

## ***Knowing God by participating in His Creation.***

(for more information see [apptoteach.org](http://apptoteach.org) theology files #310, #311)

### ***Review***

#### **A. God wants us to recognize His hand in the whole of life.**

Heb.11:3“By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.” Heb.11:3

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

Col. 1 “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.”

### ***Genesis 1:1-2:3***

### ***Respecting God’s Order***

#### **1. What is the literary nature of Genesis 1?**

- a. The literary genre of Gen.1 is a narrative cast in a historico-artistic framework consisting of two parallel triads. Note the following poetic features:
  1. Repetition of phrases (i.e. “according to their kind”).
  2. Parallelism (i.e. three days of structure followed by three days of substance).

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Population</b>
darkness	Day #1 dividing light from darkness	Day #4 luminaries
“the great deep”	Day #2 dividing the waters from above and below	Day #5 fish and fowl
“formless and void”	Day #3 dividing land from sea	Day #6 mammals and man

3. Many words and phrases in the passage are repeated three, seven, and ten times (i.e.. “and it was so”).
4. There are many anthropomorphism’s (ascribing to God the actions of people) such as resting on the Sabbath, looking and seeing that creation was good, and speaking so as to create.
- b. This text is rational and logical in a cosmological sense (concerned about relationships between God, humanity, and the universe). Its concern is not scientific or historical. Its concerns are teleological (end or purpose) rather than chronological.
- c. Some scholars have described Genesis one and two as mega-history that is to say they describe events that are real but not capable of being recorded as normal history which

is bound by time in a way that the original creation was not. A parallel example might be found in Luke 16:19-31 where the story of the rich man and Lazarus is not meant to describe the geography of the afterlife but does reveal important aspects of the afterlife.

- d. Some scholars look at the first chapters of Genesis as a literary myth (a story that is accepted uncritically to justify a collective belief in support of a social institution) that may or may not be grounded in historical fact. Its historicity is insignificant and cannot be verified.
- e. Attempts to read Genesis one and two as a technical scientifically sensitive account seems inappropriate.
  1. We should not demand that the text answer questions that it does not address such as, the length of the days of creation and the number of animals named by Adam.
  2. When we try to harmonize these chapters with today's scientific demands and then change our interpretation to meet tomorrow's demands we do not build the text's credibility.
- f. Gen.1:1 is a summary statement.

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty"* (The New International Version).

1:1 Summary statement.

Original creation ?	1:2 formless & empty	1:3-2:3 days of creation	Six
---------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------	-----

2:1 Summary statement.

## 2. Outline

- a. Title sentence (see 2:1) 1:1
- b. Chaos (the problems) 1:2
  1. Darkness
  2. Formlessness
  3. Lifelessness
- c. Cosmos (order)
  1. Structure (preparation)
    1. Day #1 (light) 1:3-5
    2. Day #2 (matter and air) 1:6-8
    3. Day #3 (land, sea, & plants) 1:9-13
  2. Substance (population)
    1. Day #4 (sun, moon & stars) 1:14-19
    2. Day #5 (fish and fowl) 1:20-23
    3. Day #6 (ANIMALS AND MAN) 1:24-31
  3. Sabbath Day - Day #7 2:1-3

## 3. What is the Purpose of Genesis 1?

Genesis is a cosmological, and theological, not a scientific, account of creation. The story is a literary device to communicate basic truths relevant to a world that tended to worship nature or gods who were a part of nature.

<b>Genesis</b>	<b>Ancient beliefs</b>	<b>Modern beliefs</b>
one God	many gods	ideological pluralism
temporal cosmos	nature = gods	eternal matter
creation subject to God	gods are a part of creation	creation independent of God
universe is orderly & purposeful	universe is chaotic	universe is random

a. **POLYTHEISM VERSUS MONOTHEISM.**

1. The notion of one God over all nature was revolutionary in Moses' day.
2. This is the primary message of Gen.1.
3. On each day of creation another set of idols is smashed. Example: The sun and moon are referred to as "lights" because in Semitic languages the words "sun" and "moon" are also the names of gods.
4. Genesis 1 achieves a radical and comprehensive affirmation of monotheism versus every kind of false religion (polytheism, idolatry, animism, pantheism and syncretism); superstition (astrology and magic); and philosophy (materialism, ethical dualism, naturalism and nihilism).

