

“Thoughts from Israel”
Creation
Epicenter of the New Testament Church
Genesis 1:1–2
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We will be looking at a number of passages in this study but I want to start by looking at Genesis 1. This is the Word of God. It's the truth. Genesis 1:1–2 says [1] *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. [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.* The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This study is a sermon hash. Hash is where you get some good vegetables and meat and they are mixed together so in this study I am putting what I think are two very important things together that probably don't seem like they go together but they are in this study. This study will be a bridge to my next series on the book of Habakkuk that prays for revival which goes along with our series of lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship.

This passage in Genesis covers the doctrine of creation and would recommend to you Dr. Douglas Kelly's book Creation and Change. It is a wonderful exposition of the first 11 chapters of Genesis with a focus on the first 3 chapters. Another book I would recommend is by Rick Phillips titled The God of Creation and is an exposition of the God of creation primarily dealing with scientific matters but it is rooted in Biblical exposition of the doctrine of creation. A third recommendation is by Thomas Purifoy Jr titled *Is Genesis History?* and it's a film that is extremely well done that includes a number of scientists and theologians.

Now I'd like to give you seven observations concerning the doctrine of creation coupled with a few thoughts from these opening verses in Genesis. One reason creation is important is that creation reveals our God. That is who He is. Night after night, day after day creation pours forth the message of who our God is. Does it reveal who our God is exhaustively? No. Does it reveal who God is to the extent that the Scripture does? No. Does creation reveal the Gospel? No, but it does reveal who God is and that He is to be worshiped because of who He is.

As it says in Genesis 1:1, if God created the heavens and the earth then that means His fingerprints are upon it. That means who He is shows up in what He has done. That is not only true in creation but there are fundamentally or foundationally three great acts of God and they are creation, redemption and providence. You can know God from those three acts. One of the lines of a praise song said 'God, we praise You not simply for what You've done but for who You are.' I understand the motivation and sensibility behind that but that is one of those things you really need to think through before you write it down as a lyric because there is no separation between who God is and what He does. What God does tells you who God is. Let's look at Romans 1.

Romans 1:16–17 says [16] *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith.* So God's great act of redemption reveals His righteousness. What God does reveals. So what about creation?

Romans 1:18 says [18] *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.* So God's providence in life reveals who He is in His holiness and that sin has a consequence even in the acts of providence. Now the ultimate judgment of God is not revealed in God's providence but the fact of God's judgment and the warning of an ultimate judgment is because sin has consequences. Break God's law and God's law breaks you. It is that simple. When we manifest our sin nature by sitting or suppressing the truth of who God is then that has consequences in life, culture and society.

Paul goes on to make this clear in the next part. What truth are they suppressing? Romans 1:19–32 says [19] *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. [21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

[24] *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, [25] because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature (or creation) rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.* (So instead of *latría* that is God-centered worship they do *idolatria* which is false worship.)

[26] *For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; [27] and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

[28] *And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. [29] They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, [30] slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, [31] foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. [32] Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.*

Here is the song of despair and devolution of a culture. It has three stanzas and it all begins by denying the Creator and worshipping the creation that is being materialists instead of worshipping God, being theists and praising God, the One who has made all that exists. When we deny God as Creator it has a death spiral of life and culture attached to it.

So why does Romans 1:16 start off 'I'm not ashamed of the Gospel'? He is basically saying he loves the Gospel. It is similar when I say I love my wife. I don't ever remember introducing my wife by saying 'Hi, I am not ashamed of my wife Cindy.' You can't fully understand why he says that until you see as he goes on to show a culture that denies the Creator, His redeeming work, creating work and providential work. When a culture does that it goes through three steps. One it goes to idolatry, the exaltation of self and then it goes to humanism, the exaltation of humanity and creation until it eventually gets to a professed atheism and every step has a consequence.

The consequence of idolatry is when a culture is turned over to sexual immorality and promiscuity. Then when it goes from idolatry to humanism, serving the individual to humanity

to the creation then it moves to sexual perversion. Finally it moves to social approval of the very sins of bringing death to lives, cultures, marriages and society as men and women shamelessly embrace it. Then they shame those who would speak to it to silence them. Then you have a decision and the decision has come to us because we're at the third stanza.

