

ORIGINS

"THE BEGINNING OF CREATION" GENESIS 1:1-25

This Week's Core Competency

Trinity – I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14 *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

To his people, Israel, surrounded by nations with mythologies that spoke of many gods, the only true God revealed himself as the one who sovereignly and majestically created the heavens and the earth in six days. And while the pattern of the account of creation in Genesis 1 is similar in some ways to Mesopotamian creation stories, the theology could not be more different. On the nature of these myths, one author writes:

"The *Epic of Atrahasis*, for example, written about 1600 BC, tells a story of the creation of the world, and moves from it to an account of a great flood. A much later Babylonian work, the *Enuma Elish*, also has an account of the creation.

"The *Enuma Elish* begins with the divine spirit and with a primeval chaos. Its main purpose is to glorify the chief Babylonian god, Marduk, who defeats the watery chaos monster, Tiamat. Light emanates from the gods, and then the firmament, dry land, luminaries and eventually humankind are created. The gods then rest and celebrate. Such stories may well, of course, have been known to the people of God. But despite some similarities,

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

– Gerard Manley Hopkins

how very different from the Mesopotamian myths is the creation poem of Genesis 1.

"Whereas the *Enuma Elish* talks about many gods, Genesis proclaims a majestic monotheism: there is one God. Whereas in the Babylonian stories the divine spirit and cosmic matter exist side by side from eternity, Genesis proclaims God's majestic distinction from everything else which in sovereign power he creates, and which depends on him for its existence. Whereas in Near Eastern mythology the sun, moon, stars and sea monsters are seen as powerful gods, Genesis tells us that they are merely creatures. (Genesis even avoids the usual Hebrew words for 'sun' and 'moon', perhaps in case they could be misconstrued as deities, and talks simply about the greater and lesser lights.) Whereas in the Mesopotamian myths light emanates from the gods, in the Genesis narrative, God creates light by the power of his word. So although Genesis shares with the Babylonian stories a similar pattern, its theological message is very different. Genesis 1 sings the praise of the majestic Creator of all. It speaks of his life-giving power. It also gives a profound significance to human life. Whereas in the Middle Eastern myths human beings seem only to have a walk-on part—they are there to supply the gods with food—in Genesis 1 the creation of human life is a high point in the narrative. It is God who provides food for men and women.

One can imagine what a rock of stability this chapter would have provided for the people of God when faced with the lure of pagan myths around them. Exiles of the people of God during their time

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in Babylon, for example, may have been tempted to fall in with the ideas of their conquerors. Genesis 1 calls them back to the worship of the one sovereign majestic Lord, who, in the transcendent freedom of his creative Word, is the source of all things, all life, all creatures, all people" (J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Genesis 1-11*, TBST, 15-16).

People still believe in many gods. Aside from those who see God as *mental projection* or as *being itself*, there are those who see him as *a being*, but some of them see him as an immaterial being, others as a material being, and still others as both. The first group includes animism, polytheism (e.g., Hinduism and Shintoism), and different forms of pantheism that conceive of God as an immaterial being. The second includes every form of idol worship and some forms of pantheism (e.g., materialistic monistic pantheism and materialistic pluralistic pantheism). The third includes at least two forms of pantheism. According to one, there is one substance in the universe that has various modes of expression. Some modes are mental, others are physical, and yet others, such as human beings, are a combination of material and immaterial—as in New Age theology. According to another form, there are many distinct things in our universe, but all of them collectively make up the being of God. Some are material only, others (i.e., spirits) are only immaterial, and still others are a combination of material and immaterial. This "collective" view of God holds that every individual has its own place as part of the whole of God (see "God—The Very Idea," in John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 41-55). All of that to say the creation story remains as relevant to us today as it was to Israel in the past.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Genesis 1:1-25

