

“The Creation” (Genesis: In The Beginning – Pt. 1)

(Genesis 1:1-5)

- **Origins**

- To really understand a story, you have to understand the beginning. Beginnings answer the big questions like: *Where are we? When is it? Who are we? What’s the problem?* In Hebrew, the first book of the Bible is called **“Ber-e-sheet,” which means, *In the beginning***, the opening words. We call it “Genesis,” which, again, means *beginning, origin*. If you want to understand the Bible, if you want to understand your life, listen to this book, because it tells us *our beginning*. The fact is, many people *don’t* understand why they’re here, who they are, what the problem is.
- I’m reminded of classic stories where a character is born into exile or captivity, separated from their true home, only to discover later who they really are. They call it the archetype of the “*Lost Heir*” or “*Hidden Royalty*”—stories like *Anastasia, Rapunzel, King Arthur, Sleeping Beauty*.
- In the Chronicles of Narnia, *The Horse And His Boy* tells the story of Shasta, kidnaped from the king’s house as an infant, raised in a far-off land as a slave. When he comes of age, he meets Aslan face-to-face and finally reunites with his father, the King, and discovers where he came from, his true identity: he is a citizen of Narnia, a prince, an heir to the King.
- As humans, we find ourselves in a similar story. Discovering “the beginning” in Genesis is like coming back to our true home: it’s like God is telling us our real name, our real destiny, in a world that’s forgotten its story. We’re going to get so many things from studying Genesis, but one of the most powerful things will be rediscovering who God says we are. Because *this story is our story*. Before we dive in to chapter 1, the *very beginning*, let’s begin with prayer.

- **Faith vs. Science?**

- **“*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he called ‘night.’ And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.*” (Gen. 1:1-5)**
- Wow...so, this is where it all begins! The question is, where do we begin—where do we even *begin* to unpack such a foundational part of God’s Word? I’ll tell you where we often begin: We debate! We argue the details! *How long is a day? Do we have to read this literally? Do we need to base our understanding of Scripture on what science is discovering, or do we have to*

base our science on a literal interpretation of the Bible? Who's the most faithful? Who's right? Who's wrong?

- Tim Mackie from the Bible Project compares it to art historians arguing about the Mona Lisa: *Who was the woman? Is she smiling, or frowning? Was it painted in 1503 or 1513? How did da Vinci paint it without leaving any brushstrokes?* These are interesting questions, but they can distract us from the most important question: *What was the artist trying to communicate? What was his intention?* Do you think sometimes we do the same thing with Genesis?
- For what it's worth: the Hebrew word for "day," *yom*, is used over 2,000 times in the O.T. to describe *various* measures of time. Depending on context, it can mean a 24-hr. day, it can also mean a span of time, like "an age" or "era"—it's used both literally *and* figuratively. Thus, you have Peter in the N.T. saying, **"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."** (2 Pet. 3:8)
- Science is a human endeavor to understand the mechanics of creation from our perspective—and it's *constantly changing*.
- The point is to prove and disprove theories about how things work. Something we "know" today, in 100 years we could realize we got wrong, or only partially right. Scripture, on the other hand, is divinely initiated, God-revealed, *timeless* truth about who God is, who we are, why we're here, where we're going.
- Imagine if God gave Moses (the traditional author of Genesis) the "origin story" of the universe in the form of a 21st Century science text book. Would anyone understand it? Instead, He gave us something far more profound, something that has been passed down, through generations, across cultures and languages, because it's *God's true story of everything*.
- It's not that Genesis has nothing to say about science, we might discover all kinds of things the more we learn—but we shouldn't expect it to be like a science book, God gave us something greater than that. Whatever side of that debate you're on, if any, don't miss the forest for the trees. Amidst all the questions, make sure you try to hear what Genesis is saying *on its own terms* before you force it into our 21st-century mindset. *Look for the heart of the Author*.
- **Genesis In It's Day**
 - What you find in Genesis is a story of origins that is *so very different* from the other stories people have told throughout history. You find an eternal, uncreated creator, totally separate from but engaged with His creation, who makes everything out of nothing, brings order out of chaos, simply by the power of His Word and His Spirit.
 - Other cultures in ancient times had their own origin stories that are *lightyears apart* from Genesis. The Babylonian culture, a major power in Israel's day, had a creation story called

“Enuma Elish”. In this story, the universe emerges from the violent conflict of the gods: the physical world is formed with the *corpse* of a conquered deity. Another god is killed and his *blood* is mixed with dirt to create humans, so the gods can have *slaves* to rest from their labor.

