

**Wednesday Night Bible Studies**  
**The Book of Genesis**  
**Week 1 - June 9, 2021 (Genesis 1:1-2)**

Intro

- welcome online again! For those of you who are just tuning in we did 4-5 months I believe going through the book of Revelation together. This started all the way back when the Covid restrictions first hit, I did a Q&A thing on Wednesday nights
  - So many of the questions were about the end times, the mark of the beast, the rapture, the book of Revelation I thought well let's just go through that book!
  - After Revelation I know lots of you were wanting to keep going! So we took a month and a half off basically and now we are going to go through the book of Genesis together.
  - So, how this works if you are new to this is we want this to be as interactive as possible. So I want to teach and work my way through the text and things related to it but please comment either on Youtube, Facebook or the website - I am monitoring the comments and I will interact with them
  - So if you have questions or comments or pushback please type it out in the comments section and that makes it more enjoyable and interactive
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- so that being said, the book of Genesis - I would love to hear how much time people have spent in this book of the Bible - is this a book that you love to read, have you spent time studying it? Is it too confusing or weird?
  - The book of Genesis is one of those books of the Bible that is highly debated - especially since it offers a view of how everything came into existence - which is an alternative view to the majority view of the Big Bang theory and evolutionary biology being how we came into existence - which we will get into as we go along
  - The book of Genesis also gives us stories that seem far-fetched or have been written off as fables: Noah and the worldwide flood, the Tower of Babel etc.

## **Background info on Genesis:**

- written by Moses as part of the Pentateuch - the first 5 books of the bible (the Law for the Israelites)
  - Genesis in Hebrew was simply called “Bereshit” which literally means “in the beginning”
  - Genesis means origins really, because it is a book about origins: the origin of earth’s creation, the origin of humankind, the origin of different institutions, the origin of sin and brokenness and evil, the origin of one special chosen family (the Israelites)
  - Now there is debate about when exactly Moses wrote the book of Genesis, because there is debate about when exactly Moses lived - there is evidence that Moses lived either in the 1500’s or the 1300’s)
  - The flood story finds parallels in different nations flood stories written in the 1600’s
  - The genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, find a parallel in the Sumerian king list dated about 1900 BC.
  - Whatever date is preferred for Moses and him writing the Pentateuch, we know for sure several centuries have separated him from the Patriarchs of Israel - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob - so these stories about them would have passed on by word of mouth
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- Genesis is split into 2 really clear sections - chapters 1-11 is what is called primeval history and then chapters 12-50 concern the family line of Abraham - the founder of the Israelites
  - So Genesis 1-11 describes the history of humanity as a whole - and really it sets the stage for Genesis 12-50 - the God who called Abraham is in fact the 1 true God - because look at this history of him creating and dealing with humanity
  - So really, 1-11 is a preface that provides the universal setting for which the particularizing call of Abraham is the solution
  - What’s fascinating is that chapters 1-11 covers a timespan of at minimum 2000 years, which chapters 12-50 covers a timespan of 350 years. So massive timespan covered in these first 11 chapters
  - So really what Genesis 1-11 does, this primeval history is it lays down a groundwork for a worldview - and what it does is it offers an alternative front end to the worldview story and it intends to offer the “true” story of not only Israel, but the whole world

## How Do we Read Genesis?

- so a question needs to be asked: "How do you and I read Genesis?"
- And really this question could go back one step and ask "What is the Bible?" Because our view of what the Bible is and how we got it affects our approach to reading it and interpreting it.
- So there is a picture on the whiteboard of these two hands - drawn by M. C. Escher in 1948 called "drawing hands" and the question would be well which hand is drawing which hand - well the answer is both
- Well the question we need to ask is "Who wrote the Bible?" Was it written by God or written by humans? And the answer is both.
- The Bible, the book of Genesis did not fall from heaven in gold tablets into Moses' arms. (Actually anytime that story is given its usually a cult - Mormonism)
- The book of Genesis was written by Moses - a human author - and I don't even think the Holy Spirit possessed him and took over his hand and he had no control over what he was writing
- Moses wrote down stories passed down orally about the origins of the world and the patriarchs and the nation of Israel and he wrote them down - and miraculously the Holy Spirit guided that process so that these are the very words of God - inspired - inerrant
- So that's not scandalous - it actually makes the Bible even more miraculous - that God himself guided the authors of the Bible and there are no contradictions and there is one unifying story and message - even though the Bible is written by 40 authors over the span of 2000 years! That's incredible!
- But what that means is Moses writes the book of Genesis for the nation of Israel - this is their worldview - Moses was not thinking about us when he wrote it down - Moses was not concerned about refuting Darwinism when he wrote Genesis 1-2
- So here's the deal - many people approach Genesis as a scientific textbook - an answer key to answering every scientific question - but that's not what the book of Genesis is for.
- The book of Genesis was intended for ancient Israel - it came from Moses to address the people of Israel, because all ancient nations had a story of where the world came from in order to explain the why things today are were the way they were.

