

THE BIBLE PROJECT 2.0

Genesis 1

Big Ideas: Creation

BIG IDEA 1: GOD CREATES

Neh 9.6: And Ezra said, “You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you.

Ps 102.25: Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

Heb 11.3: By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. [was not made out of visible things.]



GOD CREATED

God's project: To create a world where his will is done, all creatures live in joyous concert and all fellowship fully with their Creator.

PSALMS ON CREATION FROM HOMEWORK

[Psalm 33:6](#) ESV

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.

[Psalm 24:1-2](#) ESV

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

[Psalm 19:1-2](#) ESV

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

The world is to be seen as a shrine, not as a laboratory.

Genesis 1 is not history in its literary form; nor is it even STORY/NARRATIVE.

GOD CREATED

Gen 1 is not designed to be an eyewitness account. Who was there? Was it recorded?

Bonhoeffer: “No one can speak of the beginning except him who was the beginning.”

HOW DID GOD CREATE?—Wrong question!

- The church has sometimes assumed that the Bible is a science textbook: Flat earth – Ps 104.2b
- Some used it as a source for Anti Copernican theory:
Ps 93. 1b—world shall not be moved

Ps 104. 5—Earth set on foundations

Eccl 1. 5— Sun rises and goes down, hastens to place...

Ps 19. 4-6—end of earth, sun rises and makes circuit
- Columbus endured similar scorn from those who took the Bible as a science textbook.
- Can you think of other instances?

The biblical message is spiritual/moral, not scientific/technological in nature. That does not mean that it is not an accurate reflection of reality. As a basis for contemporaneous information the Bible is unparalleled in its accuracy. But its purpose is not to respond to every question, particularly in the area of HOW – the methods of God's accomplishments. That is especially true of the creation story. But this is not meant to separate meaning from reality, faith from fact, *geschichte from historie* [“story” from “history”] —as if faith will believe some things contrary to fact or reality.

The world is to be seen as a shrine, not as a laboratory.

The Author of Genesis 1 (Moses, traditionally, but unstated in the Bible itself) knew the other creation stories of his day: *Enuma Elish*; *Atrahasis* epic, *Gilgamesh* Epic and the related Mesopotamian creation myths. Heidel (*Babylonian Genesis*): Genesis contains a “conscious and deliberate anti-mythical polemic.” [p, 91]

Differences:

Mesopotamian	Genesis
dragons are rivals conquered by Canaanite gods	great sea monsters are aquatic creatures
struggle to separate upper from lower waters	separation accomplished by simple fiat
worship sun, moon, stars	Gen pointedly avoids using words for Sun, etc. “greater/lesser”
creation of man afterthought to relieve gods of work and provide food	Man the goal of creation & God provides food
magical utterance is means of creation	Gen: God simply speaks

The literary form is not modern historiography; nor is it MYTH or Legend. What is the form?

Hint: The world is a shrine. What does one do at a shrine???

The text of Genesis 1 reveals God’s PROJECT.

Repetitions and emphatic statements: Read as responsive reading; see later attachment.

The Organizational Plan of Genesis 1.

List the “days” and what’s created each “day.”

NOTE: The text says at the end of each “day” and *it was evening and it was morning the [next] day*. How was there evening and morning with no Sun or Moon? Clearly the writer does not mean to communicate about a period of hours or “daylight”.

So what is the point? The point is “WHO IS IN CHARGE?”

THIS IS GOD’S ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN. The order is not time or sequence but of **realms** and **rulers** and the ultimate RULER: God the Creator.

FILL IN CHART that appears later in this handout.

BIG IDEA 2: GOD IS SEPARATE FROM HIS CREATION



God is not the creation; creation is not God. HOLINESS.

God is Creator. He is like an artist or a poet or a dramatist or a sculptor or an architect.

Compare with other origins myths and theories.

His medium is chaos, the face of the deep. The means is His Word. (God says, “Let there be.... And it was so.”) But what God makes does not add to himself. Creation is God’s object.

In almost all other religions and theories of origin “Nature is self-generated.”

[Also known as “materialism.”]

In primitive mythology the world/universe is represented as formed from/of the “god”

In the modern concept of origins, “Nature” or “universe” just started ON ITS OWN from some material that either appeared or was already in existence from somewhere.

watch this YOUTUBE video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdPzOWILrbE>

God is separate from his creation – That’s the definition of **HOLINESS**

Karl Barth says HOLINESS means: “Wholly Other.” A difference of Kind, not size or quality.

God is *transcendent*, **NOT IMMANENT**. *Contrary to “pantheism.”*

In almost all primitive religions NATURE is conceived as MOTHER—and life comes from “nature.”

