

Gospel Truth: Faith and Science Coexisting

Session 6

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 19:1; Matthew 10:16; Romans 1:19-20; Hebrews 11:3

Session Outline

1. An Established Authority (Hebrews 11:3)
2. God's Self-Revelation (Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:19-20)
3. Engaging Scientific Worldviews (Matthew 10:16)

Theological Theme

All that exists in the universe finds both its origin and purpose in its Maker, the one true and living God. God granted people free agency but many have used this free will to rebel against God, deny His existence, and explain Him away.



Leader Guide

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Introduction

- ❓ Who is the highest authority in your life?
- ❓ How does someone's level of authority affect the way you relate to them?

All of us live under different authorities. Government officials, bosses, teachers, coaches, and pastors all serve as authorities in our lives whom we submit to in different ways. Just and righteous authority is a great blessing in the lives of those over whom they rule. We give more credence to the words of those who are over us, as we should.

Our greatest authority is God and the commands He has made clear through His Word. The authority of God overrules all other authorities in our lives. We must say with Peter and the apostles, “We must obey God rather than people” (Acts 5:29).


Session Summary

The gospel message is a precious gift. We have been given another gift, in the Bible, to ensure that the gospel remains pure in our minds and hearts and that we walk in obedience to it all the days of our lives on earth.

The Old and New Testaments are the source documents of the Christian faith. They are historical and verifiable. One may choose to believe that what is written in the Bible is not true, but no one can reasonably deny that what we have in the Bible are the very words penned by Matthew, Paul, John, and the like. Scholars agree on the veracity and reliability of the Old and New Testament documents. Of course, we also believe they are much more than ancient texts that provide insight into another time. Rather, the Bible says of itself, “the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). “All Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Scripture not only answers questions concerning the spiritual well-being and eternal destiny of man, but it also addresses the origin of man and the universe. Though the Scriptures weren't written to be an exhaustive science book, the Bible does speak about the world God made, and where the Bible touches the sciences, it speaks with authority and infallibility.

1. An Established Authority (Hebrews 11:3)


 How does Hebrews 11:3 (and Gen. 1) help us understand the origins of the universe? How should this affect the way we interact with science?

The Bible is filled with trustworthy promises, precepts, and warnings. This includes answers about the world around us. The Bible points us to have faith that God made the universe and that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Our worldview should begin with this basic fact: God has revealed Himself to mankind in a specific way. For example, He spoke to Adam and Eve in the garden, the prophets throughout Israel's history, and then through the apostles during the time of Christ. God continues to speak to people through the writings of the apostles and prophets in the sacred Scriptures. This Bible is the authority of all who trust God.

We are to be people who live under authority. Although we have a strong tendency toward self-reliance and independence, when we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, we willingly and joyfully submit to our King and recognize that He has spoken to us in a book. This book, the Bible, is the foundation for all truth. What did the writer of Hebrews mean when he described the Bible as living and as sharper than a two-edged sword? How do the Scriptures accomplish this?

The first reality we must come to grips with is the fact that Scripture exists because of the necessity of "redemptive revelation." Redemptive revelation simply refers to the information that we need as fallen human beings to bring us to salvation. To be saved, we need the information that can guide us to the source of salvation. Men and women must encounter redemptive revelation for it to accomplish its end.


 How God choose to preserve and pass along the Bible? Why does this matter? How does this connect to the amount of trust we should place in the Bible?

Created by the Word of God

Believing that God created the world involves a leap of faith. Faith points to an unseen power who made the world we see. The universe involves more than the physical world. It includes the ages that God had planned, beginning with the act of creation and extending to the consummation of all things in Christ. By faith we know that all we see around us and all that takes place on earth came from one we cannot see.


You may have played the “Telephone Game” at some point in your life. If so, you know word of mouth transmission of information is far from reliable. In all literate cultures today, information that carries any authority at all must be in written form. It’s no wonder that God chose to give the church His redemptive revelation in written form. Every time we pick up our Bibles to read, it says the same thing. This is the most comforting and precious gift we could have outside of salvation. When a person opens God’s Word to carefully explain it, their comments are rooted and attached to a trustworthy record.

This is why it is vital to be part of a local church in which the Scriptures are carefully taught and obeyed. Ultimate truth is found in the Bible alone, and the Bible is the ultimate authority of the church and every individual believer.

 Application: If the Bible is our ultimate authority, how should we approach situations in which the Bible and science seem to be in conflict?

2. God’s Self-Revelation (Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:19-20)

The authority of God’s Word has been preserved and handed down from the prophets and the apostles. God chose to reveal Himself to mankind through these written words so that there would be no confusion.