- So if you think about the nation of Israel and Moses writing Genesis and Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy - the members of the implied audience knew that their God had crushed the so-called gods of Egypt and Genesis 1-11 explains why he could do so - the God of Israel is not a tribal god but the one true God who made heaven and earth - and Genesis 1-11 frames up that worldview
- So what that means is in the social setting of Genesis 1-11, many scientific questions would have gone unaddressed because they were irrelevant to telling the story:

Genesis 1:6 - let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters - expanse can be translated canopy or firmament

- we know the sky is not a solid canopy - a firmament
- But that doesn't matter - God revealed himself and creation in a way ancient Israelites would have understood - they believed the sky was solid
- Where did Cain get his wife? Not answered in the text - it is irrelevant to the worldview being developed - now we can figure that out pretty clearly - Cain most likely married his sister
- Psalm 93:1 - "yes the world is established, it shall never be moved."
- We know the world is moving constantly - we are rotating around the sun - that doesn't matter - what is the message Psalm 93 is giving to the people of ancient Israel
- So we have to remember that the context of Genesis 1 is not a religious view (the Israel one) vs. A secular view (non-Israel) - because there was no such thing as a secular view
- There were no Charles Darwin's in the ancient world who operated with a non-theistic presupposition
- Now all that to say, I do believe we can get answers to questions science brings up - BUT I think we miss the mark when we assume that is what Genesis is meant to do - because it isn't

## **Mesopotamian Creation Stories**

- so here's what's interesting - the genesis 1-2 creation story isn't the only creation story from the ancient world
- Mesopotamia is full of ancient creation stories that all were meant to develop a worldview - and there are striking similarities between the

Genesis account and these other pagan world views but also massive difference that we will get into

Sumerian King List (18th century BC) - creation assumed, kingship comes down out of heaven - a series of 8 kings in 5 cities - a flood - kingship again after the flood, dynasties follow leading to modern times

Atrahasis Epic (18th century BC) - “when the gods instead of man did the work, bore the loads” - the great Anunnaki (senior god) made the Igigi, a group of junior gods to do the work - they went on strike and humans were created to do the hard work for them - the gods killed one of their own and mixed his blood and flesh with clay and split to make humans in 7 couples - human were noisy and disturbed the gods rest - so they sent plagues and famine and eventually a flood to control the population - certain gods spared Atrahasis who made a boat and saved animals and some people from the flood

Eridu Genesis (16th century BC) - creation, and cities are instituted - alienation occurs - there is a flood and an ark - a new start leading to modern times

- all of these ancient cultures had worldview stories, origin stories, and the people who heard these tales and believed these tales would derive from them a stance towards their life in the world - worldview questions - Where did we come from? What am I here for? What is the meaning of life?
- so Genesis is answering these worldview questions - among all of these nations and all of these stories, Moses writes down the 1 true story, about the 1 true God. And Genesis answers these worldview questions

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

- All-right so with that kind of background let's dive into Genesis chapter 1.

Genesis 1:1 - “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

- so here is the very first words of the Bible - in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth

- I love that right out of the gate, no effort is made to prove the existence of God - it is simply affirmed as a fact to believe - again because in ancient times nobody was an atheist - that's a new idea
- But Genesis says in the beginning, there was God - and now as we dive into this book, let us show who this God is - and what he is like
- In the beginning confirms that there was a beginning point to the universe - which science has confirmed - the universe isn't eternal - it had a beginning
- And the word "create" used in verse 1, that verb is "Bara" in Hebrew and it occurs 50 times in the OT - deity is always the subject or implied subject when this verb is used
- What that means is create - "bara" is inherently a divine activity that humans cannot perform
- So what did God create? The heavens and the earth - this is an example of a merism - expressing totality through 2 contrasting parts - so heavens and earth is a way of saying in the beginning, God created everything.
- so here's what fascinating - our dominant worldview in the west is naturalism - the idea that only the natural exists - what we can see, hear, smell, touch, taste - only the physical - there is no spiritual realm, there is no God - only the natural exists
- So atheists or biological evolutionists or naturalists have to answer those same worldview questions - now no one was there in the beginning - none of us witnessed the beginning of the universe - so regardless of what your worldview is you are making assumptions and faith claims based on evidence
- That's what faith is - looking at evidence and then making a belief statement or believing in something when you don't know 100%
- So the naturalists worldview of where everything came from is nobody X nothing equals everything
- Because there is no creator, there is no purpose or design to the universe and there was nothing - and through the Big Bang and billions of years of luck and chance we got to everything we see today
- So really the holy trinity of evolution is matter, time and chance
- Jacques Monod - "Man is alone in the universe's unfeeling immensity, out of which he emerged by chance...Chance alone is at the source of every innovation, of all creation in the biosphere. Pure chance,

absolutely free but blind, is at the very root of the stupendous edifice of evolution.” (Nobel prize winner in biochemistry)