The mother-goddess takes many forms: Gaia, Magna Mater, Cybele, Artemis...

THINK DAVINCI CODE—mother goddess The Chalice represents the feminine, p.445

BIG IDEA 3: GOD OWNS CREATION.



Grasp between thumb and first finger

If you make something, to whom does it belong?

We have copyright, patent and property laws if we make something new.

When God makes the world, no other owner has the right to claim it—and certainly not the creatures.

When God makes the world, he does not just make processes, purposes, laws and mechanics. He remains attached to it. Is. 43:2-3; Psalm 23; Psalm 46:1-3; Psalm 91: 11-13; Psalm 121; 1 Pt 5:7

God directs human activity.

- He judges human failure.
 - He acts to cleanse and restore.
 - He generates reconciliation and restoration.
 - He has a plan for final victory.

Contrary to Richard Dawkins “Blind Watchmaker,” God is personally engaged and caring about his creation. Richard Dawkins in *The Blind Watchmaker* writes:

“All appearances to the contrary, the only watchmaker in nature is the blind forces of physics, albeit deployed in a very special way.... Natural selection, the blind unconscious, automatic process...has no purpose in mind. It has no mind ... “

But in the Bible God remains attached to his creation. Isaiah 43:2-3; Psalm 23; Psalm 46:1-3; Psalm 91: 11-13; Psalm 121; 1 Peter 5:7

The Earth BELONGS TO the Lord:

Exodus 9:29

Moses replied, “When I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands in prayer to the LORD. The thunder will stop and there will be no more hail, so you may know that **the earth is the LORD’s**.”

Psalm 24:1

[*Psalm 24*] [*Of David. A psalm.*] **The earth is the LORD’s**, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

1 Corinthians 10:26

for, “**The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.**”

God Claims Ownership ...

Heidelberg Catechism: What is your only comfort in life and in death? *That I belong – body and soul, in life and in death—not to myself but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ...*

1 Chr 29. 10 ff. for all things come from thee and of thine own have we given thee [David's offering for Temple]

God binds Himself to His Creation watches over, guards, protects, preserves and sustains creation. God does not spin the world off onto its own – AGAINST DEISM.

Is 43. 2-3: when you pass through the waters, I will be with you.

Ps 23

Ps 46. 1-3 God is very present help in time of trouble.

Ps 121

1 Peter 5.7: Cast all your care upon him for he cares for you.

- ◆ Man need not think himself an accident on earth plotting his own way through this maze
- ◆ God is not distant, but present
- ◆ Chance does not govern, but God

Illustration: 5 days before news came of the massacre of Jim Elliot, Nate Saint and the 3 other missionaries by the Auca Indians in Ecuador, Elizabeth Elliott, wife of one of those missionaries writes that she came across this text from Is 43:2-3: *WHEN* you pass through the deep waters ... when, not, if.

Psychological Consequences:

God owns; therefore we belong.

Human thriving requires *belonging* to form identity.

How does one know he belongs? Ownership leads to direction.

Consequence of ownership is that it answers the human need for identity or belonging –ownership issue – who owns me?

Robert Wise, a pastor and teacher, was adopted and told us his story. But he was always haunted by who his father was. Adopted into a family where he knew he did not belong – he had Native American heritage, but this was an Anglo family. He remembers being in a cotton field and watching his mother being loaded onto a truck and leaving him alone in that cotton field. He said finally someone pointed out that in his acceptance of Christ, he received a Father – he said his ego was literally rebuilt by the power of know that I am owned.

Nature, as the mindless consequence of physics, leaves humanity untethered,
like plants without a place to root,
like a guitar with detached strings.

Like children without a father.

Like boys abandoned on an Island (*Lord of the Flies, William Golding*)

This is why Jesus pre-eminently reveals God as FATHER

Two German scholars (Herman Strack and Paul Billerbeck) wrote a book on the Gospel Parallels with the teaching of Jesus in the Rabbis. The only major distinction turns is Jesus teaching that God is *Abba*.

These are some of the great reasons believers resist *Mother-god terminology*.

There is a fundamental difference between transcendence and immanence.

BIG IDEA 4: GOD MADE EVERYTHING GOOD

God created all things good—another contrast with Mesopotamian legend.

Gen 1:31 not universally accepted: *God saw all that he had made, and it was **very good**.*

- * Other major religions
- * Greco-Roman philosophy
- * Some forms of Christian attitudes

What God makes is good in itself (intrinsically) But everything must be used as the creator intended in order for it to remain good. Even the “good” can be abused into becoming evil.

“God don’t make no junk”



God’s right hand makes no junk.

God makes all things good, including human beings.

