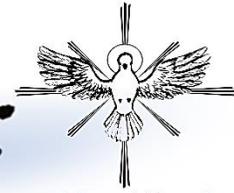




GENESIS



Creation through Water and the Word

SESSION 1 OPENING DISCUSSION

Read Genesis 1:1

- 1 Some have said that Genesis 1:1 is the most challenged and attacked passage in all the Bible. Would you agree? Why or why not?
- 2 Obviously, atheists, agnostics and unbelievers will not find anything about the bible convincing, much less Genesis. But why do so many Christians struggle to believe these first chapters?

✝ *There are some things that we can never fully know or understand. Genesis begins in this way. It states unequivocally that before there was anything, God was. The religious word we use to describe this is _____ . Yet, God is more than this. He is not just perpetual throughout time, Genesis says, "In the beginning God created..." . These first words of Genesis state that God was before time, itself. He created time.*

JOHN 8:57-59

[T]he Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

MATTHEW 22:31-33

[A]s for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.' ³³ And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

✝ *We can never fully understand all of this, but we can deduce some of it by looking at the Universe in all it's orderly complexity and letting the evidence point us to the conclusion that there is a God above and before it all. Creation does, indeed, testify to the existence of God. But creation can't tell us very much about God; it can't tell us _____ and _____ He is like.*

- 3 The fundamental problem right now in the way that our modern culture collides with Christianity and the way that Scripture collides with science revolves around the question HOW DO WE KNOW THE TRUTH? But this problem started over three hundred years ago with the Enlightenment.

DEFINITION

The Enlightenment: *A European intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries in which ideas concerning God, reason, nature, and humanity were synthesized into a worldview that gained wide assent in the West and that instigated revolutionary developments in art, philosophy, science, and politics. Central to Enlightenment thought were the use and celebration of reason, the power by which humans understand the universe*

and improve their own condition. The goals of rational humanity were considered to be knowledge, freedom, and happiness.

- The Enlightenment was a time when intellectual thought moved away from Metaphysical approaches for finding truth to Epistemological approaches.

DEFINITIONS

Metaphysics: A study of “first principals.” A priori assumptions that are unanswerable to scientific observation, analysis, or experiment. Attempting to answer questions like “Where did everything come from?” & “Who am I?” & “Why am I here?” => **Understanding begins with what we know.**

Epistemology: The study of how knowledge is possible. The only think we can truly know is what we can experience and study => **Understanding begins with how we know.**

- The Enlightenment is what properly gave birth to _____. It was reasoned that if God is beyond knowing (because He is “supposedly” beyond the created order and therefore cannot be experienced or studied) then it stands to reason that God might not exist, since He cannot be known. The intellectuals of the Enlightenment began to dismiss God as nothing but a superstition of medieval times.

- Enlightenment thinking challenged much about the culture of medieval Europe. It was called the Age of Reason. One of the biggest challenges came against the traditional monarchies of Europe. For centuries, kings and queens had claimed rule by “divine right.” They asserted their authority was from God. Romans 13:1-7 is a passage that monarchs would have pointed to which teaches that all rulers are established by God. (“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” – Romans 13:1). But Enlightenment thought argued that if God is beyond knowing then how can we know if a Monarch rules rightly? Who can say if he or she is, indeed, ruling by God’s will? A ruler could do almost anything and claim it was God’s will, even if such action was harmful to the people who are under that ruler. Enlightenment thinkers argued that it was far better for a ruler’s authority to derive from the people who are ruled. This would ensure that rulers will always do what is good for the people.

- ➔ Can you think of a revolution that rocked the British Empire in the late 1700’s that espoused these same principals? Indeed, the social contract that came out of this revolution, called the _____, begins with these three words “WE THE PEOPLE...”.

- 4 So if the first chapters of Genesis cannot be a source of authority according to Enlightenment thinking because it cannot be experienced or studied, what is the alternative? How do answer the question of “where did the universe come from?” without the bible?

DEFINITION

Materialism: A philosophical worldview which holds that matter is the fundamental substance of nature and everything can explained by understanding matter and the physical laws that govern it, including mental states and consciousness. An oft-quoted statement by the co-discoverer of the structure of the DNA molecule, Francis

Crick (1955), captures the gist of the materialistic approach even in regards to the origin of consciousness and thought: “You’, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.”

- *As an alternative to the Biblical answer, Science today offers up a thoroughly materialistic answer for where all things came from, the _____ . Interestingly, this answer cannot be studied or experienced and is very much like the biblical answer in it’s metaphysical approach. But because it explains the origin of the universe in entirely natural ways, it is an acceptable answer for science. They will argue that perhaps we can one day fully understand how the universe exploded into existence by studying how universe works today.*
- *Indeed, it’s interesting how “religious” science can sometimes sound. Take the first law of thermodynamics as an example. It’s based on Newton’s definition of mass and energy and states that energy (and mass, which is really just energy in a static state) cannot be created or destroyed. So for example, a piece of wood is at the molecular level a bunch of stored energy—all that atoms that make up the wood have a positive and negative charge. Should a fire come along and burn that wood, the mass of that wood is not destroyed. The fire merely converts the wood into other forms of mass/energy: heat and carbon and other elements. But consider for a moment what this definition implies. If mass/energy cannot be created or destroyed, what religious word would describe it?*
- *Now what is more logical (remember logic is another important branch of philosophy and we’ll use lots of logic in this study as we discuss worlds false, materialistic approach)? Is it more logical that eternal mass has always existed and will always exist and thus mass was before Universe and that through a big bang of mass and energy all the order and complexity of the universe came into being? Or is it more logical to deduce that there must be an eternal God—testified to in the bible—who brought forth all things with an intentional and orderly design and purpose?*

Read Genesis 1:1-5

- 5 The words of Genesis 1:1-5 really do sound fantastic and amazing. Is it possible to be a Christian, believe in Jesus for salvation, but not believe in the truth of Genesis 1? When it comes to how the universe was formed and where life came from, can’t we just let science provide those answers? Hint: The answer is NO! But why is the answer “no”?
 - ✠ *The Bible is thoroughly _____ . Even though our salvation doesn’t rest on Genesis 1, Jesus is a vital part of Genesis 1. See John 1:1-5 & 14, also Colossians 1:17.*
 - ✠ *Consider also all the ways these first few verses and the first few chapters of the Genesis are rich with baptismal theology.
Creation/ new life => Flood which drowns sinful man, ark which saves Noah and his family/ baptismal waters which drown the old Adam and put us into Jesus Christ.*
- 6 Is Genesis 1 a text that has been given to us to explain how the universe works? Is this our science book?