

Sunday School Notes 19 January 2020: What difference does it make? (Genesis 1 and 2)

People have always been fascinated with where they come from. You have probably all had to draw a family tree at school and these days there are internet sites where one can trace one's family history.

Some of the very earliest writings known to us endeavour to tell the story about our beginnings. We have these records in hieroglyphics (from Egypt) and in cuneiform (from Babylonian/Mesopotamian) and elsewhere. Generally these stories tell of fights between various gods which led to earth being created. Humans were only created, they tell us, to do menial work for the gods! And humans continued to annoy the gods constantly.

In Genesis, however, we have the account of a loving Father creating all things for our benefit and creating us "in his own likeness/image".

The Bible account was, of course, written long before people knew about science, let alone about cells and genes and DNA! God chose not to explain the origin of things scientifically. For thousands of generations of people, a scientific explanation would have been understandable. Genesis 1, however, doesn't mean that there is no room for the various scientific theories (eg evolution) that are concerned with the 'How?' and 'When?'

God isn't trying to give a science lesson in the first couple of chapters of the Bible. Instead he aims to teach us about himself.

The first thing we learn is contained in the very first words of the Bible: *"In the beginning, God ..."* The Bible answers a question which science doesn't and can't explain: 'Who began this process?' The Bible doesn't tell us who made God or where God comes from. We don't know the answer to these questions. God didn't tell us, probably because our minds would struggle to comprehend the answer.

So the second thing we learn right from the beginning is to trust God, to have 'faith' that he is telling us the truth.

This has become easier as over the years scientists have discovered that there are many facts in Genesis 1 and 2 which are more scientific than our ancestors would have realised. For instance scientists have realised that the first necessity of life is Light; that sea creatures developed before land animals, that the human body is basically 'dust' – carbon, calcium, phosphorus, iron mixed with water(!); that there is a difference between animals and humans. The fact that the story is told in a kind of poem in which each time period is described as a 'day' was simply to make it easier for us all to understand how amazing the whole process was.

Thirdly we realise that God created us for a purpose. Not to be a worker who could be bossed around as other old stories suggested, but as someone to work alongside him to manage his earth and his people.

That is why on this Covenant Sunday each year at DMC remind ourselves of our role. We do this by saying a 'covenant prayer'. In it we ask God to work out his plans in us, and we remind ourselves that this doesn't mean things will always be great – but even in the bad times we can know that God is a loving father who has promised to be there for us – even beyond the grave.

And that's why the Bible story begins as it does. God is making sure we know that he is the Creator who cares for his creation and loves everything he made. And we shall miss the whole point of life if we don't realise that we were created to 'pass God's love on' or 'to pay God's love forward'.

Bits of knowledge!

The word 'genesis' is in the English dictionary which gives its meaning as "*The origin or formation of things*". There are a number of 21st century words which come from the same root: *Genes, Generation, Genealogy, Genetic* – all words to do with where we began.

Heard this week of dating of star dust: 7 billion years old!!