

## 1 God the creator Genesis 1:1

How are you doing with your New Year Resolutions? I've managed to get my hair cut so, so far, so good. I told the barber that it was my New Year Resolution to get my hair cut more often, "Great!" He said, "What were your other New Year Resolutions?"

"Oh, no," I replied, "there weren't any others – just that one – be realistic I thought, give yourself a chance to achieve it this year!"

He didn't comment, but I could tell that he was a bit disappointed that my New Year's Resolutions were no more ambitious than a more regular trim, but to be honest, I know my limitations. The problem is that when a New Year comes around, it isn't really the opportunity we make it out to be for a totally new start because (like it or not) we drag lots of baggage with us from the old year.

"New Year – New You" is just advertising hype, because the "New You" still has lots of "old you" habits, attributes, possessions and responsibilities.

Sometimes we think how wonderful it would be to have a real beginning from scratch – a clean slate, a fresh start and that is what we get in Genesis – "in the beginning..."

Have you ever wondered; what was there before the universe? Well, the answer is nothing - the story of the Bible begins at the beginning, the story of the universe begins at the beginning, this isn't a new start, this is THE start. All that was there (and I use that choice of words cautiously) was God. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Even when we buy something new it is made up of old things – a beautiful sparkling diamond ring may look new, but it's made from stones and metal which have spent millions of years underground, but in contrast the universe God created was not an old universe recycled, no, God made it new.

Now I am conscious that this is going to throw up all sorts of questions today about evolution, science and faith etc and we don't have the time to address all those issues this morning.

But if you were here two years ago then you will remember that we began 2009 with a whole series on creation and science. I'm afraid that because of space the talks are no-longer on the website, but if you would like to listen to them again and think about some of those issues in more detail then you can always request a CD.

So with that in mind, let's move on because although we can't tackle every issue today, we can see some big sign posts which line us up to explore our relationship with God. For example;

Have you wondered why the universe is here? Let me tell you; it is because God called it into existence. The point is not to get bogged down in the how; six day creationism, or theistic evolution, or whatever, the big message is that the universe is no chance happening, no random event.

Before the universe came into being - God existed and God was enough; there was Father, Son and Holy Spirit existing in perfect community and perfect fellowship and perfect love – “in the beginning God” – nothing and no-one else was needed, but God chose to call the universe into existence.

Now just pause for a minute and think, God chose to call this universe – stars, planets, asteroids, comets into existence and then the small fiddly stuff too.

That means that not only are supernovas, black holes and dark matter important, but vegetation animals and people are all of great worth too because God chose to create it all. So the Bible begins by telling us that this universe is specially and purposefully created by God.

And the up shot is that we need to therefore remember that God is the King over creation; he alone is the one worthy of our worship. Think about it; if God is the creator God, the one who made everything then how can we possibly worship anything or anyone instead of him? It doesn't make sense and yet we need that reminder because we can so often slip into that sort of behaviour – idolatry isn't just about bowing down and worshipping a stone idol, it's whenever we have put something or someone ahead of God in our list of priorities.

How often we do it! We can even put the creation above of the creator. Can you imagine doing that in any other walk of life? "This painting is magnificent a glorious chance coming together of paint, canvas and frame – OK I'll admit it, it was painted by someone or other, perhaps, but you can't really credit the artist can you? The painting is what is important, the artist – well, he's immaterial. I'm not interested in who he was or what he was trying to say – I don't think he deserves any credit at all!"

But when we put nature, or ecology, or even our leisure pursuits, or family – anything in a more important position than God in our lives, we are, in effect, saying exactly the same thing!

Now, that's not to say that people are not important, we are and we can see that in the opening chapters of the Bible, let me explain. Remember how we read in Genesis that, "...the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

And in John chapter 1 we read how “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.”

All this means that in the beginning God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were there, God was in a perfect loving relationship – he had no need of anyone or anything else and yet we see that he chooses to create humanity as the pinnacle of creation; in his “image” male and female human beings are created and we are “very good” in his eyes.

Does your life have meaning and purpose and validity and hope? At times you might not feel as if it does, but Genesis 1 and 2 tell you that yes it does because you were not carelessly created – remember our verse from last week? “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” God has those plans for us because he lovingly created you and me.

Remember how the psalmist reflects on this as he sings a song of praise to God, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

And so the Psalmist concludes, “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.”

You see, when we try to find our worth elsewhere; as a parent, or a spouse, or through work, or academia we will be constantly disappointed, but when we recognise that we are actually the highpoint of God's creation, that nothing can top us then God will become precious to us afresh as we realise we are not mere chance genetic occurrences battling our way through a vicious universe mindlessly directed by the concept of the survival of the fittest; neither are we about to be superseded by a laptop or a robot because in contrast to technology and even animals we are amazingly created to know, love and be loved by God whose image we share and to receive his blessing.

And here right at the beginning of the Bible we see that this blessing is to be found in God's Kingdom which has been opened to us. Genesis reveals to us that God's good and perfect plan is to place humanity in a perfect garden within the world. There we are in an unfettered relationship with God where God cares for us and gives us the command to fill the world and subdue it – to expand God's kingdom as we live in the seventh day of rest.

Days 1-6 have beginnings and ends, but not day seven, day seven is ongoing and we are in that day now where God rests from creation and reigns in majesty.

Now, as we are going to see next week, this perfect and idyllic world doesn't last long because of our sin, but what is important for us to establish today is that everything begins well. I once put together a piece of furniture and at the assembly stage I made some sort of mistake with the runners for draws. The result was that it was never going to work properly. But that is not how it is with the world God created.

This world and the people God created were created good and very good – everything fitted together well in God's kingdom.

We were never supposed to have fractured relationships with one another and God, we were never intended to lose our lives because of war, famine or even flood or be cut off from the loving presence of our creator God.

And the good news (without spoiling the ending for you) is that God is going to put things right – Jesus has promised that all those who come to him who are heavy laden will find rest in him, that they will discover the seventh day rest of God's perfect peace through faith in him. And when we look at the very end of the New Testament we see that, one day, God will once again in the New Creation dwell with his people in a perfect unhindered relationship with them.

If life, the universe and everything sometimes seems chaotic, then it just might be for us, but it is never out of God's control. God is the creator king who is above the whole universe and as we begin our journey through the Bible it is wonderful to see that in the beginning he made everything good and to remind ourselves that he alone is the only one worthy of our worship and our praise.

As Isaiah declared, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no-one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."