- All the other ancient creation myths, from Babylon, Egypt, Greece, seem to share this idea of a *cosmic chaos* that gods *battle* over in order to establish their power and order. That’s how lots of people made sense of their story. (It’s also convenient propaganda for empires...)
- Now you read Genesis, and you see this God who creates peacefully out of His sovereignty, who is the only true God, whose creation is not an idol to be worshiped but a reflection of His glory. And after every step of creation God says *it is good*. There’s a beautiful progression and symmetry to this story: in days 1, 2 and 3 God creates spaces or habitats for creation (time and space, the heavens and the earth, the waters and dry land). Then days 4, 5 and 6 God creates the corresponding inhabitants (stars and planets, birds and fish, animals and people).
- Compare the Enuma Elish story of humans as slaves of the gods, with Genesis’ view of people:
“Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Gen. 1:26-27)
- By the end, after He makes people, God says *it is very good*. And God doesn’t sit back to say, now these creatures can serve me as my slaves: no, He says, I want you to *share in my work*, and I also want you to *share in my rest*.
- Did God need to rest because He was tired? Is He weak and limited like us? Of course not. This is a different kind of rest: in those days, a god or a king “rested” from their labor when the palace or temple was finished, enemies were defeated, and they took their seat on the throne to rule over a peaceful kingdom. God is resting on the 7th day because He’s seated on His throne, reigning over His creation—and God is generously inviting humans to *reign with Him* and *rest with Him*. Wow!
- The Bible says *this* is what the artist intended. *This* is your origin story, *this* is what you were made for. In the rest of Genesis, we’ll look the Fall, where it all went wrong, where we got “original sin”—but here God reminds us that in the beginning, *before* original sin, *there was original glory*. The rest of the Bible is how God is working out His plan with humans to get us back to that—it’s why Jesus came. That’s our story. The rest of Genesis will set the stage.

- **Einstein’s Mistake**

- Speaking of stories, we need to come back full-circle to that science and faith stuff. Did you know that the father of “the Big Bang Theory” was actually a catholic priest, and this same priest once convinced Albert Einstein of his biggest mistake? In 1915 Einstein published his groundbreaking “Theory of General Relativity”. His discoveries in the laws of physics could have pointed to a startling discovery: that the universe was constantly *expanding*.
- But in Einstein’s day the prevailing *assumption* was that *the universe, not God*, was the true constant—it was static, it had no beginning or end, it always was. So, Einstein created a “fudge factor” called “the cosmological constant” as an anchor in his equations to keep the universe “stationary.” But a decade later, a Belgian priest and physicist, Georges Lemaitre, would use Einstein’s equations and the discoveries of Edwin Hubble to show that the universe *is* continually expanding outward, and that motion had to rewind back to a single, infinitely dense point of origin. The evidence was showing that if you go back far enough, at some point, there was virtually nothing—and suddenly, there was *everything*.
- Einstein later saw this as one of his biggest blunders, and after listening to the Priest give a lecture on his findings, he said, “This is the most beautiful and satisfactory explanation of creation to which I have ever listened.” Today, this is the foundation of modern cosmology:
- That *everything* came from “*nothing*” in a sudden explosion of matter and energy. It’s taken thousands of years for science to catch up, but it sounds a lot like, “*Let there be light.*” A NASA scientist reflected on how jarring these discoveries were for the scientific community: **“For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.” (Robert Jastrow)**
- If Genesis can so powerfully speak to the origins and purpose of *all things*, this entire universe, don’t you think it can speak to *you*?
 - Do you accept *God’s true story about your life*, or have you been living from someone else’s story? Have you been living like the “lost heir,” the orphan, the slave?
 - Do you know you were made in God’s image to reign in God’s Kingdom? Do you believe that at your beginning, when you became “something” out of “nothing,” God said, *it is very good*?
 - We have so much more to discover in Genesis, but today, I want you to accept that **what God created you to be is the most important thing about who you are—and to live into that story, all you have to do is put your faith in Him, and accept the gift of God’s saving grace. Because of Christ, this story is your story.**