

**Text: Genesis 1**

**Theme: In the Beginning**

**Sermon delivered by Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi during Service of the Word on 07/06/2015 at 10:30 am**

We take so much for granted. We walk outside and experience the world around us, often without any thought of its majesty and grandeur. We see the sky, the trees, the ocean, the mountains, any of which is immense enough to overwhelm us as we try to consider its beauty and magnitude.

That takes us to the very first book of your Bible which is called Genesis. Genesis means "beginnings". It tells of the beginning of the world. The beginning of mankind. The beginning of sin. The beginning of sacrifice for sins. And the beginning of God's special relationship with the people He'd created.

Someone has said that it's nearly impossible to fully understand the rest of the Bible unless we understand the very first 12 chapters of Genesis. Those chapters form the foundation of the rest of what the Bible is all about.

For example, notice the very first words of Genesis: "In the beginning God..." Before anything else happened... there was God. Scripture didn't start out: "In the beginning, the earth was without form and void." Or "In the beginning before the sun and solar system existed" Or "In the beginning in a land far, far away". It simply says, "In the beginning GOD..."

Hebrews 1:10-12 says: "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

**Everything in scripture is built - not so much around the earth or man - but around God.** Now, why is that important? Why is it important that the Bible starts out saying "In the beginning God?"

**Firstly – because God formed the earth.**

He created it. He owns it. It belongs to Him. He owes His existence to no one.

We may be actors on the grand stage of life, but God owns the stage. He owns the props. He owns us. Everything that you see and touch in this world - belongs to God.

"A group of scientists got together and decided they no longer needed God. One of them said to God, "We've decided we no longer need you. We can do all kinds of things through science. We can even clone people and make body parts, so we just don't need you anymore."

God listened patiently, "Let's have a man making contest just like in the days of Adam."

The scientist agreed and bent down to grab himself a handful of dirt.

And God smiled and said, "No, no, no – you get your own dirt."

It's all God's. Everything is His. Once you figure that out, everything else in Scripture begins to make sense.

**Secondly**, Genesis starts out saying "In the Beginning God" is because **without God nothing else matters**. Nothing has purpose. Nothing has real value. You take God out of the picture and you end up with an empty, meaningless universe.

You see, it's God that creates value in this world and in us. Without God you are left nothing that has any intrinsic value to it in this world.

This is a £50 bill. How many of you would be pleased if I gave you this £50 bill? What if a tore it? Would you still want it? What if I were to crumple it up into a ball, would you still want it? What if I were to stomp on it – would you still want it?

Now why is this £50 bill worth £50? Is the paper worth £50? Is the ink worth £50? Is that little strip of plastic they put inside the bill worth £50? Well if the paper, the ink and the plastic strip inside aren't worth £50, what makes this bill worth £50?

It's worth that much because the UK Government says it's worth that much. And to verify this bill's value, the government puts its images on that bill.

### **So, how do I know that I (as a person) have value?**

Because God put His image in me.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27)

You are made in the image of God. You have intrinsic value. If for that reason alone – you are worth a great deal.

And Genesis 1 not only tells me that God created this world just for US, it goes into great detail to show the lengths God went - to prepare this world for us.

It is the only known planet in the universe with the advantages for *life* that ours has. Our planet is in what's called the “Goldilocks zone” – not too close to the sun and not too far away.

- If the earth were 1 degree closer to the sun, we'd fry! If we were 1 degree further from the sun, we'd freeze!
- If the moon was any closer or larger, the tides would destroy the coast lines. If the moon was any smaller/further away -oceans would die from a lack of nutrient movement.

That's why Genesis is so specific about the care God took in preparing Earth for mankind. It had to be just so... or life could not exist. God was very particular on how He built our environment on this planet. If it weren't “just so” - without the proper combination of chemicals and minerals and gases - we'd never survive.

### **What did God create on the first day? (Light)**

This wasn't the sun and moon kind of light – God created the sun, moon and stars 3 days later (vs 14-19) - this light was a **Divine** light. A light that came directly from God to light our world. It is the type of light you crave when your light is surrounded by the darkness of this life – be it serious illness, loss of loved ones or status and you cry out to God in supplication to remove the darkness surrounding you.

