

This is the climax of creation. Man alone – male and female (v. 27) – is in the image and likeness of God. This doesn't mean that God looks like us, but that, in important ways, we are like God. We are able to look at the creation and recognise the creative mind of God. There is a strong streak of creativity in all of us. Then there's the responsibility of dominion – to “rule” over creation, to order life on earth.

It is important to grasp that “man” is created in the image of God “male and female”. We note this theme again in chapter 2.

The Scriptures nowhere describe the “mechanism” of creation, simply that God spoke and things came to be. We read in Hebrews 11.3, “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible”.

Evolution is a scientific theory of origins. Science has no valid reference-point to go back “to the beginning”. Even long-term dating techniques are flawed because they depend very much on non-scientific assumptions. It is little wonder that the theory is now seriously questioned from within the scientific community.

On the other hand, “creationism” hasn't always served the cause of the gospel well. In an effort to set the teaching of Genesis within a scientific framework, there has been a tendency to go dogmatically beyond what the Scriptures state clearly.

What we affirm strongly is that we share with the animal world a common Creator (rather than ancestor), that we are unique in all creation in being made “in the image of God”, that we are meant to know and respond to God and that we have responsibility over the creation.

**Reflect:**

- What evidence do we see that humanity is made in the image and likeness of God?
- In what ways has humanity exercised wise and responsible dominion over the creation? In what ways has humanity failed to exercise wise and responsible dominion over the creation?

**Study 2. In the Garden.** Reading: Genesis 2.4-25

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Studies in Genesis chapters 1-11  
by Peter J Blackburn

## 1. Brand New World

Reading: Genesis 1.1-2.3

Back in December 1983 we were on Long Service Leave and camped for a week at Narooma on the southern New South Wales coast. In my jottings at the time I wrote the following:

16.12.83. There were footprints in the sand – people-prints and seagull prints!

The sand was dry, the wind was already blowing them away. Where the sand was damp, the tide would come in again and smooth the area out.

I remember once coming to a beach that seemed untouched. It was as if nobody had ever been there before – mine would be the first footprints!

But then – a cigarette packet, a bottle top, a plastic bag, a drinking straw, a drink can... Not so untouched after all.

They talk about “footprints in the sands of time” – the impermanence of all we do. But when the footprints are gone, the litter remains!

Shakespeare had Mark Anthony saying,

The evil that men do lives after them;  
The good is oft interred with their bones.

Noble ideals and goals – all blown and washed away? The evil that litters our life – not what we regard important – remaining? Is that how things really are?

It's so easy to be pessimistic! Across the years I have heard this pessimism directed at God. If God made the world good, why are conditions so harsh? There seems to be so much of “nature red in tooth and claw”! How could a loving God allow this or that to happen? If God is sovereign, why do evil people seem to run amok?

**Reflect:**

- As we look about us every day, what are the reminders that God is the Creator?
- What are the evidences that much of what we see is a departure from the Creator's plan?

## In the Beginning

In the Hebrew Bible, the first five books are named from their opening phrase. So the first book is *be-RAY-shith* – “in the beginning”. We know it as “Genesis”, the name given by the Greek translators in the third century BC in what is called the Septuagint.

Scholars call the first five books by the Greek name as the Pentateuch – “five-volumed [book]”. In the Hebrew Bible they are simply “the Law” (*hattorah*). They are also known as “the books of Moses”. They were most likely written largely by Moses, except for the last chapter in Deuteronomy which records his death.

The Introduction in the NIV comments, “The book of Genesis is about many beginnings – the beginning of the universe, the beginning of man and woman, the beginning of human sin, the beginning of God’s promises and plans for salvation, and the beginning of a special relationship between Abraham and God. Genesis tells about God’s special people and his plan for their lives. Some of these people are: Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers.”

### Read: Genesis 1.1-19.

Genesis 1.1 is foundational for the whole biblical revelation. There is a God and he is the Creator of all things. God isn’t “in” everything – as pantheism would have it. He isn’t, as Deism suggests, the “clockmaker” who set it all up and went absent. He is Spirit, yet isn’t totally divorced from the physical world/universe, either. He is the Creator and Sustainer.

John begins his gospel with words that consciously link creation and redemption – “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... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (Jn 1.1-3, 14a).

God created from nothing. Our human creativity is always secondary – working on what is already there. The Hebrew word translated “created” is used exclusively for God’s creative activity.

The earth was “formless and empty” – and dark! But God was present by his creative Spirit and active through his powerful Word. It only took his Word to fulfil his creative will.

What was conceived in the mind of God could have happened in an instant, and not over the six “days” described here. We are given the sequence and order in which the divine plan was brought into being.

And what were the “days”? The repeated phrase “and there was evening and there was morning...” is often used to insist on a 24-hour period. It certainly signifies the completion of a “stage” of creation. But then we come to 2.4 – “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when (literally in the day) they were created”. Or the words of Peter, “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (2 Pet. 3.8).

The “expanse” (v. 6) – “firmament” in KJV – isn’t to be thought of as a solid “dome” as GNB puts it. Those who have drawn pictures of a “triple-decker universe” haven’t understood Hebrew thought.

The gathering of water in one place and appearance of dry land (vv. 9-10) may well have involved volcanic and/or earthquake activity.

Light was created on the first day, but the sun, moon and stars appear on the fourth day (vv. 14-19). This suggests a clearing of dense clouds. Before this the atmosphere had been a hot-house ideal for the creation of vegetation.

#### Reflect:

- Read Romans 1.20-25. Since God is the Creator, what should be our attitude to the world in which we live? In what ways do twenty-first-century people “worship and serve created things rather than the Creator”?
- Share an experience in which some part of the creation has particularly moved us into worship of the Creator.

## Living Creatures and Human Beings

### Read: Genesis 1.20-2.3.

The creation of vegetation set the scene for the next amazing stage, the creation of living creatures – fish, birds and creatures that move along the ground. They were created “according to their kinds” and told to “be fruitful and increase in number”.

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (v. 26).