

JANUARY I

GENESIS I:1–2:25

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. ³Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light “day,” and He called the darkness “night.” Evening came, and then morning: the first day.

⁶Then God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water.” ⁷So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸God called the expanse “sky.” Evening came, and then morning: the second day.

⁹Then God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land “earth,” and He called the gathering of the water “seas.” And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, “Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it, according to their kinds.” And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it, according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³Evening came, and then morning: the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for festivals and for days and years. ¹⁵They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶God made the

two great lights—the greater light to have dominion over the day and the lesser light to have dominion over the night—as well as the stars. ¹⁷God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, ¹⁸to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹Evening came, and then morning: the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, “Let the water swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” ²¹So God created the large sea-creatures and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²So God blessed them, “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.” ²³Evening came, and then morning: the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. ²⁵So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the animals, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.”

- ²⁷ So God created man in His own image;
He created him in the image of
God;
He created them male and female.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.” ²⁹ God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth, and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This food will be for you, ³⁰ for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it. I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. Evening came, and then morning: the sixth day.

2 So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. ² By the seventh day, God completed His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. ³ God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it He rested from His work of creation.

⁴ These are the records of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation at the time that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. ⁵ No shrub of the field had yet grown on the land, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground. ⁶ But water would come out of the ground and water the entire surface of the land. ⁷ Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

⁸ The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there He placed the man He had formed. ⁹ The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the midst of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river went out from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became the source of four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon, which encircles the entire land of the Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² Gold from that

land is pure; bdellium and onyx are also there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon, which encircles the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows to the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.” ¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is like him.” ¹⁹ So the LORD God formed out of the ground each wild animal and each bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found who was like him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. ²² Then the LORD God made the rib He had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ And the man said:

This one, at last, is bone of my bone,
and flesh of my flesh;
this one will be called woman,
for she was taken from man.

²⁴ This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

PSALM 1:1-6

¹ How happy is the man
who does not follow the advice of
the wicked,

- or take the path of sinners,
or join a group of mockers!
- 2 Instead, his delight is in the
LORD's instruction,
and he meditates on it day and
night.
- 3 He is like a tree planted beside
streams of water
that bears its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.
- 4 The wicked are not like this;
instead, they are like chaff that
the wind blows away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked will not
survive the judgment,
and sinners will not be in the
community of the righteous.
- 6 For the Lord watches over the way
of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to
ruin.

PROVERBS 1:1-4

- 1 The Proverbs of Solomon son of
David, king of Israel:
- 2 For gaining wisdom and being
instructed;
for understanding insightful
sayings;
- 3 for receiving wise instruction
in righteousness, justice, and
integrity;
- 4 for teaching shrewdness to the
inexperienced,
knowledge and discretion to a
young man—

MATTHEW 1:1-25

1 The historical record of Jesus Christ,
the Son of David, the Son of Abra-
ham:

- 2 Abraham fathered Isaac,
Isaac fathered Jacob,
Jacob fathered Judah and his
brothers,
- 3 Judah fathered Perez and Zerah
by Tamar,

- Perez fathered Hezron,
Hezron fathered Aram,
4 Aram fathered Aminadab,
Aminadab fathered Nahshon,
Nahshon fathered Salmon,
5 Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab,
Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth,
Obed fathered Jesse,
6 and Jesse fathered King David.

- Then David fathered Solomon
by Uriah's wife,
7 Solomon fathered Rehoboam,
Rehoboam fathered Abijah,
Abijah fathered Asa,
8 Asa fathered Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat fathered Joram,
Joram fathered Uzziah,
9 Uzziah fathered Jotham,
Jotham fathered Ahaz,
Ahaz fathered Hezekiah,
10 Hezekiah fathered Manasseh,
Manasseh fathered Amon,
Amon fathered Josiah,
11 and Josiah fathered Jechoniah
and his brothers
at the time of the exile
to Babylon.

- 12 Then after the exile to Babylon
Jechoniah fathered Salathiel,
Salathiel fathered Zerubbabel,
13 Zerubbabel fathered Abiud,
Abiud fathered Eliakim,
Eliakim fathered Azor,
14 Azor fathered Zadok,
Zadok fathered Achim,
Achim fathered Eliud,
15 Eliud fathered Eleazar,
Eleazar fathered Matthan,
Matthan fathered Jacob,
16 and Jacob fathered Joseph the
husband of Mary,
who gave birth to Jesus
who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷So all the generations from Abra-
ham to David were 14 generations; and
from David until the exile to Babylon,
14 generations; and from the exile to
Babylon until the Messiah, 14 genera-
tions.

¹⁸The birth of Jesus Christ came
about this way: After His mother Mary

had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

²⁰ But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit.²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.”

²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ **See, the virgin will
become pregnant
and give birth to a son,
and they will name Him
Immanuel,**

which is translated “God is with us.”

²⁴ When Joseph got up from sleeping, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her ²⁵ but did not know her intimately until she gave birth to a son. And he named Him Jesus.

The Primary Focus

In the beginning God.—GENESIS 1:1

We focus on what is without doubt the most noble and loftiest of themes: the nature and character of God. I have noticed that Christians, generally speaking, seem to be preoccupied with knowing more about themselves rather than knowing more about God. Ask any Christian bookshop manager: “What are the best-selling books?” Not those that unfold for us the nature of God, but those that direct us toward such things as how to get a better self-image, how to manage money, how to find inner healing, how to get more excitement out of life, and so on. Not that these subjects are unimportant, but they are explored in a self-absorbed way that gives the idea that the most important thing in life is knowing ourselves better. It isn’t. The most important thing in life is knowing God better.

John Lancaster, a minister in Cardiff, South Wales, in an article entitled “Where on Earth Is God?” asks the question: “Given a choice between attending a seminar, say, on the ‘Glory of God in Isaiah’ and one on ‘The Christian and Sex,’ to which would you go?” He makes the point also that although the church often answers the questions that people are asking, the real problem may be that people are not asking the right questions. In today’s church we are far too man-centered and not God-centered.

It is not by accident, I believe, that the Bible opens with the thunderous acclaim: “In the beginning God.” I tell you with all the conviction of which I am capable: if God is not our primary focus, then everything else will soon get out of focus.

Prayer

O Father, from this day help me determine to make You my primary focus. And give me the grace and strength to maintain it, through all the vicissitudes and uncertainties of the days ahead. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.