

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 1

GENESIS: INTRODUCTION

ESV STUDY BIBLE: THE ENGLISH TITLE "GENESIS" COMES FROM THE GREEK TRANSLATION OF THE PENTATEUCH AND MEANS "ORIGIN," A VERY APT TITLE BECAUSE GENESIS IS ALL ABOUT ORIGINS—OF THE WORLD, OF THE HUMAN RACE, OF SIN, AND OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE. THE HEBREW TITLE IS TRANSLATED "IN THE BEGINNING," USING THE FIRST PHRASE IN THE BOOK.

TRADITIONALLY GENESIS, LIKE THE REST OF THE PENTATEUCH, HAS BEEN ASCRIBED TO MOSES. THE OTHER BOOKS OF THE PENTATEUCH RELATE MOSES' LIFE AND HIS ROLE IN BRINGING ISRAEL TO THE BORDERS OF CANAAN, AND PARTS OF THESE BOOKS ARE EXPRESSLY SAID TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY MOSES (E.G., NUM. 33:2; DEUT. 31:24). GENESIS IS CLEARLY AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS THAT FOLLOW, SO IT IS NATURAL TO SUPPOSE THAT IF MOSES WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR COMPOSITION, HE MUST ALSO HAVE BEEN THE AUTHOR OF GENESIS (CF. JOHN 5:46). THIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE PENTATEUCH'S ORIGIN WAS THE VIEW OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS FROM PRE-CHRISTIAN TIMES UNTIL THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. (SOME HAVE DISPUTED THIS IN MORE RECENT DECADES.)"

SO MUCH OF THE REST OF THE BIBLE IS RELATED TO THE STORIES, CHARACTERS AND THEMES WE WILL READ IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS. IN MANY WAYS, THE FIRST BOOK IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT. AND WITH THAT WE BEGIN WITH THE BEGINNING...

GENESIS 1:1-5 - THE BEGINNING → DAY 1: LIGHT, DAY & NIGHT

V. 2 - "FORMLESS AND VOID" - BEFORE GOD CREATED, THERE WAS DISORDER AND CHAOS, AND PART OF GOD'S CREATIVE WORK IS BRINGING ORDER TO THE CREATION. ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS WHO HAD A "CREATION STORY" OF THEIR OWN WOULD OFTEN DESCRIBE THEIR DEITY AS ONE OF CHAOS AND DISORDER, UNRULY AND UNPREDICTABLE - THIS WAS NOT THE CASE OF THE GOD OF THE BIBLE. HE WAS (IS) THE GOD OF ORDER AND AS WE WILL READ ON GOODNESS.

THE FACT THAT THE FIRST THING GOD CREATES IS LIGHT BOLSTERS THIS POINT. LIGHT IS VERY MUCH ASSOCIATED WITH GOODNESS, ORDER AND VISIBILITY AS OPPOSED TO EVIL (DARKNESS), DISORDER (FORMLESS), AND CONFUSION (VOIDNESS).

V. 5 - ONE DAY - GENESIS TELLS US ABOUT MANY FOUNDATIONAL THINGS. HERE WE LEARN THAT THE STANDARD MEASUREMENT OF TIME WILL BE IN "DAYS" = ONE EVENING, ONE MORNING. THIS PATTERN WILL CONTINUE THROUGHOUT THE CREATION NARRATIVE.

GOD CREATED THINGS THROUGH SPEAKING THEM. GOD "SAID" AND IT WAS. WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT THE CREATOR GOD THE READER FIRST ENCOUNTERS IN THE FIRST FEW VERSES OF THE BIBLE?!

GENESIS 1:6-8 - DAY 2: "EXPANSE"/UNIVERSE/HEAVENS

FROM THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN IN THESE VERSES, THERE WOULD APPEAR TO BE A VAST EXPANSE OF AIR (AND THE REST OF CREATION) WITHIN A LARGER REALM THAT IS FILLED WITH WATER. IN OTHER WORDS, THE UNIVERSE YOU AND I LIVE IN AND OBSERVE COULD ACTUALLY BE A "BUBBLE" SURROUNDED BY WATER.

PSALM 148:3-5 - PRAISE HIM, SUN AND MOON; PRAISE HIM, ALL STARS OF LIGHT! 4 PRAISE HIM, HIGHEST HEAVENS, AND THE WATERS THAT ARE ABOVE THE HEAVENS! 5 LET THEM PRAISE THE NAME OF THE LORD, FOR HE COMMANDED AND THEY WERE CREATED.

GENESIS 1:9-13 - DAY 3: DRY LAND, VEGETATION

THE CREATION FOCUS NOW CENTERS ON THE EARTH ITSELF (DAY 1 AND 2 FOCUSED ON MORE UNIVERSAL AND CREATIVE ORDER DETAILS). GOD SEPARATED THE WATERS INTO ONE PLACE AND DRY LAND APPEARS. THE SEPARATION OF WATER AND LAND IS CALLED THE EARTH AND SEA. HE'S NOT TALKING ABOUT GALAXIES AND PLANETS, HE'S TALKING ABOUT THE EARTH.