- Chance is not a force! It cannot be the cause of anything
- The only legitimate use of the word chance is mathematical probability - if you flip a coin again and again, 50-50 chance it will come up tails
- But “chance” is not the force that can actually flip the coin - chance is not an intellect that designs the patterns of probabilities - chance determines nothing - it does not exist as a force or a cause
- And when you look at thermodynamics, physics, biology - it all suggests that chance simply cannot be the determinative force that has brought about the order and interdependence we see in the universe
- now here is also what is interesting. Herbert Spencer, who was a huge Darwin advocate said there were ultimately 5 scientific ideas or categories that comprise of everything to scientific examination: Time, Force, Action, Space, Matter
- Now right out of the gate there is a problem - because human intellect and emotion don't fit into any of these categories
- But even if you play by science's games, genesis 1:1 fits all of these 5 categories that comprise all scientific examination:

Time - In the beginning

Force - God

Action - Created

Space - the heavens

Matter - the earth

Verse 2 - “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

- so verse 2 gives us some more information here.
- The earth was “without form” and “void”
- In Hebrew that is “tohu wa bohu”
- Both of those words are nouns and they have a wide range of meaning
- The word bohu appears 3 times in the OT and always in conjunction with tohu. So it appears in Genesis 1:2 and then also in:

Isaiah 34:11 -“He shall stretch the plumb line of confusion (tohu) over it, and the plumb line of emptiness.” (Bohu)

Jeremiah 4:23 - "I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form (tohu) and void; (bohu) and to the heavens, and they had no light."

- now the word tohu appears 20 times in the OT and it can stand on its own - and it usually describes something as non-functional and unproductive
- It appears 11 times in the book of Isaiah (we won't read them all)
- It appears in Deuteronomy 32:10 - used in parallel with desert and wilderness
- appears in Job 6:18 indicating desert
- Used in Isaiah 24:10 to describe a deserted city
- figuratively this word is used to describe something without substance or reality or something being groundless

So what does this mean? God creates the heaven and earth and the earth is tohu wa bohu - without form and void - a desert wasteland and darkness was over the face of the deep?

- scholars have debated lots about how verses 1-2 connected to the rest of the creation account?
- Does vs. 1-2 describe something that came to be after God created an originally perfect universe?
- Does it expand and clarify the shape of the earth when God first created it?
- Does vs. 2 describe the situation before God begins his actual creation described in vs. 3 and onward
- So an interesting theory is what is called the Gap Theory
- Some scholars believe vs. 1 describes an original flawless creation - and then something catastrophic happened between vs. 1 and 2 - perhaps Satan's fall from heaven? And creation became without form and void
- And then God starts almost a 2nd creation - a recreation which is described in vs. 3 and onward
- my view is verses 1-2 serve as introduction to the book - almost a title, providing an alternative origin story to those of the other nations
- Vs. 1-2 are background to the narrative while vs. 3 starts the 6 days of creation
- In the beginning serves as a literary intro to the rest of the chapter



- Because in the beginning God created the heavens and earth, is concluded in 2:1 - "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished..."
- now here's why vs. 1-2 is there - the ancient world thought in terms of naming, separating, and assigning functions and roles in an ordered system
- So in the creation account in Genesis you see all these things that would have made sense to the ancient mind:
  - God creating order
  - God naming things
  - God separating things
  - God assigning functions and roles
- here's what is cool about vs. 1-2: in every other creation narrative there is some kind of conflict that brings about creation
- Babylonian lore - Tiamat was the belligerent and monstrous ocean goddess - the very personification of evil
- And Marduk kills her, splits her corpse lengthwise like a shellfish and creates heaven and earth from those 2 parts
- All of the ancient creation narratives are about some kind of conflict
- Here, in Genesis there is no conflict - God simply issues a command and creation complies
- Even in verse 2 - it says darkness was over the face of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters
- YET, the deep is not personified - its not a threat to God - its inanimate
- And the the Spirit of the God - the RUAH of God - the Holy Spirit is hovering over the face of the waters
- So verses 1-2 is setting up what we are going to hear in the rest of the chapter - and in 2 short verses, the Genesis creation narrative is strikingly different from every other ancient creation narrative:
- there is 1 God
- There is no conflict