

# GENESIS 1-2

## CREATION & THE IMAGE OF GOD

Genesis 1-2 tell the story of creation: how God brought our world into existence. Genesis 1 portrays God's action in narrative (story) form, while Genesis 2 describes the creation in a more poetic way. Our reading begins with some of the most important words in the Bible: In the beginning, God. Genesis opens up with these foundational words that set the tone for all of human existence. There is nothing, and then, all of a sudden there is something—because God exists and calls it into being. The first thing we must understand from the creation account in Genesis is the all-supremacy and eternality of God. Paul describes it in Romans 11:36 by saying, “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” God is the cause of all things, the realization of all things, and the ultimate goal of all things. He acts in creation—from something out of nothing—ultimately that he would be glorified. The opening verses of our Bible tells us: 1) there was never a time when God was not, 2) there was a time when everything else was not, 3) God as the supreme, sovereign, and powerful one has acted to bring creation into existence for his ultimate glory.

Genesis 1 then recounts God's creation of the entire universe as we know it: light, land, trees, creatures. Notice the repetition in the creation account: after each major block we see “And God saw that it was good.” The perfect and glorious God created a perfect and glorious creation. The crown jewel, or culmination of his creation results in his creation of mankind in Genesis 1:26-28. 1:27 records, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” How do we know that we, humans, are the crown jewels of God's creation? First, the creation—only after God has made humans—is summarized as “very good” instead of simply “good” (1:31). Second, mankind is described as being made in the image of God (1:26-28), a designation given to no other creature in the universe.

Being made in God's image begins to give us a clue of God's purpose for us as people, the crown jewel of his creation. There has been a lot of debate over what it means to be made in God's image, but it really comes down to two main ideas: to know God, and reflect that relationship to the world. First, we see evidence that there is to be a special relationship between God and man. The emphasis on image and likeness shows that in some ways, mankind is created in reference to God, showing that there is similarity that is meant to lead to relationship (1:28). Then, God speaks to the first man, Adam, in giving him instructions—showing that there will be a relationship going forward (2:17). Only after the first couple's sin do they notice God walking in the garden with them and respond in fear and embarrassment—showing that before sin, this wasn't the intention of their relationship (3:8). Second, being in God's image is to reflect that relationship to the world. In God's blessing of Adam and Eve in 1:26-28, he commands them to be fruitful and multiply so that they may have dominion over the land. This is so they reflect their role and relationship with God to the entire creation for his ultimate glory. Then in 2:15, God gives Adam the responsibility of working and keeping the garden. These are the same words used in other OT texts of the role of priests in keeping the temple—God's sacred space.

This shows us that Adam and Eve's role was not only to enjoy a relationship with God themselves; but to somehow steward that relationship to the rest of creation in a way that others (subsequent humans) would come to know God in relationship.

Genesis 1-2 then becomes more than a neat story of God creating the world—but a story of how and why we exist as humans. We exist because God is the all-powerful, sovereign, causer-of-all-things God who created the world. Something out of nothing. Because God acted, everything around us was brought forth into being. But rather than a neat fact, it gives us purpose. First, we are to view our purpose within the story of the universe—ultimately to bring God glory and praise. Second, we are to live out our purpose that is inherent in being created in the image of God. This means that we are A) to enjoy a rich relationship with God, having the capacity to do so through the person and work of Jesus Christ, B) to seek to “image” him to the world around us, that through our life and words we would reflect who God is that others would enjoy a relationship with him. Genesis 1-2 give us purpose right now—many years later. Let us allow this text to move our hearts to our big God who calls us into existence and relationship with him for his ultimate glory.