b. **PROCREATION VERSUS CREATION.**

1. The Egyptians, Canaanites, Assyrians and Babylonians all had their "generations of the gods."
2. The one true God reveals Himself as creator of all other wonders (stars, seas, life). This stands in contrast to other ancient cosmologies which were based on procreation. A cosmic egg is produced and hatches. A cosmic womb gives birth. Or a god and goddess mate and beget further gods and goddesses.

c. **THE PROLOGUE TO THE COVENANT.**

1. The central theme of the Scripture seems to be the covenant relationship between God and man.
2. The first chapters of Genesis set the stage for that relationship.
3. The unique nature of human beings - made in the image of God - is key.
4. The role of the Sabbath as the climactic point of the creation is to be seen as an important emphasis.

d. **MAN - BETWEEN CREATOR AND CREATION.**

1. Everything that is not God has derived its existence from him.
2. The original act of divine creation is unique. It is not like the creative acts of man.
3. Nothing made by God is intrinsically evil. The physical body and the earth are good.
4. Mankind is responsible to God.
5. There is a relationship between all parts of the creation. We are capable of meaningful relationships with God, other people, and the cosmos.
6. Mankind lives under certain limitations.
7. Man is the climactic act of creation.

8. Man, like God is to rest on the seventh day. Ex.20:9-11

e. **A chart contrasting the Biblical Creation with Pagan tradition of the time.**

<b>Surrounding Ancient Beliefs:</b>	<b>Ancient Hebrew Revelation:</b>
The universe created the gods	God created the universe
There are many gods	There is one God
The gods are visible as sun, moon, stars etc.	God has no visible form
The gods can be represented by physical, man made idols	No image should be made of God
The gods are sexual beings	God has no physical "shape" or form
The gods are part of the universe	God is set apart from creation
The gods do evil as well as good	God is righteous
The names of the gods connote their dependence on the physical	God's name, "I AM," connotes self-existence
The gods are limited in power	God is "Almighty"
The world was formed through violent conflicts between older and younger generations of gods	God created in orderly stages, seeing that each was "good," until all was prepared for humans and pronounced "very good"
Sun, moon, and stars are gods	Sun, moon, and stars give light and help us mark times and seasons
Sea monsters, left over from primeval struggles with gods, still lurk in deep waters	Large sea creatures are simply categorized with other sea life
Life is rekindled each spring by copulation between the gods	God delegates to creatures the ability to generate seed to reproduce after their own kind

**4. How are we to understand the following expressions in the creation narrative?**

- a. **"In the beginning"** (Hebrew - bereshit) is a unique term that is used in the Bible to describe an extended or indeterminate duration of time - not a specific moment. It is a block of time not unlike "the end times" in the NT.
- b. **"God"** (Hebrew - Elohim) is a general word for "mighty one" or "one who is awesome." The plural references to God underscore His majesty and may suggest the Trinity. It is the word used in chapter one.  
**"Lord"** (Hebrew - Yahwah) is used in chapter two with Elohim. It is the name of Israel's Covenant maker.
- c. **"Created"** (Hebrew - Barah) is a word that means to make new. Its subject is always God in the Bible but it is not always used to create out of nothing. It is the best Hebrew word however to convey the idea of ex nihilo (out of nothing).

