

OpenTheo

Genesis 1 (Part 1)



Genesis - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg provides a detailed analysis of Genesis 1, the summary of the creation story, and Chapter 2, which focuses on the creation of humans in the Bible. He emphasizes that the language and the meaning of some words used in Genesis 1 may vary. While there is ambiguity in the interpretation of some phrases, the focus of the lecture is a small part of the vast theology and cosmology discussed in Genesis. Gregg explains that the belief in one God has existed in ancient societies long before evolution. The purpose of humanity is to glorify God, depend on Him and submit to His will. The division between light and darkness established by God emphasizes the distinction between good and evil.

Transcript

Jesus in Genesis 1 Now we begin with the book of Genesis. We begin with the Bible in this lecture. And I would like to read through the first chapter in its entirety for the simple reason that you can't really comment intelligibly about the early verses, until you have sort of this whole picture in your head.

And you get the whole picture by reading through Genesis 1 up through 2, verses 1-3. Now, we certainly will not comment on that many verses in this lecture, but we want to have that whole picture before us as I make comments later about the earlier verses. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form and void. And darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Then God said, Let there be light. And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good.

And God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

Then God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. Thus God made the firmament and divided the waters which

were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so.

And God called the firmament heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day. Then God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place.

And let the dry appear. And it was so. And God called the dry earth.

And the gathering together of the waters He called seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself on the earth.

And it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

So the evening and the morning were the third day. Then God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night. And let them be for signs and seasons and for days and years.

And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth. And it was so. Then God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.

He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

So the evening and the morning were the fourth day. Then God said, Let the waters abound with abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens. So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters and the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

Then God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind, cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth, each according to its kind. And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. Then God said, Let us make man in our image according

to our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them.

Then God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God said, See, I have given you every herb that yields seed, which is on the face of all the earth and every tree whose fruit yields seed. To you it shall be for food. Also to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food.

And it was so. Then God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth and all the hosts of them were finished. And on the seventh day, God ended his work, which he had done. And he rested on the seventh day from all his work, which he had done.

Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it he rested from all his work, which God had created and made. Now, that is, of course, taking us through the seventh day. At that point, the story changes, and we will not go further in our reading right now.

It doesn't so much change as it goes over the material again from a different way of organizing the material. Because chapter 2, verses 4 to the end of that chapter, provide a more close-up view of the creation of man and woman and some of the things that went on in that sixth day that we read about at the end of chapter 1. We'll take that separately at another time. At this point, we'll take the first account of the creation, which is in Genesis 1. And, of course, chapter 2, verses 1 through 3 are not really accounts of the creation at all, but the aftermath when God had completed the creation, and he rested, and then it makes reference to his having sanctified the seventh day.

Now, we can take almost forever on this chapter. For example, I can, and I have notes with me to do so, but I won't. I can speak for six hours merely on the evidence related to the subject of evolution and creation, special creation.

I have separate lectures on that recorded. I will not go into that in detail now. But that would simply be a little tiny part of what we're considering here.

There's a lot of theology here. There's a lot of cosmology here. And there's a lot of

uncertainty here about the meaning of some of the things.

For example, the opening verse. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now, what is the relation of that verse to the rest of the chapter? Is it the first thing of a series of things? That would be a very natural way to read it.

Of course, in order to do the other things, God had to create the heavens and the earth. So we could say he first created the heavens and the earth as sort of the stage upon which the rest of the drama would be played, and then he added characters and props and things like that in the successive acts of the chapter. And so it'd be possible to see the first verse as merely the first step of several steps that we read about throughout the rest of the chapter.

Others have felt that perhaps chapter 1, verse 1, is a summary of the whole chapter. That is to say, what you're about to read about is the story of how God created the heavens and the earth. Now let's get started.

The earth was formless and void. Now, obviously, the earth was formless and void suggests that the earth already, in some sense, existed to talk about as a formless and void phenomenon. But it's not entirely clear.

You see, it could be that chapter 1, verse 1, is a summary statement of the whole chapter, which is then unpacked. Genesis does this same kind of thing, literary-wise, in certain other places, it seems. For example, in Genesis chapter 6 and verse 8, it says, well, we read about how bad the earth was in the first seven verses, how God saw that the earth was evil and determined He was going to wipe it out.

But it says in verse 8, but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. And then it starts telling the story of Noah and how he indeed found grace in the sight of the Lord, how God came to him and warned him and told him to build an ark and so forth. But one could say that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord is a summary statement of what's about to follow.