This is what's odd – that light was the **ONLY** thing God created on that 1st day.

And I thought to myself: Why just create light? You see, God wasn't just creating the world for us. From the very first day of creation God intended to send us a message of His plan for us from the beginning of Eternity.

### **And what was the message?**

Well, let me set the stage for this:

Jesus said “I am the LIGHT of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the LIGHT OF LIFE.” John 8:12

And in John 1:4 we're told that “in (Jesus) was life, and that life was the LIGHT of man.”

Jesus was THE light of the world. But what did Jesus do to give us that light?

He died for our sins. He was buried... and He rose from the grave.

In rising from the grave Jesus conquered DEATH... and gave us hope of life eternal.

Now guess which day of the week Jesus rose from the grave and conquered death?  
The First Day!

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.  
God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.  
God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night."  
And there was evening, and there was morning— the first day. Genesis 1:3-5

When God created the world, He lit the world with a divine light. There was NO OTHER light for the world. Without that divine light, the world was cast in complete darkness. And without that divine light there would be NO LIFE on the earth God created.

In the same way, Jesus is the Divine Light. Without His light the world is in darkness.

There are three questions we all must answer eventually:

1. **Where did I come from?**
2. **Why am I here?**
3. **Where am I going?**

You can never answer the last question until you answer the second question, and you will never answer the second question until you answer the first one.

Genesis tells us where we came from and it also tells us why we are here. We were made by God and we were put on the earth to know God and to serve him. And in serving him we find meaning, purpose, fulfilment, incredible satisfaction and a sense of self-worth. We were made for God and the more we know about him, the happier we will be.

### **1. The Universe Had a Definite Beginning.**

The text says, "in the beginning," referring to the beginning of all created things. When the Jews named this book, they named it after the first word of the Hebrew text, which literally means "In the beginning" or as a title, "The Beginning." This is where everything starts.

The things we see around us, the trees and the things we own, the mountains and the oceans, none of it has been here forever. Only God is eternal. Everything else had a beginning. Even time itself was created by God.

This world is God's house. He's left clues everywhere about what kind of God He is.

That raises a question that children like to ask (and adults secretly wonder about): Who created God? The answer is, no one "created" God. He was there before the beginning. He had no beginning and he did not create himself. He was, he is, and he will always be. I freely admit that we cannot comprehend what that means. But know this. God stretches back farther than the mind can imagine. He goes far beyond the reaches of chemistry or biology or history or mathematics or quantum mechanics or the speculations of theoretical cosmology. He dwells in eternity, which means no telescope can find him and no computer program can define him.

Once the great Augustine was asked what God was doing before he created the world. He thought for a moment and then replied, "He was creating hell for people who ask questions like that."

### **2: The Universe Was Created by God Out of Nothing.**

The Apostles' Creed begins with these simple, majestic words: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." Ponder this thought. Genesis 1:1 tells us that God created all that we see around us. He created the sun and the stars and the moon and the

planets. He created the comets and the asteroids. He created the quasars and the pulsars and the black holes of space. Scientists estimate there are 400 billion stars in the Milky Way Galaxy. Scientists estimate there are more than 100 billion galaxies, each with at least 100 billion stars. Imagine that. And God hung each one in space and calls each one by name (“He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.” Psalm 147:4).

God has left his fingerprints all over the universe. You have to be blind not to see them. Let me illustrate. Suppose you were to visit my house while I was not there. How much could you learn about my family just from looking around? You might suspect we had boys from the basketballs in one of our bedrooms. Although you might not know I was a pastor, you would certainly know I studied the Bible from seeing all the Bibles and commentaries strewn around the computer in the corner of our dining room, my study, my bedroom. If you looked at the books in one of our small bedrooms, you will find ladies clothes in the bedroom and law books on the shelf, which may suggest that a lady with some connection to law lives here. And if you looked in my closet, you’d discover I’m of average height just by looking at my suits. There’s a lot more a careful observer could discover about my family just by rummaging around through our drawers and bookshelves. In the end, you’d know a lot about me although you wouldn’t know me personally. The clues are everywhere for those who care to look.