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." 7 So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse

of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Bracket "the beginning" in v. 1.
- * Circle "created" in v. 1.
- * Bracket "formless and empty" in v. 1.
- * Highlight the repeated words, "God said."
- * Highlight in a different color "and there was evening and there was morning."
- * Circle "expanse" in vv. 6-8.
- * Underline "and it was so" in vv. 7, 9, 11, 15, 24.
- * Box the repeated evaluation "was good" in vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25.
- * Circle "first day," "second day," "third day" in vv. 5, 8, 13, 19, 23.
- * Circle "made" (2x) in v. 16.
- * Circle "kind/s" in vv. 21-25.

day **2** EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Verse 1 opens with the words, "In the beginning." In the beginning of *what*?
2. Describe your impression of the mood conveyed by verse 2. (Cf., "formless," "empty," "darkness," and "deep.")
3. *What* did God create on the first three days (vv. 3-13)?
4. How did the creation of these things give *form* to that which was "formless" in the beginning?
5. What did God create on the next three days (vv. 14-25)?
6. How did the creation of these things *fill* what was "empty" in the beginning?
7. Israel's neighbors worshipped gods associated with the sun, the moon, and other astronomical bodies (Dt. 4:19; cf. 17:3). Explain the obvious implication of the fact that God created "two great lights" and "the stars."
8. What do you infer about God from *what* he created and *how*? (Cf. Ps 19:1; Ro 1:20)
9. **Discussion:** Talk about questions you have about the story of creation.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The opening verses of Genesis 1 have been interpreted in very different ways. According to one interpretation, Genesis 1:1 refers to original creation. The verb "created" must then refer to creation out of nothing. Verse 2 follows with a description of the earth immediately after creation, and verse 3 goes on to describe how God shaped the raw materials he created into the heavens and the earth as we know it. And so Genesis 1:1 refers to the first day of creation.

According to another, Genesis 1:1 likewise refers to original creation. However, the "gap theory" maintains that something cataclysmic happened between verses 1 and 2 to render God's perfect creation "formless and empty," causing many of its backers to translate verse 2, "And the earth *became* formless and empty." They speculate that the fall of Satan occurred between verses 1 and 2, and as a result the earth incurred divine judgment. Verse 3 they say goes on to describe the first step in the process of rebuilding and reforming the judged earth. As in the first interpretation, the verb "created" means creation out of nothing. The chaos described in verse two is connected with Jeremiah 4:23-26, Isaiah 24:1 and Isaiah 45:18.

According to a third, which has several variations, original creation out of nothing is not the subject of Genesis 1. And so verse 1 does not refer to the *absolute* beginning of the heavens and the earth but to its *relative* beginning—the beginning of the heavens and the earth *as we know it*. According to the variation I find most convincing, Genesis 1:1 is a summary statement that sums up everything that unfolds step by step in the following verses; there is no "gap" between verses 1 and 2. Verse 2 consists of three clauses that describe the condition of the earth when God spoke. These clauses are circumstantial to verse 3, which describes the first step in the process of forming and filling the "formless and empty" earth. According to this interpretation, "there was an original creation that cannot be dated (see John 1:3 and Heb. 11:3). The fall of Satan and some of the angels (that the gap theory places between verses 1 and 2) took place before Genesis 1 (see Ezek. 28; Isa. 45; Jer. 4:23-26); the result of their fall was judgment and chaos. Genesis 1 records the re-creation or restoration of the cosmos (God's first act of salvation)" (Allan Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 720; for other variations on this third interpretation see

718-20; see also John H. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*, 67-72; Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol.1, *Genesis 1-15*, 11-13). In my opinion, the grammar and syntax of Genesis 1:1-3 and the meanings of the words used support this version of the third interpretation best (for a summary of the evidence see 721-23). So interpreting Genesis 1 is risky business—like wearing gray pants and a blue jacket into battle during the Civil War. Everyone delights in taking deadly aim at your interpretive conclusions. (For example, *Reading Genesis 1-2: An Evangelical Conversation*, edited by J. Daryl Charles, published in 2013, contains articles by five prominent scholars, who present their five distinctly different interpretations in a point-counterpoint style.)