1. **“made”** (Hebrew - Asah) is the more general term that also means “to appoint” and “to acquire.”
  2. **“formed”** (Hebrew - Yatzar) means “to shape.” It is used to describe the skilled work of an craftsman.
- d. **“the heavens and the earth”** (the sky and the land) is an expression which means “the whole universe.”
- e. **“without form and void”** (Hebrew - tohu wabohu) Gen. 1:2. The idea is one of “wilderness without human life.” It is used by the prophets to describe the results of God’s judgment but that does not mean that judgment is always the cause of such a condition.
- f. **“let there be”** is a prophetic expression of God’s word calling forth something so as to make it good. It can refer to the creation of something out of nothing but more often it refers to the awakening of something to its good purpose. So the expression “let there be light” may mean “let the light shine as I intend” with no specific reference as to whether the light existed before the spoken word. For example in Ex.10:23, Neh.8:3, Gen.44:3 a similar expression is used to describe the sunrise.
- g. **“Image and Likeness of God”** (1:26)
1. **“Image”** (Hebrew - tselem) - exact copy
  2. **“likeness”** (Hebrew - demut) - resemblance. These two terms are synonyms (Gen.5:3).
  3. The first thing that is said about mankind is that he is a spiritual being - distinct from the rest of created life in a way that links him with God.
  4. What makes mankind unique from all lower forms of animal life is his religious nature and capacity for a covenant relationship with God. (Not that he is a bipedal, tool-maker with language and possessing a certain brain size.)
- h. **“day”** (Hebrew - Yom) in Gen.1?
1. In Gen.1-2 the term is used in three ways:
    - a. Daylight - the opposite of night. 1:14
    - b. A 24 hour day. 1:5 (This is the literary image that is used.)
    - c. An extended period of time. 2:4
  2. The arguments for a literal solar (24 hr.) day in the 6 days of creation.
    - a. A plain reading of the text, with its recurring phrase of *“evening and morning”*, suggests a solar day of twenty-four hours. That would have been clear to Moses and his first readers.
    - b. Creation is pictured in six familiar periods followed by a seventh for rest, corresponding to the days of the week as Israel knew them. Ex.20:11
    - c. The text does not tell us whether the account is an analogy of God’s creative activity or a chronological account of how many hours He worked.
    - d. It would be assumed that the appearance of history would be present in the creation of fully developed life forms (i.e. trees would be created with rings).
  3. The following reasons suggest that the day might not be a solar day.
    - a. Gen.2:4 uses the term to refer to the whole creation event - *“These are the generations of the heavens and of the Earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.”* We could also cite Gen.4:3, Isa.2:12, 4:2, and Josh.24:7.

- b. It is unlikely that all of the activity ascribed to the 6th day could have taken place in 24 hrs.
  - c. If the sun's appearance is not until the fourth day, it could not have been used as a means of measuring the length of the previous three days.
  - d. If the stars were created on the fourth day and the nearest star is Alpha Centauri (four and a half light years away), how could they be "*for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years*"?
  - e. On what side of the earth was the world created? Morning and evening do not coincide at all points of the earth's surface.
  - f. We are expressly told, both in the Old and New Testament, that God's time is not to be confused with man's time - II Pet.3:8.
  - g. The fact that the Scripture commonly refers to a 24 hour period whenever it associates the word "day" with a number, is true but it is not a rule of Hebrew grammar and therefore of limited significance.
  - h. The reference to "evening and morning" is used in Psalm 90:4-6 in conjunction with the expression of "one day is as a thousand years." This suggests that it may be a poetic expression in Genesis one.
4. The length of the days is not the point of this text.
- a. It is interesting to note that long before the evolutionary debate, the extended day view was held by Ireneaus, Origen, Basil, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.
  - b. To be dogmatic in insisting on a "24 hr. day view" at this point may unnecessarily discredit the witness of one seeking to win a favorable hearing of the gospel among nonbelievers. If evangelicals can't be trusted in a simple matter such as the age of the earth, which can be easily verified, then how can they be believed on the doctrine of vicarious atonement?
- 5. What is the significance of Genesis 1?**
- a. The world is not eternally self-existent.**
  - b. The world is not the most important part of reality.**
  - c. The world is subject to God.**
  - d. The world is not fit for people without God's intervention.**
  - e. To be human means that I accept a sacred responsibility.**
    - 1. – to reflect God's nature in the earth.**  
Col.3:9-10 "do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him."
    - 2. – to seek a personal relationship with God.**  
Acts 17:27-28 "27 God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, thought He is not far from each one of us. 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are His offspring.'"
  - f. To be human means that I treat all people as sacred.**
    - 1. Capital punishment** – Gen.9:6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed for in the image of God has God made man."
    - 2. Social speech** – James 3:9 "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness."

**g. To be human means that I make and keep sacred covenants.**

Matt.19:5-6 “for this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh, Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore god has joined together let no man separate.”

**h. The natural environment is not God but it is good therefore don't worship it and don't abuse it.**

**i. The natural environment is a habitat for humanity therefore understand it, develop it, and preserve it.**

## **Reflective Questions**

**1. You should be able to answer these questions.**

- a. Why do some feel that Genesis one should not be read as a scientifically accurate account of origins?
- b. What are the purposes of Genesis one?
- c. What are the arguments for and against the “day” of Genesis being 24 hrs. solar day?
- d. What are examples of literary parallelism in Genesis one?

**2. You should be able to discuss these questions.**

- a. How does the creation account of Genesis one inform our self-image as humans?
- b. What are the parallels between the pagan world addressed by Genesis one and the world-views of our day?
- c. How does our view of the creation effect our sense of purpose and our relationships with God, others, and the planet?