BIG IDEA 5: GOD MAKES HUMANS, PLURAL, IN HIS IMAGE—THE IMAGE OF GOD

*So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

What is God's image in humanity? Fingerprints all over the "dust."



Some possible explanations include:

- 1. Irenaeus: IMAGE natural capabilities of man—mind, will, personality; LIKENESS—supernatural capabilities of man: Morality, fruit of the spirit, etc.
- 2. Mental and Spiritual faculties – reason, personality, freewill, self-consciousness, intelligence, creativity, etc. Problem: the lack of biblical evidence so that the traits mentioned are often more a reflection of the values of the commentator than any particular reflection of revelation.
- 3. Physical resemblance, as in Seth was fathered “after his [Adam’s] image.” Gen 5.3. BUT OT stresses the non-physical nature of God & invisibility – Deut 4.15-16.
- 4. God’s representative on earth: Common oriental view of the King. Mandate of Creation gives man the responsibility to have dominion and subdue the earth, an obviously royal task. Psalm 8 speaks of man as having been created a little lower than the angels, *crowned* with glory and made to *rule* the works of God’s hands. Functions of royalty in Ps 8.
- 5. Capacity to relate to God. Personal relationship with God possible—Karl Barth.
- 6. **Image related to male and female** – unity in plurality: Note that God says let US make man in OUR own image. Why the plural? It is possible that the Bible uses the royal plural for God – Elohim. The NT reveals God as triune: Word and Spirit. The OT writer does not intend that meaning, but the intended meaning of the author may be enhanced by the *fuller meaning* made clear from the NT. Thus if God is unity in plurality, his image in humanity would have a similar unity in plurality.

Someone said that your image of yourself comes from what you believe the most significant person in your life thinks of you.

Self-image comes from where?

From what does the image of God seen in Jesus come?

(Clue: “*Like Father, like Son.*”)

Jesus reveals God’s image by doing his Father’s will.

BIG IDEA 6: GOD GIVES PRIMACY TO HUMANS

Humans are not like the rest of Creation.

To no other animal or plant group does God give commands that can be disobeyed. God gives humanity the responsibility for governing the rest of Creation. *Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.*

Psalm 8:4-6:

*what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?*

⁵*You have made them a little lower than the angels^[e]
and crowned them with glory and honor.*

⁶*You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet ...*

BIG IDEA 7: GOD COMMANDS OBEDIENCE—GOD IS LAWGIVER

The Covenant of Creation

Hittite Suzerainty Covenants: The point of emphasizing the formal relationship to ancient Treaties is to make clear that God is sovereign. He does not negotiate with creation. He dictates terms because he is creator and owner. The form comes from one of the harshest empires of the ancient world, the Hittites. When they conquered peoples they insisted on unconditional surrender and gave unilateral commands and consequences: Either obey or be annihilated. Those are the “Stipulations and Sanctions” of the covenant of creation.

God makes covenant/cultural mandate with his human creatures.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

- Replenish
- Subdue
- Manage (dress, till and keep)
- Take charge

CONCLUDING THOUGHT:

NO CREATION—NO INCARNATION. Without creation, no Christmas.

A self-generated world can have no Savior.

BIG IDEA Recap

BIG IDEA 1: GOD CREATES

BIG IDEA 2: GOD IS SEPARATE FROM HIS CREATION

BIG IDEA 3: GOD OWNS CREATION.

BIG IDEA 4: GOD MADE EVERYTHING GOOD

**BIG IDEA 5: GOD MAKES HUMANS, PLURAL, IN HIS IMAGE—
THE IMAGE OF GOD**

BIG IDEA 6: GOD GIVES PRIMACY TO HUMANS

BIG IDEA 7: GOD COMMANDS OBEDIENCE—GOD IS LAWGIVER

NO CREATION—NO INCARNATION.

Genesis 1 (NIV)

- 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 a vault between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault "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 vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault 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 vault 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 vault of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, 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: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the 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.
- ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, ^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.



2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Genesis 1: Organizational Plan of God's Creation

There was evening and morning before there were technically days marked out by sunrise and sunset?
How do you understand that?

"Day" 7

Category		
"Day" 1	4	
"Day" 2	5	
"Day" 3	6	

Consider the following if you choose to prepare for week 3

READ:

Genesis 2-6

Questions to think about:

What is the problem of evil?

How do the following religions deal with the problem of evil? Pick one and prepare to share.

Islam

Buddhism

Hinduism

Modernism/secularism

Compare with Judeo-Christian approach.

How do you understand the relationship of the Bible to “science”?

Markers:

Genesis 2: Sabbath

Genesis 2: Marriage

Genesis 3: God’s command broken

Genesis 3: God’s redemption

Genesis 6: Flood