I was born in the first stanza of the Hefner celebration of promiscuity. I have watched the persistence of sexual perversion to the declaration of social approval. While sexual promiscuity, sexual perversion and social approval of sexual perversion and promiscuity all deserve God's judgment you need to see in the text that they are God's judgment. Other than the word 'depart from Me you workers of lawlessness' these are the most frightening words to me in the Bible – God gave them over – and even the restraints of common grace are removed as society devolves into the death spiral that is picture here. What is at the core of it? They would not affirm the God that created them.

So let's go back to Genesis 1. To deny there is a Creator you profess to be wise but become a fool. I remember in my unbelieving life before I came to Christ I wanted to be an atheist so bad to get rid of the convictions of all of those things growing up but I just didn't have enough faith to be an atheist. While I think you tenderly, appropriately and appointedly walk with professed atheism in evangelism and apologetics the reality that you know is that atheism is a sophisticated journey into imbecility. You really have to work hard at being an atheist where nothing created something and then the something said let's reproduce ourselves when there wasn't an ourselves and then it ordered itself. It is totally non-scientific. There is no case of spontaneous generation of life or the ordering of life by mutation to higher standards. It is bad science but you have to work at it and then shame others who would speak against it into silence. That's why I believe this doctrine of creation is absolutely crucial.

I don't know that when I look at creation that there is a Father, Son and Holy Spirit but I do know that when I look in the Word of God there is a Trinity because God acts as a Trinity. The Father authored the creation through the Son and the Son accomplished creation through the superintending work of the Holy Spirit. The same thing was done in redemption. The Father authored the salvation of His elect. The Son accomplished the salvation of His elect and the Spirit of God applied the salvation of His elect. It is true in the act of providence. The Father has authored all things to be for our good and His glory in the matters and the affairs of life. He does go through the intercession and mediatorial work of Christ and Christ does His work through the intercession work of the Holy Spirit who works in us with groaning too deep to be uttered. I would not know all this without the Word of God but I would know the reality of God and even though the creation doesn't explain all that there is about God it does declare the reality of God and that He is to be worshipped in all of His power.

Another observation from Genesis 1 is the self-existence of God. The text does not explain the origin of God but it explains the origin of creation including us. The given is God. God is the uncaused cause and Creator of all that exists. That is why He says to Moses 'I Am that I Am' (Exodus 3:14). God is self-existing – Genesis 1:1–2 says *[1] In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. [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.*

People ask me 'when did God begin' and the answer is that you can't put God in the boxes He has made. He doesn't have a beginning. He begins beginnings. He doesn't have an end. He brings things to a conclusion. God cannot fit in the box of space and time. In the creation of the heavens and the earth we have space, time and matter but God doesn't fit in those boxes. He made them. I AM that I AM.

Your only other choice is another trinity. That is the choice that Carl Sagan made when he wrote the Cosmos. The cosmos was his confession of faith. The opening words in his work are 'that's all there is, that's all there was, that's all there ever will be.' Space, time and matter are eternal here. We say that as a doxology that God is, was and is to come. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. But the atheist is ultimately a materialist and the trinity to them is space, time and matter or self-existing and if you give enough space and time to the matter this will result.

That's why I believe believing the Bible is not a leap of faith into the darkness but it's just walking in the light. It makes sense. When I go through a field and I see a turtle on a fence post, it doesn't take a rocket scientist that I'm not the first one that walked through that field. If I pick up a watch it doesn't take much for me to know there is a watch maker. Yet I'm supposed to look at this and declare that it exists out of eternality of space, time and matter that given enough time this exists.

There are three very precious moments to me in my life to bring me to my conversion, even in the midst of my rebellion. One of them happened when I was laying in my bed at 14 years of age. For some reason that night I could feel and hear my heart beating and it struck me that 'I don't care how young you think you are, you're not going to be there forever, and there is coming a day that it won't beat, what will you do and where will you be in that day?'

