



Genesis #1

Creation: Order, Purpose and Limits

w/c 3 May 2026

"Now if I believe in God's Son and remember that He became man, all creatures will appear a hundred times more beautiful to me than before. Then I will properly appreciate the sun, the moon, the stars, trees, apples, as I reflect that he is Lord over all things. ...God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars." (Martin Luther)

Read Genesis 1:1-2:3

Often a contentious passage; misused by many. Firstly, by those who would claim it reveals the irrelevance of religious understanding to a modern worldview. Equally though, by those who would claim it describes what happened and therefore somehow points to a recent creation. I hope that through this study you will understand that both are not only wrong but also sadly diminish the wonderful reality. Let's start at the beginning. The key to unlocking this passage lies in the first ten words. And we need to focus on perhaps two phrases there:

In the beginning – there is a beginning: time is part of creation itself as well as matter.

God created: creation is separate from the creator. This is actually a key difference from some of the creation myths around at the time Genesis was written.

The remainder of the chapter (going on to 2:3) is essentially a poetic reflection on the nature of that creation, seen through the prism of the ancient Jewish understanding of the nature of the universe (small and limited). It explains for them, in a way that is certainly neither science nor history, how what they believed to exist came to be. We can therefore ask ourselves:

What did it mean to the writer?

But also, **what does it mean for us today?** Given what we now know about the cosmos, **what is its message both for believers and also for those around us?**

Neither history nor science clash with Genesis because they speak to different things. The facts are what they speak to. Genesis is speaking to a different place; exulting in the creator. Let us rejoice in the awesome breadth and depth of creation, its age and its extent. One of the great beauties of our universe is that science works, creation is not capricious, we can trust measurements, laws can be applied.

What does the nature of the creation say about the nature of the creator?

Currently available evidence points to Homo sapiens (our species) appearing around 300,000 years ago. It does seem that the 'dust of the earth' from which God formed humanity is to be taken as being an already existing hominid. DNA indicates that common ancestors for all of humanity existed at about this time.

Why is it important that all humans have a common ancestor? See Acts 17:26.

What does it mean to be in the image of God?

The point of creation though is not to theorise about it. We, as the whole of humanity, are charged with being its stewards (a term that, I'm told, gives the flavour of vv26&28 better than many translations. **What can we do to demonstrate that stewardship in both small things and by influencing larger events?** Equally, we should take time to reflect on how better we might experience and enjoy God's creation and praise him for its long and wonderful history.