### **God’s Fingerprints.**

The galaxies shout out, “He is there.” The wildflowers sing together, “He is there.” The rippling brooks join in, “He is there.” The birds sing it, the lions roar it, the fish write it in the oceans—“He is there.” All creation joins to sing his praise. The heavens declare it, the earth repeats it and the wind whispers it—“He is there.” Deep cries out to deep, the lamb and the wolf agree on this one thing—“He is there.” No one can miss the message. God has left his fingerprints all over this world. Truly, “This is my Father’s world,” and every rock, every twig, every river and every mountain bear his signature. He signed his name to everything he made. The earth is marked “Made by God” in letters so big that no one fails to see it.

He created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. The technical term is *ex nihilo*. He spoke, and the stars filled the sky. He spoke, and the birds began to fly. He spoke, and the fish began to swim. He spoke, and the roses began to bloom. He spoke, and the snail began to creep, the coyote began to howl, and the hummingbird started to hum. Hebrews 11:3 explains creation this way: “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” When God wanted a turtle, he said, “Turtle, be,” and the turtle poked his head out from his shell for the very first time.

He is sovereign. He is Almighty. He is Omnipotent. He is Supreme. Only God creates. We don’t create anything. We take existing material and fashion it into something new. We make things. Only God creates something from nothing.

Because he is the Creator, he is greater than his creation. Because he is the Creator, he is absolutely supreme over all things. That means there is nothing in my life that is greater than God. And there is no problem I have that he cannot solve. Nothing that baffles me baffles him. Nothing that stumps me stumps him. He is the ‘Unstumpable’ God!

Evolution for some people is just an excuse to reject God’s sovereignty.

### **3: All Things Owe Their Existence to God the Creator.**

This point follows from the previous two. Because God is the Creator, he is also the owner of all things. If I make a toy boat, I can truly say, “This is mine. I made it and I own it.” Since God made us, he has the absolute right of ownership over us.

We want to do our own thing, go our own way, live the way we want, do whatever we feel like doing, whenever we want to do it, and no one has the right to tell us what to do. But if God

created us, he owns us. If he owns us, then we are accountable to him for everything we say and do. That's not a happy thought for many people.

As is so often the case, we get some very good help on this point from dear old Martin Luther. Writing over 450 years ago, he asks what does it mean to say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?" Here is his answer:

I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given and still preserves my body and soul, my eyes and ears, and all my members, my reason and all the power of my soul, together with food and raiment, home and family, and all my property; that he daily provides abundantly for all the needs of my life, protects me from all danger, and guards and keeps me from all evil; and that he does this purely out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I am in duty bound to thank, praise, serve, and obey him. This is most certainly true.

To which I say, right on, brother!

#### **4: True Wisdom Begins with Genesis 1:1.**

If we say we believe the Bible, we must start where the Bible starts, with the very first verse. Wisdom and truth and the search for God all begin right here. If you want to end up where the Bible ends up, in the New Heaven and New Earth of Revelation 22, then you'd better start where the Bible starts, with "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Let me put it another way: If you can believe Genesis 1:1, you won't have any problems with the rest of the Bible. If you can believe that there is a God who miraculously created everything in the universe, you won't struggle over the other miracles of the Bible.

Nothing makes sense without God. "Love Made Me".

I close with the words of John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That text takes us back before Genesis 1:1. Before creation there was God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. "And the Word (that is, Jesus Christ) became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Why did God create the world? Because he wanted to. We are here because God wanted us here.

And so, I close the first message in this series. There are enormous moral issues that we face if we believe the first words of the Bible.

#### **If God created me, then ...**

He knows me. He sees me. He knows the truth about me. I cannot hide from him. I must someday answer to him.

#### **If we believe that God created us, then ...**

Our heads should bow. Our knees should bend. Our wills should yield. Our hands should serve. Our minds should worship. Our hearts should love.

God created us. God loved us. We owe him everything. He alone is the Lord. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This is where the Christian faith begins. Amen.