The second moment was when I was on a mission's trip and the missionary wanted to show me something that was beautiful and he got me on a boat on the Nile River. It was one of those beautiful evenings and just seeing the myriads of stars and that reminded me of the very first moment when I was 10 years old. I went out to the back yard after supper and laid down on the grass when the glorious moment that the dusk becomes night and the stars begin to pop out. I looked and looked and thought how vast the universe is. The first thing I felt was how small I was and the next thing I felt was how alone I would be if I didn't know the Lord and I needed to know the Lord.

I was not converted in two of those times but I had been converted when I was sailing down the Nile River but I remember the vastness of the universe as I looked at the glory of His creation in those moments. That immediately made me think of the transcendence of God and then the imminence of this God who comes and ministers to us and the fact that I need Him. This brings me to another observation.

Another observation is that God does not need me. God existed before me. I was not made out of any need that God has. God is self-sufficient which then carries over into my redemption. God didn't save me because He needed me. God saved me because His unfathomable, relentless, unstoppable love for me, even though it cost Him to freely give His Son and His Son to freely give Himself. There is an inseparable relationship between God as Creator and God as Redeemer.

Another observation from the text is that God is El Shaddai. He is Almighty. All of this comes into existence because He brought it into existence. He brought it out of nothing and brought everything into existence at that point in time when He made everything. We know three things when God brought everything into existence from nothing. We are made in the image of God and therefore we are creative but we don't bring anything into existence from nothing. Every time we produce or achieve something we have started with stuff that has been given to us for we can't bring something from nothing. God is not simply creative but God creates.

Here are the three things we know. Number one is the earth was without form and void. Another way to say this is the earth was unformed and unfilled. The words in Hebrew are *tohu bohu*. The second thing we know is that darkness was over the face of the deep. Light was not revealed upon the creation yet. Thirdly, is the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters, this darkness covered creation. That is important because that explains what God does in the next six days.

There was a theologian by the name of Thomas Chambers who was somewhat of a geologist himself. He lived in the early 1800s when geology was being explored and he created from this Genesis text what came to be known as the gap theory which was adopted by Schofield and was popularized in the dispensational Schofield study Bible. The theory is that there was a gap of maybe thousands or millions of years between the time God created everything and when He ordered up everything and in that Satan fell with all this confusion as we see the darkness and the face of the deep. The only problem is that the Hebrew construction won't allow that because it is very clear that there is nothing consecutive there for there is a descriptive statement of everything as it is made. There is nothing there that says after God created Satan fell and caused all this darkness there. It is simply stating that as God created everything it was unformed, unfilled and in that moment of creation, not later, darkness was over the creation and then the Spirit of God hovered over that which was created.

Then the next six days happen which is the second most important week in the world right after the week of my Savior's passion week for there wouldn't have been any reason for the passion without this week. The first three days of this creation week are forming everything and the last three days are filling what is formed. Darkness is about to be dispelled. Unformed is about to be formed. Unfilled is about to be filled and the Spirit of God is superintending all that God is doing in and through His Son Jesus who by Him all things were created and for Him all things were created. So let's see from Genesis 1 how this comes about.

Genesis 1:3–5 says [3] *And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. [4] And God saw that the light was good. And God 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.* So here He has formed the pattern of the day with light and darkness.

Genesis 1:6–8 says [6] *And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." [7] And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. [8] And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.* So in this day He creates the heavenly canopy and the waters upon the earth by separating them.

Genesis 1:9–13 says [9] *And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. [10] God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. [11] And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. [12] The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. [13] And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.*

So in the first three days God has formed day and night, the heavens above and the waters below and then thirdly He has gathered the waters into one place. What seems to be here is a single continent that is surrounded by the waters of an ocean in this original act of creation. So

God has handled the *tohu*, where He has formed everything and now He is going to handle the *bohu*, where He will fill everything.

Genesis 1:14–19 says [14] *And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, [15] and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. [16] And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. [17] And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, [18] to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. [19] And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.* Here God sets up the governing of the day with the sun and the moon.

People say here that this is scientifically out of order but it is if you don't remember that God is light. God is not dependent upon the sun for the light for God makes the light. Then He puts in place what He will use to bring forth light and to reflect light which would be the moon upon the earth itself.

Genesis 1:20–23 says [20] *And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” [21] So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. [22] And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” [23] And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.* So now God has filled up the land and the seas.

Genesis 1:24–31 says [24] *And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. [25] And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

[26] *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

[27] *So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

[28] *And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” [29] And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. [30] And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. [31] And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

So God has now filled and the last thing He puts in place is man made in His image, male and female, with three commands to subdue the earth (the sanctity of work), to be fruitful and multiple (the sanctity of sexuality within marriage) and thirdly they are to superintend this home that He has made for us to His glory. All of this has been put into place for us.

People ask me if I think God created all this in six days and yes I do. Do I realize that the world day is used four different ways in the book of Genesis, yes I do. Do I believe that there is room for disagreement within believers on this, yes I do. I stand with the Westminster Divines on this and that is was all created in six days. What about all of the age? Everything that is there has the appearance of age so I believe God put the appearance of age and secondly with the actions of God in His creation such as the flood, divine acts of judgment such as Sodom and Gomorrah there is produced an appearance of age.

I do not embrace the fact of uniformitarianism where it is as it always has been. I think God has intervened. If I have a faucet that's dripping and I see that I've lost an inch of top soil and come back the next day and see another inch gone and by the third day I've lost ten inches of top soil, then what happened? Someone cut the faucet on for it wasn't that I missed seven days. Well, God has cut the faucet on and we're told He has cut the faucet on when He made valleys into mountains and mountains into valleys and He brought up the fountains of the deep. When He does that there is the appearance of age.

So I believe these things are as God has revealed and I believe they can be scientifically supported with the presuppositions that there is a God and that God has been active in His creation. Adam was not made an embryo. He had the appearance of age. When God made the bushes and trees He didn't make them as seeds for they had the appearance of age. In other words, if there was a tree it had rings. That didn't mean the tree had lived those years for that's how God made it when He made it. I believe this creation set out before is directly related to the world and life view. I do not believe that origins are an incidental issue.

The other part of the hash I was going to talk about I don't have time to go into but I will tell you it. The epicenter of Christianity was a place called the Upper Room. The last Passover took place in this room. The first Lord's Supper took place in this room. The washing of the Disciples' feet took place in this room. One of the six sermons recorded in the Gospels from Jesus was given here. It is known as the Upper Room Discourse. That's a lot of stuff to happen in one room. Then Jesus sent them back there for a prayer meeting where the Holy Spirit fell upon them and the fulfillment of Pentecost. Then they went from there and 3,000 were converted and the Gospel took off. In less than 25 years the Gospel would be all the way up in Europe and gone to North Africa turning the world upside down from that little room. Right in that room was 120 after the ascension of Jesus where the Spirit of God fell upon them.

The parents of John Mark owned that Upper Room. After James the brother of John was killed and Peter was taken off to prison, it is right in that room in Acts 12 where they were praying for Peter to get delivered. He was delivered and came and knocked on the door and they couldn't believe it was Peter. That was answered prayer. It was the place where the core of the church would meet at Jerusalem but then that monumental moment came when Judas had to be replaced and right there in that room they replaced him with Mathias. This is the Disciple that my grandson was named after. I have stood there many times in my trips to Israel and it is such a glorious place to stand there and think of all this that took place in that room.

Don't despise the day of small places or small things. Nothing is small when it is in the hands of God. There was the epicenter of the Gospel earthquake that is still sending the tremors around the world. I hope this study has given you some things to think about. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the time we could be together in Your Word. We give You praise and thanksgiving for You are our Creator. You are the Lord of Creation. Thank You for

revealing to us. Not only have You created us in Your image and all that exists around us but You have saved us to give You praise and You sustain us so that every breath might praise God from whom all blessings flow, in Jesus' Name, Amen.