 According to Psalm 19:1, how else has God revealed Himself?

We can learn about the existence of God and His attributes by looking at what He does. We have evidence that God exists by His Word and His works. His works are the work of creation and the work of providence. The psalmist wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1). From the beginning people have looked at the created order and deduced that there must be a Creator. We can reason that if there exists such an intricate, beautiful, terrifying, glorious creation, then there must be a Creator behind it that outshines it. Throughout the history of human societies, people have experienced an immediate awareness of a divine being. They didn’t have to figure out that He exists. God has made that much abundantly clear. People are born with an impression of God’s existence standard in their being. Therefore, when they look at creation, they aren’t seeking to discover if there is a God, but they are deciding what He is like and how He ought to be approached.

Paul wrote, “since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse” (Romans 1:19-20). God’s creation makes it clear that He exists and is worthy of worship, but it does not give anyone specific knowledge about how to deal with the problem of sin. That’s why the Bible is necessary. Furthermore, people who are in rebellion against God “suppress” the truth about His existence and character. Though they instinctively know God exists, the hardness of their hearts leads them to deny His existence and rationalize other explanations for the existence of the universe.

One of the most effective tricks the devil has played on the West is to convince us that he doesn’t exist and neither does God. One of his main tools for bringing about this result was the introduction of an alternate explanation for our existence. When our society decided that human discovery and theory was of higher authority than the Bible, the trap was set, and it was only a matter of time before secularization overtook a fear of God.



Why does it matter what we believe about the origin of man or Genesis 1? How does this impact our belief about other things?

The book of Genesis is foundational to our understanding of the rest of the Scriptures. What we believe about these first chapters sets the trajectory for how we will interpret the rest of the Bible and how we will understand the world around us. We must remember that the Scriptures are divinely inspired (in a way no other book is), inerrant (without error), and completely sufficient (they contain all we need to know for salvation and walking with God).

Furthermore, until the past few hundred years, all Christians have taken the first three chapters of Genesis literally. In other words, Christians (and Jews for that matter) have believed God created the world in six literal days, that Adam and Eve were literal people, and that they gave in to the temptation of Satan in the garden of Eden. In fact, Jesus Himself believed the Genesis account and had no notion whatsoever of the idea that God created the world and all living things through the process of evolution (see Mark 10:6).



Application: What is the authority for your beliefs? How does what you believe about Genesis 1 impact this?

3. Engaging Scientific Worldviews (Matthew 10:16)

We should trust fully in the words found in the sacred Scriptures. We are comforted by the promises. We tremble before the warnings. We are helped by the precepts. We are enlightened by the truth found there. Our worldview and understanding of the world should be shaped by the Scriptures. This is in sharp contrast to the worldviews of those who don't hold the Scriptures to be authoritative.

- ❓ How can we hold to the truths of the Bible while also gracefully engaging with those who disagree?
- ❓ Should we pursue education and vocation in the sciences? Why or why not?

We should remember several principles to help us interact within a society that largely rejects a biblical understanding of the world around them. We must learn to be both wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). We have been given precious truth in the Scriptures, but that truth is only in part. God didn't reveal exhaustive knowledge about all things in the universe in the Bible. As such, we should remember that there is knowledge to be gained about the world around them outside the Scriptures. It is good and right to become scientists, engineers, doctors, and any number of fields that are built upon knowledge gained by human reason and observation. However, we must also remember that all human reason and knowledge is to be tested by what is found in Scripture. If anything contradicts the teaching of Scripture either directly or indirectly then it is to be reexamined because it falls short of agreement with infallible truth.

We should also remember that this clash of worldviews is spiritual in nature. Satan is working to expand his kingdom and the worldview that accompanies it. Yes, followers of Jesus should be ready to give a defense of what they believe and participate in open debate and dialogue concerning these ideas, but ultimately it is God who opens hearts to the gospel of Jesus Christ and gives someone the gift of faith (see Acts 16:14; Ephesians 2:8).

Finally, we must be on their guard against the wiles of the devil. Satan has used this strategy to lead millions into destruction. Those who follow Christ must be vigilant not to fall prey to this snare. We should seek to understand the issues at hand and be willing to discuss them with others, but in a way that doesn't endanger our own souls.

- ❓ Application: What can you do to grow in your knowledge of the Bible? Where does the world have more influence over you than the Bible?

Conclusion

The sufficiency of Scripture doesn't mean the Bible contains all knowledge about our created world. The fields of science and math are needed and a great blessing to human societies. The Bible is not sufficient for software development or chemical engineering. It is sufficient, however, to teach us how we ought to live to the glory of God as we work in those fields and all others. The Bible is sufficient to achieve the purpose of redemptive revelation. It was sufficient for that purpose before the development of other fields of study, and it will continue to be sufficient no matter what discoveries are made about creation in the future.