IT IS MIND-BOGGLING TO CONSIDER THAT THERE IS A VAST AND MASSIVE UNIVERSE AROUND AND BEYOND US AND THE FOCUS OF THE CREATOR IS THIS SMALL PLANET AND THE DETAILS OF ITS EXISTENCE.

ON THIS NEWLY CREATED MATTER CALLED "EARTH", "VEGETATION" WILL APPEAR. THIS IS THE GRASS, TREES, AND OTHER PLANTS. THE EARTH WASN'T GOING TO JUST BE DIRT AND WATER, BUT UNIQUE VEGETATION WILL THRIVE. THESE PLANTS WILL REPRODUCE THEMSELVES (RATHER THAN NEED TO BE CONSTANTLY RE-CREATED BY GOD) BY "YIELDING SEED". THAT'S AMAZING.

LET'S PAUSE FOR A MOMENT AND CONSIDER THE BEAUTY OF THE VEGETATION OF THIS PLANET. NOT ONLY DO THESE PLANTS REPRODUCE THEMSELVES THROUGH SEED, THEY POSSESS MANY COLORS, SIZES AND SHAPES, AS WELL AS FRAGRANCES AND FRUITS! GOD CREATED ROSES TO SMELL GOOD, FOR PALM TREES TO BE FLEXIBLE, FOR WATERMELONS TO GROW WITH HARD OUTER CASING AND SWEET AND BRIGHT EDIBLE FLESH!

GENESIS 1:14-19 - DAY 4: SUN, MOON & STARS

GOD CREATES HEAVENLY LIGHTS WHICH WILL HELP INDICATE THE DIVISION OF DAY AND NIGHT (SOMETHING WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN ESTABLISHED BY GOD, V. 5). CONTINUED WITH HIS FOCUS ON PLANET EARTH, THERE WILL BE A LARGER LIGHT IN THE SKY DURING THE DAYTIMES (WE CALL IT THE SUN) AND SMALLER, LESS BRIGHT LIGHTS AT NIGHT (THE MOON AND STARS).

THINK ABOUT HOW POWERFUL THE SUN IS. ON A CLOUDY DAY, THERE IS STILL ABUNDANT LIGHT. THE SUN GIVES LIGHT, WARMTH AND TELLS US WHAT TIME IT IS.

THE MOON LIGHTS UP THE NIGHT SO IT'S NOT PITCH BLACK (A PROBLEM FOR PRE-ELECTRICITY GENERATIONS). IT TELLS US WHAT TIME OF THE MONTH IT IS, AND REGULATES TIDAL CONDITIONS ON THE SEAS AROUND THE WORLD (A DETAIL THAT THIS CHAPTER DOESN'T TELL US BUT WAS DISCOVERED LATER).

AND THE STARS CAN BE USED AS NAVIGATION AIDS, TELL US ABOUT DIFFERENT SEASONS AND PROVIDE A NIGHTLY CANVAS TO BE MESMERIZED BY.

GENESIS 1:20-25 - DAY 5: CREATIONS IN THE SEA, AIR AND LAND

FROM THIS TEXT IT APPEARS THAT GOD CREATED ALL OF THE ANIMALS AT ONCE. ANSWERING THAT AGE OLD QUESTION "WHICH CAME FIRST, THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG?" ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, THE CHICKEN DID, ALONG WITH EVERY OTHER LAND AND SEA DWELLER AND THE CREATURES OF THE SKY.

FROM "GREAT SEA MONSTERS" (V. 21) TO THE SMALLEST WINGED INSECT, GOD CREATED A VAST AND DIVERSE SET OF ANIMALS.

HE "BLESSED THEM" AND TOLD THEM TO "BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY." THIS DIRECTIVE FROM THE CREATOR GIVES ANIMALS THEIR PURPOSE - THEY ARE TO THRIVE AND FILL THE EARTH WITH MORE OF THEMSELVES. ANIMALS OF ALL KIND, LIKE THE VEGETATION FROM DAY 3 WILL REPOPULATE THEMSELVES RATHER THAN HAVE ONE LIFESPAN OR NEED TO BE RECREATED BY THEIR CREATOR.

LET'S THINK ABOUT THE DIVERSITY OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOM. BLUE WHALES ARE 80-100 FEET LONG AND WEIGH 300,000 LBS. CHEETAHS CAN RUN 65-75 MPH IN SHORT BURSTS. WANDERING ALBATROSSES HAVE BEEN TRACKED FLYING OVER OCEANS NEARLY 10,000 MILES BEFORE RETURNING TO LAND (THAT'S LIKE FLYING NON-STOP FROM TEXAS TO AUSTRALIA). MACAW BIRDS ARE BRIGHT REDS, BLUE AND YELLOWS. KANGAROOS CARRY THEIR CHILDREN IN A SPECIAL FRONT POUCH. COWS PRODUCE MILK THAT COMES OUT OF THEIR UDDERS. CHAMELEONS CHANGE COLORS. WOW.