Recognizing how the passage is structured will aid in recognizing what it means. On the pattern seen in the account, one commentator writes: "The narrative for each day typically includes the divine speech ('God said'), the statement of the fulfillment of his decree ('and it was so' or 'and there was'), the divine evaluation ('it was good'), and then the concluding sequence ('evening and morning came') . . . It is worth observing that 'waste and void' in verse 2 gives a key to the six days of creation, the first three correcting the waste or formlessness, and the next three correcting the void or emptiness" (Ross, 103-104). So, in a nutshell, after declaring in verse 1 that "God created the heavens and the earth," verse 2 describes the circumstances when God spoke (v. 3), verses 3-25 then describe day-by-day steps in the process of forming and filling what was "formless and empty."

On the first three days (vv. 3-13), God creates light and separates it from darkness, creates an expanse to separate the water above it from the water below it, and creates dry ground by gathering the water below the expanse into seas, which provides for the creation of fertile vegetation. In doing so, God creates order by giving what was "formless" form and function.

On the next three days (vv. 14-25), God creates "lights in the expanse . . . to serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years," creates living creatures to swim in the water and birds to fly across the sky, and creates living creatures to move around the ground. In doing so, God creates fullness by filling what was "empty" with heavenly luminaries and living creatures after their kinds.

"The sixth day reveals both the culmination and the goal of creation. After bringing order and fullness to the creation, God created human life to enjoy and rule the now habitable world" (Ross, 112).

The Message of the Passage

Out of chaos and darkness the true God sovereignly and majestically created the world as we know it in six days, restoring order and supplying fullness in preparation for the creation of mankind.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **In the beginning** According to one commentator, "Genesis 1:1 is a summary statement of everything that is unfolded step by step in the following verses. Verse 2 consists of three clauses that are circumstantial to verse 3 and describe the condition of the earth when God spoke. Genesis 1:3 is an independent, narrative sentence describing the first action in the process of bringing the earth into its present order . . . The term [beginning] would refer not to the *absolute* beginning but to the beginning of the heaven and the earth as we know them." Then he adds, "In this passage the word would refer to the first phase of the universe as we know it" (Ross, 720, 721). It refers to an initial period or duration; in this case that initial period describes the entire seven days (Walton, 68, 69).

v. 1 **God** The word translated "God" is plural but the verb translated "created" is singular. While the plural form has been variously explained (see Ross, 721), "it is simply the ordinary word for God: plural in form but singular in meaning" (Wenham, 14).

v. 1 **created** The word translated here refers exclusively to what God does and refers to making something perfect, new, fresh, or whole. It means, "to fashion anew—a divine activity" and does not necessarily imply creation *ex nihilo*—out of nothing (Ross, 721). "It is clear that [*bara*] is not a term exclusively reserved for creation out of nothing" (Wenham, 14). "Even in English we use the verb 'create' within a broad range of contexts but rarely apply it to material things (i.e., parallel in concept to 'manufacture'). One can create a piece of art, but that expression does not suggest manufacture of the canvas or paint. Even more abstractly, one can create a situation (e.g., havoc) or a condition (an atmosphere). In these cases, the verb indicates the establishment of a role or function" (Walton, 71).

v. 1 **heavens and earth** A figure of speech called a *merism* meaning "the whole universe and all that is in it" (Ross, 721).

v. 2 **Now** This word introduces a disjunctive clause that rules out a sequence between verses 1 and 2 since "the disjunctive clause at the beginning of v. 2 cannot be translated as if it were relating the next event in a sequence" (the NET Bible, 5tn on Ge 1:2; see also Ross, 721).

v. 2 **formless and empty** Cf., "without form and void" (NKJV, ESV). "Traditional translations have followed a more literal rendering of 'waste and void' (the NET Bible, 5tn on Ge 1:2). Yet Isaiah 45:18 says that God did not create the earth a waste ('empty' NIV), which suggests that the conditions described in v. 2 were the result of God's judgment. "'Waste and void' cannot describe an intermediate stage in God's work of creation. Not only does the syntax (*waw* disjunctive) argue against that sequence, but Isaiah 45:18 states that God did not make this world as a waste (*tohu*)" (Ross 106). Some translate as a *hendiadys*, e.g., "formless void" (NRSV), "total chaos" (Wenham, 15).