- ❓ Who or what is the fundamental authority in your life? What do you look to help you make sense of the world around you?
- ❓ Where have you been influenced by the world in a way that contradicts the Bible? What needs to change?
- ❓ How might a conversation about science give you opportunity to share your faith with others?

Prayer of Response

Thank the Lord for His Word and works. Worship Him in the splendor of His holiness. Ask the Lord to strengthen your faith and give you boldness to share it with others.

Additional Resources

- *Be Basic* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Why the Universe Is the Way It Is* by Hugh Ross
- *Genesis 1-11* by Kenneth Matthews

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



For Next Week

Session Title

- Gospel Choices: Addressing Anger and Rage

Main Passages

- Genesis 4:6-16; Nehemiah 5:6; Ephesians 4:26-27; 6:11

Session Outline

1. Righteous Anger (Nehemiah 5:6; Ephesians 4:26-27)
2. Sinful Anger (Genesis 4:6-16)
3. Shrewder than the Devil (Ephesians 6:11)

Memorize

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

- Genesis 1:1

Historical Context of Genesis

Purpose

Genesis lays the groundwork for everything else we read and experience in Scripture. Through Genesis we understand where we came from, how we got in the fallen state we are in, and the beginnings of God's gracious work on our behalf. Genesis unfolds God's original purpose for humanity.

Author

Since pre-Christian times authorship of the Torah, the five books that include the book of Genesis, has been attributed to Moses, an enormously influential Israelite leader from the second millennium BC with an aristocratic Egyptian background. Even though Genesis is technically anonymous, both the Old and New Testaments unanimously recognize Moses as the Torah's author (Jos 8:35; 23:6; 1Kg 2:3; 8:9; 2Kg 14:6; 23:25; 2Ch 23:18; 25:4; 30:16; 34:14; 35:12; Ezr 3:2; 6:18; Neh 8:1; 9:14; Dn 9:11, 13; Mal 4:4; Mk 12:19, 26; Lk 2:22; 20:28; 24:44; Jn 1:17, 45; 7:19; Ac 13:39; 15:21; 28:23; Rm 10:5; 1Co 9:9; Heb 10:28). At the same time, evidence in Genesis suggests that minor editorial changes dating to ancient times have been inserted into the text. Examples include the mention of "Dan" (14:14), a city that was not named until the days of the judges (Jdg 18:29), and the use of a phrase that assumed the existence of Israelite kings (Gn 36:31).

Setting

The Torah (a Hebrew term for "law" or "instruction") was seen as one unit until at least the second century BC. Sometime prior to the birth of Christ, the Torah was divided into five separate books, later referred to as the Pentateuch (literally, five vessels). Genesis, the first book of the Torah, provides both the universal history of humankind and the patriarchal history of the nation of Israel. The first section (chaps. 1–11) is a general history commonly called the "primeval history," showing how all humanity descended from one couple and became sinners. The second section (chaps. 12–50) is a more specific history commonly referred to as the "patriarchal history," focusing on the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants: Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons. Genesis unfolds God's plan to bless and redeem humanity through Abraham's descendants. The book concludes with the events that led to the Israelites being in the land of Egypt.

Special Features

The book of Genesis is the great book of beginnings in the Bible. True to the meanings of its Hebrew and Greek names (Hb bere'shith, "In Beginning" [based on 1:1]; Gk Geneseos, "Of Birth" [based on 2:4]), Genesis permits us to view the beginning of a multitude of realities that shape our daily existence: the creation of the universe and the planet earth; the origins of plant and animal life; and the origins of human beings, marriage, families, nations, industry, artistic expression, religious ritual, prophecy, sin, law, crime, conflict, punishment, and death.

Extended Commentary

Hebrews 11:3

This chapter compares the faith of the OT fathers with the faith exercised by Christian believers. Faith is defined as the reality of what is hoped for and the proof of what is not seen. The Greek word for “reality” is *hupostasis*. It has been used previously to describe the relationship of Christ to God (1:3) and the firm confidence that believers possess (3:14). Faith is not fleeting but substantial enough to generate confidence. The Greek word for “proof” indicates an inner conviction that is not based on visible matters. To please God requires faith. One must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. He is there and he responds.¹

Romans 1:19-20

1:19 God as Creator has disclosed himself in creation. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands” (Ps 19:1; cp. Ac 14:15–17). People also have an innate capacity for God as well as a moral conscience. God is at work to show himself in the world, yet the world is in rebellion against him.

