

Knowing God by participating in His Creation.

(for more information see apptoteach.org theology files #310, #311)

What do we mean by “God’s Story”?

God’s story is the unfolding drama of His Work and Words in the history of the World. The emphasis on “story” is important because the details (actions and doctrines) find their true meaning in a cultural and historical context that is one big ongoing drama.

What does it mean to know God by participating in His Story?

Our relationship with God is one of:

Communion
Cooperation
Calling

We are not:

Separated
Spectator
Slaves

Hebrews 11:3

The real beginning

1. Heb.11:3 “By faith we understand that the worlds (ages) were prepared (have been adjusted) by the word (rhema) of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.”
2. This text is important in that it challenges us to respect three things we must understand before we read Gen.1-3.
 - a. The priority of faith in understanding certain truths.
 - b. The priority of the word in understanding God’s hand in the world. “by the word”
 - c. The priority of the spiritual in understanding ultimate reality. “by the spiritual”
3. **How do we see behind the “big bang”? “By faith we understand”**
 - a. The fact that God created everything that is a part of time and space is known only by faith.
 1. Christians have always understood truth to come from **special revelation** (The Bible) as well as **general revelation** human observation, experience, and reason.

God’s Works	God’s Words
Seen by all	Seen by those to whom it is given
Given through Creation, Culture, & Conscience	Given through Scripture, Special inspiration, & Illumination
Science	Faith

2. Faith is the doorway to the most important questions of life.
 - Where did I come from?

- Where am I going?
 - Why am I here?
 - Who am I?
3. The question of the **Origin** of the universe and life - cannot be answered by science. We only have hints.
- b. By FAITH we do not mean blind faith in whatever one's imagination concocts, but faith in authority beyond our senses.
- c. There are two contrasting kinds of wisdom - (not science vs. Scripture) but (open vs. closed). Wisdom that is not open to the spiritual, supernatural dimension of life will not only be limited but misguided on many counts.

Closed	Open
Materialistic science or Religious tradition held uncritically. Science and faith are incompatible.	True Science & Scripture rightly understood. There is need for both science and faith.
Dogmatic, defensive, uncritical of self.	Humble, teachable, patient, & honest.

4. **What is the extent of God's creation? "the worlds were prepared"**
- a. There are three Greek words translated "world" in the NT.
1. **KOSMOS** - an orderly place. (Heb.4:3 "his works which were finished from the foundation of the world")
 2. **OIKOUMENE** - an abode for people (Matt.24:14 "this gospel . . . shall be preached in the whole world")
 3. **AION** - an age or period of time. (Rom.12:1 "be not conformed to this world")
- b. The word for "world" in this text is AION not cosmos. It suggests the whole of history (space, matter, and time) with all the systems of life that compose the cosmos and the forces and systems over time within it.
1. God created more than the heavens and the earth. What was created was all of history, all world systems, all events and experiences because there is no time, as we know it, with God.
 2. Eph.2:1-2 "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course (aion) of this world (cosmos), according to the prince of the power of the air."
 3. There are important implications in this verse that will find application when we get to the question of God's knowledge of the future.
5. **What is the means of the creation? "by the Word of God"**
- a. The Bible is consistent in repeatedly saying that God spoke the world into existence. Ps.33:6,9 "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made . . ." Ps.148:5 "Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created." What does this mean? Did God speak and there was in an instant full-blown creation?
- b. Another way of saying it is that God willed it into existence.

1. We are born of the Word of God according to I Peter 1:23 “for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and abiding word of God.”
 2. The Word of God when spoken works through other instruments to bring about God’s will.
 3. ILLUSTRATION: We are born again by the word of God but we can also point to many instruments through which the word worked to bring us to faith and new birth. - preaching, witness, conviction of sin, etc.
 4. Could God use natural forces to shape the world? Yes. This would not contradict His speaking it into existence. Does this mean that the evolutionary theory of Darwin and his followers is the way God shaped the creation? Not necessarily. We would have to weigh the theory on the basis of the evidence for it.
 5. But if there is a contradiction with Scripture it is not with the fact that God spoke the world’s into existence.
- c. The Word is a priority in our understanding of God’s power.
1. The Scripture as the Word of God comes with a awesome legacy of power to change things, to bring into being that which does not now exist.
 2. Treat the message of the book with great respect. Expect its message to change lives - dramatically and through natural forces under God’s control.

Colossians 1:15-17

The story is not about us but it is for our benefit.

“15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

1. **Jesus is the Lord of creation. “the firstborn over all creation”**
 - a. This phrase should not be understood as “the firstborn *of* or *in* all creation” but rather as the preeminence who rules over all as its head and heir.
 - b. The fact that Jesus was not created but was the Creator is made clear in verse 17. This is made clear in **Jn.1:3** “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made”, and **I Cor.8:6** “But to us there is but one god, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things, and we by him.”
2. **The spiritual and the physical are the domain of our participation. “visible and invisible”**
 - a. Here again we have a hint at the creation of the “times” (ages) as well as the spiritual forces both good and bad that make history.
 - b. The fact that God controls the movements of history is born out in other texts. Acts 17:26; Deut.32:8; Job 12:23
 - c. The spiritual dimension of life is the “hard core” reality behind the superficial material dimension of life.

1. The text says in effect that the visible physical world that we know was formed from the invisible reality of the spiritual dimension of life that preceded it. (It did not come from nothing.)
2. ILLUSTRATION: The greatest witness to the fact that such a world exists is the human experience. We intuitively know that there is more to humanity than the physical body.
3. In Romans 1:20 explains that the invisible attributes of God are seen in the visible creation. One reality reflects the other. Those who are sensitive to this fact - see God.
- d. This also means that the nature and the natural is not outside God's domain or control.
 1. God who is the basis of all that exists in the physical world.
 2. Paul talks of Christ as the one who creates and sustains all life. He is the spiritual life force behind the physical world that we experience and see. Col.1:15 (below)
- e. Spirituality is a priority in our understanding of reality.
 1. Don't follow that growing popular notion that we are nothing but a body, a complex physics lab.
 4. The spiritual dimension is very real.

Questions

1. You should be able to answer these questions.

- a. Apart from Gen.1-2 where does the Bible speak about God as the creator?
- b. Does the Biblical record exclude the possibility of a "natural" process in the formation of the earth as we know it?
- c. What are the limits of science in understanding origins?
- d. What is the significance of the word translated "world" in Heb.11:3?
- e. How is Jesus related to the cosmos?

2. You should be able to discuss these questions.

- a. Why is faith an important part of knowing the most important things in life?
- b. What is the nature of the tension between science and Scripture?
- c. How can we expect to know God by participating in His Story?
- d. In what sense is history a part of God's creation?