WHY NOT JUST MAKE ONE BROWN SNAIL? BECAUSE GOD IS AMAZING AND HE SHOWS HIS POWER AND INTELLIGENCE THROUGH THE REMARKABLE DIVERSITY OF HIS CREATION. AND ALL OF THIS COMES INTO EXISTENCE BY JUST THE POWER OF HIS WORD.

GENESIS 1:26-31 - DAY 6: HUMANS

THE LAST THING THAT GOD WILL CREATE IN CHAPTER 1 IS HUMANS. TWO VARIETIES ARE MENTIONED: MALE AND FEMALE. IN THIS INSTANCE WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT THIS 6TH DAY OF CREATION IS NOT LIKE THE OTHERS. IT IS SPECIAL FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS.

LINGUISTICALLY WE SHOULD NOTICE A DEPARTURE FROM THE PATTERN WE HAVE READ SO FAR ON DAYS 1-5. RATHER THAN GOD SPEAKING IN A VACUUM, HE INVITES US INTO HIS THRONE ROOM AND SPEAKS AS A SOVEREIGN RULER MAKING A DECLARATION TO HIS HEAVENLY COURT.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD? FROM THIS SECTION ALONE IT'S NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR. DOES IT MEAN WE LOOK LIKE WHAT GOD LOOKS LIKE IN APPEARANCE? DOES IT MEAN HUMANS REFLECT "GODLINESS" IN OUR ACTIONS/BEHAVIORS? THE TEXT DOESN'T CLEAR THIS UP. HOWEVER, WE DO GET SOME HINTS FROM THE TEXT.

1 - HUMANS ARE SPECIAL. NO OTHER PART OF CREATION IS SPOKEN OF IN THIS WAY. THE ANIMALS AREN'T IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, NOR ARE THE STARS AND THE TREES.

2 - HUMANS HAVE AUTHORITY OVER THE EARTH (LIKE GOD DOES). ANIMALS WERE TOLD TO BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY, AS WERE HUMANS, BUT HUMANS WERE ALSO CHARGED TO "SUBDU" AND "RULE" THE EARTH AND ITS CREATURES. ALSO THE PLANTS ARE GIVEN ~~TO~~ HUMANS FOR FOOD (THUS HUMANS ARE SUPERIOR TO PLANTS TOO). UNDER GOD, THE HUMANS ARE GIVEN DOMINION OVER THE EARTH. IN THAT WAY, THEY ARE LIKE GOD, OR "IN HIS IMAGE."

IF WE ALLOW SCRIPTURE ALONE TO HELP US UNDERSTAND SCRIPTURE, THE OTHER TIMES IN THE BIBLE WHERE THIS PLURAL PRONOUN IS USED BY GOD "LET US..." WE SEE HIM CLEARLY SPEAKING TO "ANGELIC BEINGS" IN HIS HEAVENLY THRONE ROOM. (EX: ISAIAH 6, 1 KINGS 22:19-23). MOST VISIONS OF GOD'S THRONE ROOM, HE IS NOT ALONE (EX: REVELATION 4-5). GOD IS THE ONE CREATING, BUT WHEN IT CAME TIME TO CREATE HUMANS, HE MAKES A ROYAL DECLARATION. THIS IS VERY SIGNIFICANT.

AS THE **NASB STUDY BIBLE NOTE SAYS OF GENESIS 1:26-27**: "GOD SPEAKS AS THE CREATOR/KING ANNOUNCING HIS CROWNING WORK TO THE MEMBERS OF HIS HEAVENLY COURT". WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT GOD'S OPINIONS OF HUMANS!

THIS IDEA OF "DOMINION" ISN'T TO IMPLY CREATION IS SOLELY HERE FOR OUR BENEFIT - "WE'RE IN CHARGE, WE CAN DO WHATEVER WE WANT!" INSTEAD, THE WHOLE OF CREATION BELONGS TO THE CREATOR AND WE HUMANS ARE MERELY STEWARDS OF THAT GREAT WORK, YES, WITH AN AUTHORITY OVER IT (RATHER THAN IT HAVING AUTHORITY OVER US), BUT MINDFUL TO WHOM IT REALLY ALL BELONGS. WE ENJOY THE FRUIT OF

OUR LABOR, THE BEAUTY OF THE WORLD AROUND US, THE SIGHTS, SMELLS AND TASTES OF LIFE, AND THE END GOAL SHOULD BE TO SAY - "WOW, GOD, YOU ARE SO GOOD."

WITH EACH RECOGNITION OF THE BEAUTY, COMPLEXITY AND WONDER OF THE CREATION, WE ECHO THE GENESIS 1, REFRAIN AND AGREE THAT YES, IT IS "VERY GOOD!"

THE CHAPTER ENDS WITH A DECLARATION THAT ALL THAT HAS BEEN MADE SO FAR (THIS WILL ACTUALLY END BE THE END OF THE CREATION) IS NOT JUST GOOD, BUT "VERY GOOD". IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT AS TO WHAT GOD MADE BEING RIGHT AND PURPOSEFUL AND GOOD, IT IS CLEARED UP WITH THESE 6 "GOODS (*TOV*)" AND FINAL "VERY GOOD (*TOV MAY-OD*)".