1:20 Humanity’s problem is not that they don’t know the truth. The history of the human race discloses a determined effort to oppose the will of God. People are without excuse for their idolatry and practical atheism.²

Psalms 19:1

Although the heavens can refer to God’s dwelling place, here it is clarified by expanse, which is what can be seen from the perspective of those who live on the earth. This is the same Hebrew word as the expanse that separated water from water in Gn 1:6–8. Creation is sometimes personified as a witness to God’s work among his people, particularly in the covenant relationship he has with them (Dt 4:26; 30:19; Is 1:2). In this context one specific part of creation is personified as declaring and proclaiming a message. The parallelism between the glory of God and the work of his hands indicates that the objects of creation are demonstrations (or evidence) of God’s glory (50:6; 89:5–8; 97:6; Rm 1:19–20).³

Genesis 1:1-2

1:1 This opening verse of the Bible, seven words in the Hebrew, establishes seven key truths upon which the rest of the Bible is based.

First, God exists. The essential first step in pleasing God is acknowledging his existence (Heb 11:6). Second, God existed before there was a universe and will exist after the universe perishes (Heb 1:10–12). Third, God is the main character in the Bible. He is the subject of the first verb in the Bible (in fact, he is the subject of more verbs than any other character) and performs a wider variety of activities than any other being in the Bible. Fourth, as Creator, God has done what no human could ever do; in its active form the Hebrew verb *bara'*, meaning “to create,” never has a human subject. Thus *bara'* signifies a work that is uniquely God’s. Fifth, God is mysterious; though this particular Hebrew word for God is plural, the verb form of which “God” is the subject is singular. This is perhaps a subtle allusion to God’s Trinitarian nature: He

is three divine persons in one divine essence. Sixth, God is the Creator of heaven and earth. He does not just modify preexisting matter but calls matter into being out of nothing (Ps 33:6, 9; Heb 11:3). Seventh, God is not dependent on the universe, but the universe is totally dependent on God (Heb 1:3).

1:2 Bible translations since the time of the Septuagint, the translation of the OT into Greek (ca 175 BC), have rendered the first Hebrew verb in this verse as *was*. However, in an effort to explain the origins of evil and/or find biblical evidence for an old earth, some Bible scholars have suggested that this verb should be translated as “became.” Citing portions of Is 14:12–21 and Ezk 28:12–19, they believe a time gap, possibly a vast one, exists between the first two verses of the Bible, during which Satan led a rebellion in heaven against God. This allows interpreters to suggest that the early earth became formless and empty because Satan’s rebellion marred God’s good creation. However, the construction of this sentence in the original Hebrew favors the traditional translation (“was” rather than “became”).

The sense of v. 2 is that God created the earth “formless and empty” as an unfinished and unfilled state. Working through an orderly process over a period of six days, God formed (days 1–3) and filled (days 4–6) his created handiwork. The “forming” was accomplished by means of three acts of separating or sorting various elements of creation from one another. The “filling” was carried out through five acts of populating the newly created domains. Watery depths, a single word in Hebrew, suggests an original state of creation that was shapeless as liquid water. The Hebrew verb translated *was hovering*, used also in Dt 32:11, suggests that the Spirit of God was watching over his creation just as a bird watches over its young.⁴

Matthew 10:16

Just as wolves stalk and destroy sheep, persecutors will attempt to hunt and destroy Jesus’s disciples. Serpents are shrewd because they flee from danger (see note at 3:7–9). Similarly, Jesus’s disciples must be prepared to take strategic action when persecution threatens (10:23). However, like doves, they should be innocent and not use violent means to answer persecution.⁵

References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*

Author Bio

Warren Wiersbe (Be Basic)

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of Back to the Bible, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as “the pastor’s pastor.” He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Hugh Ross (Why the Universe Is the Way It Is)

Hugh Ross (PhD, University of Toronto) is founder and president of Reasons To Believe (www.reasons.org). He is the author of many books, including *Creation as Science* and *The Creator and the Cosmos*. Ross has addressed students and faculty on over 300 campuses in the United States and abroad on a wide variety of science-faith topics. From science conferences to churches to government labs, Ross presents powerful evidence for a purpose-filled universe. He lives in the Los Angeles area.

Kenneth Matthews (Genesis 1-11)

Kenneth A. Matthews (ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary; PhD, University of Michigan) is professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, where he teaches Old Testament, Hebrew, and biblical hermeneutics. His noted publications include two commentaries on Genesis and (as coauthor) the Leviticus Scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls.