chinese. I'm not Hebrew.

What has it got to do with me? But the book of Genesis has served that purpose, to put us into the context, and we knew, oh, that's how God worked.

Okay. And the purpose of God in choosing the people of Israel to entering into covenants with them is because God wanted his salvation plan to work out through the Hebrew people.

[27 : 59] And that's how God chose to be. So this is, we understand this so that we see the book of Genesis in this original meaning.

And will help us to know all these things, all these accounts and the records that was in the book. So we don't just isolate account or events from one another. It all has a purpose. God has everything in his hand.

Everything was planned. Okay. And the book of Genesis reminded us something about God himself. The book of Genesis reminded us God is a very personal God.

He was not a thing or a creative force like a lot of the ancient Near East, you know, the people in the ancient Near East. There was no problems about believing in God.

[29 : 07] There were plenty of gods, but which one was God? And how these gods were. But the book of Genesis told us that God is a very personal God.

He is a person. He is not a thing. Okay. And he is interested in us. He wanted to build relationship with us. He chose Abraham.

He chose his descendants. And today, he is interested in us. Why was he relational? Because God is not just one.

One. We believe in a triumphant God, right? God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Spirit even hinted that in the book of Genesis.

Right? God created the heaven and earth. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. So God and the Spirit.

[30 : 10] And also in the book of Genesis and in other parts of the Old Testament, they always talked about the angel of the Lord. Okay? The angel of the Lord can be translated as angels, you know, messengers.

Okay? Gabriel, Michael. These were angels, archangels. But the angel of the Lord in Hebrew in this original meaning, it could translate as God himself.

The manifestation of God. Okay? So in the New Testament, we see it more clearly. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. God is good.

God is mighty. God is creative. Now, this is our God. This is the Hebrew God. This is our God. Our God is great. He's not a thing.

He's not a force. He's not interested in us. He is very much interested in us. Right? He loves us. He loves us to a point that he wants, he sent his son to die for us because he didn't want us to see us perish.

[31 : 17] Now, that's, the book of Genesis reminds us of that. And secondly, the book of Genesis reminds us of mankind. We are created. We're not, our ancestors were not monkeys or apes.

We are created. And we are created uniquely. We have an image and a likeness of God. Even though we sin.

All right? Yes, the chapter 3 reminded us that we sin and eventually we die. Okay? But, we still have the image of God in us.

We are still capable of loving other people. We are still capable to be compassionate. We are still capable to be genuine. These are the image and likeness of God in us.

Even though, yes, the sin has marred that image. But, the image is still there. And in Christ, he recreated that image.

[32 : 23] And thirdly, salvation. As I said before, chapter 3, verse 15. God immediately pronounced salvation.

In due time, the descendant of that woman will crush. The descendant of Satan. And Jesus, through his death and resurrection, he totally, completely crushed the chaotic power.

And you and I, we're saved. Through him. And this was done through God chose a man, Abraham. And eventually developed into a clan, a nation. And Christ, as a Jew, came out from this people of Israel. Now, that was, this is what Genesis was talking about.

So, we want to put ourselves into context and to understand that way, way before we realize anything, God was at work. Because, he existed before time, before space.

[33 : 36] His purpose will work out according to himself, through his might, according to his wisdom. This is, I drew this to remind ourselves.

I hope it can help us to understand as well. Okay. The first book is Genesis. And the last book is Revelation. It kind of, it represents the beginning to the end of mankind.

Okay. It does not mean God started there. No. God was pre-existent. He was way, way before. Because he's God. No.

He created time. So, he's out of time. He created space. So, he's not in the space. And even in the end times, when Revelation, when Christ comes back again, that will be continued on eternally.

Okay. So, this is only us. And in the Bible, it talked about, firstly, in the Garden of Eden, God has planned salvation.

[34 : 43] He first has declared, announced salvation in 315. And then, the first 11th chapter, God was created, was dealing with mankind, especially with Noah.

Because during that time, the sin of mankind was so severe, God almost had to wipe up the whole mankind, except Noah and his family.

And God preserved that. And out of that, he recreated the mankind and the creation. Okay. And in chapter 12, God has chosen Israel.

Chosen Abraham. And through this, his salvation will work out. And the cross is the most crucial thing for the human history.

And Christ, in God's designated time, he came and died for us and raised for us. And salvation was provided for mankind.

[35 : 49] And here now, we as church, we have this good news. We are commissioned to preach.

To preach unto when? Until Jesus returns. So this is the creation of salvation. So this is the creation of salvation, the conception of salvation, completion, communication, until one day, Jesus comes back.

That will be complete, consummated. Okay. Now, this is the message that the book of Genesis has for us. How do we respond to that?

So let us go deeper. Start, just stop asking these sort of, just, skin deep questions.

But ask, let's go deeper to ask, who is God? And who is not? As I said, you know, the people at that time, they had no problem to believe in God.

[36 : 55] It's just, who is the real one? There's so many gods around. And we truly believe there is one God who created heaven and earth and created me and you.

And he's interested in mankind. And we are saved now. We are saved in Christ, through Christ. Okay. As Christians, let's ask, if he is really God, then I'm not God.

And nothing in this world can replace God and cannot compete with God. So how do I, how do I place my priorities here on earth in time and space?

And let us ask, where does man come from? Am I truly a creation of God?

If I am, how do I look at myself? I'm not evolved. I'm created with the image and likeness of God.

[38 : 02] I'm not perfect, but I have some value because God created me and he does not create rubbish. And how do I deal with sin when I'm in that chaotic state, when I, at times, I give in to temptation and I fall?

The cross of Christ has the power to forgive. Whether we are Christians or not, we can always come to Jesus and ask for forgiveness and ask for forgiveness.

And every time, there is. And what was the purpose of creation? It's not just for us to manipulate or to do whatever we want.

God placed us as human to work in his garden, to maintain. And the purpose of man here on earth?

These are the deeper questions we should ask. So I hope, let's go back and read the first, I mean the first, yeah, we'll be talking about 11, one to 11, the first 11 chapters, but let's read the whole book of Genesis and to understand God's purpose in it for you and for me.

[39 : 27] Let's pray. Father God, just thank you for your amazing word. Yeah, the book of Genesis, we kind of, kind of, yeah, we know, but we actually don't know very much.

I pray that, Lord, as light shone, when you say, let there be light, surely, Lord, let there be light to light up our lives, to know your word, your purpose for us.

Thank you, Lord. We commit ourselves into your hand and we ask that you be with us in Jesus' name. Amen.