v. 2 **darkness** "Darkness was over the surface of the deep" carries an "ominous, uncomfortable tone" (Ross, 107).

v. 3 **first day** "The exegetical evidence suggests the word 'day' in this chapter refers to a literal twenty-four hour day. It is true that the word can refer to a longer period of time (see Isa 61:2, or the idiom in 2:4, 'in the day,' that is, 'when'). But this chapter uses 'day,' 'night,' 'morning,' 'evening,' 'years,' and 'seasons.' Consistency would require sorting out how all these terms could be used to express ages" (the NET Bible, 22sn on Ge 1:5; see also Ross, 109; Walton, 81). One writer claims the separation of light from the darkness entailed the creation of time (Walton, 81).

vv. 6-8 **expanse** "The firmament separates the water in the sky from the seas and rivers. In v 8 it is called 'heaven.' Put another way, the firmament occupies the space between the earth's surface and the clouds. Quite how the OT conceives the nature of the firmament is less clear" (Wenham, 19; cf., Walton agrees with Seely that defining the firmament as the atmosphere is "a modernizing reinterpretation of the Bible" [111]). The same writer claims the separation of the waters entailed the creation of weather (112).

v. 9 **water, dry ground** "The two elements brought together on the third day focus on a cosmos designed to provide for vegetation and agriculture. Soil and water sources on the one hand, and reproduction of plants through seed on the other, represent the crucial ingredients for vegetation" (113). Again the same writer claims the separation of dry land and gathered waters entailed the creation of agriculture.

v. 14 **let there be lights** "The language here describes the phenomena; the sun is not in the atmosphere—it is far beyond it—but appears to be in the heavens. Likewise, it is possible to interpret the passage with the meaning that the sun, moon, and stars now appeared for the first time, not that they were only now brought into existence" (Ross, 111).

v. 16 **made** The term doesn't necessarily mean that the heavenly bodies were *manufactured* on the fourth day (Walton, 125). "Whatever the time and manner of their creation, these heavenly luminaries have as their function to dominate the day and the night, to serve as sign for the fixed seasons, and to rule over the heavens The verse may be translated 'signs for the fixed seasons [a hendiadys], that is, days and years' (an explicative *waw*)" (Ross, 111). The appearance of heavenly bodies entailed the creation of fixed yearly seasons.

vv. 21, 24-25 **kind/s** A term more general than species—"a group of organisms or species that are capable of hybridizing" (Ray Bohlin, "Mere Creation: Science, Faith & Intelligent Design," www.probe.org/docs/mere.html).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

The Ousel is a very little bird that lives near mountain streams. It can usually be found where the water is flowing quickly. This bird can float on top of the water, appearing weightless, and then suddenly sink to the bottom like a rock. There he walks around picking up bits of food on the floor of the stream. After eating his fill, he walks to the shore, shakes himself dry, and then immediately begins floating on top of the water waiting to feed again. It has been discovered that this bird has a unique muscle that can instantly exhale all of the air from its body, allowing it to sink down. When the bird rises from the water, it can fill its lungs again and float on top. This little bird is just one of God's unique creations. We serve a very imaginative Creator. His wonders never cease. Psalm 19:1 says even, "the heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." Summer is here and it's time for a creation field trip! Make plans to take you family to the zoo or a park where beautiful flowers are blooming. Go get ice cream and watch the sun set over the lake. Observing His awesome creation will lead us to worship our breathtakingly creative God.

What Does The Bible Say

Read: Read Genesis 1:1-25

1. How did God create the world and everything in it?
2. Read verse 25. What did God think about His creation?
3. How many days did it take God to create the world?

What Do You Think

1. Think about the creation order. Why did God create plants before animals?
2. Think about your favorite animal. What is unique and special about it?
3. How do you think God wants us to treat His creation?

What R U Going To Do

Make a simple book or poster illustrating the first 5 days of creation. Bring your artwork to church next Sunday for us to display. You will also receive a special prize or tokens. Let's fill a wall with pictures of God's amazing creation!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Trinity - I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God—Father, Son and Spirit.

Memory Verse

Psalm 100:2 - *Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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