God's about ready to wipe out the earth. But let me tell you how one man found favor in God's sight and received mercy. And then the story comes.

If you look at Genesis chapter 37, there's a couple of places in this chapter that could be seen this way. This is, of course, the story of Joseph, the beginning of the story of Joseph. And in verse 5, it says, Now Joseph dreamed a dream and he told it to his brothers and they hated him even more.

Now, it's possible that that's a summary of what's about to be described. As if he's saying, now, let me tell you about a dream that Joseph had that he told his brothers about and caused them to hate him. And then it tells the story.

So he said to them, please hear the dream, et cetera, et cetera. It's possible that verse 5 is a summary of the verses that follow. And likewise, in the same chapter, verse 21 says, But Reuben heard it and he delivered him out of their hands and said, let us not kill him.

That is, the brothers of Joseph wanted to kill him once they throw him in the pit. And Reuben came to his rescue. The following verses after verse 21 tell the story of how Reuben intervened.

And so it's possibly a literary feature of some of the passages in Genesis that before a story is told, it is summarized in a single verse. That could be true in Genesis 1 and some think that it is. I don't know what's at stake in deciding that, but it's just one of the many things you don't get very far into the book of Genesis before you find matters of curiosity.

Some of them difficult to resolve as to their exact nature. Now, we would ask, what is meant by the heavens and the earth? Because actually both of these words, heavens and earth, are used elsewhere in the same chapter in ways that seem different than they are used in verse 1. For example, if God created the heavens and the earth right at the very beginning of the series, then the heavens there are something different than they are in verse 8, where it says God created firmament and he called the firmament heaven. Well, the firmament was a creation of the second day and yet it is called heaven.

And yet verse 1 gives the impression that the heavens and the earth came along right at the beginning. Now, the word heaven, of course, can't have more than one meaning. And it does in the Bible have more than one meaning.

It apparently has more than one meaning in this chapter too, because heaven can mean space, like outer space, like the universe, the place where the stars are, for example, is said to be at least in the heavens. In verse 14, it says, then God said, let there be light in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night, sun from the sun and the moon. And he mentions the stars also at the end of verse 16.

So, heavens is where stars and sun and moon are, out in space. And yet on the second day, we read of the creation of a firmament. The word firmament simply means an expanse, an expanse.

And God created an expanse, which apparently it would appear to be in verse 2, excuse me, the second day, would appear to be the earth's atmosphere. There are other possibilities. But he talks about the waters above and the waters below the firmament.

And, you know, the way that I think most people understand this is that the firmament is the earth's atmosphere and there are terrestrial waters on the earth and there are waters above the firmament, which are where the eventually rains came from. But you

see, it would appear that the word heavens means more than one thing here in this chapter. In one instance, it seems to me where the stars are.

Another is where the birds fly or where there's water above the heavens. But that's not too strange. Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 that he knew a man who was caught up in the third heaven.

And it's the only place in the Bible that uses an expression like that, third heavens or any other kind of number of heavens. But the explanation usually given to Paul's statement about the third heavens is that there are three ways that the word heaven is spoken of in the Bible. One would be the earth's atmosphere, the nearest heavens, where the birds fly and so forth, the atmosphere around the world.

Then there's the starry heavens, outer space, we'd say. And then there's, of course, that heaven where God's throne is, which is probably best understood to be a spiritual realm rather than a location out beyond outer space. In all likelihood, where God dwells is considered to be not so far away at all.

It's just a spiritual realm that is nearby. Remember when Paul was speaking in Athens to the philosophers on Mars Hill in Acts 17, he said, God is not far from any of us, but in him we live and move and have our being. God lives in heaven, but he's not far away.

So there's a third kind of heavens. There's a third reference to heavens in Scripture. And so right at the beginning, again, of Genesis, we're finding the word heavens, a word that has a bit of ambiguity.

It has more than one possible meaning in different contexts. Here it probably means space. And then the earth, that also is a word that has more than one meaning.

When I was reading verse 9, I left out the word *land*. You may have noticed that if you're reading along. That's because *A*, the word *land* is in italics.

That means it's not in the Hebrew. Literally, where our translation says, God, let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place and let the dry *land* appear. The word *land* isn't there.

It's just let the dry appear. And the reason I left out the word *land* is because in the next verse, he refers to the dry as earth. Now, earth and land are exactly the same word in the Hebrew.

It would have made no sense for it to say the dry land he called earth because the word for land would be *eretz* and the word for earth is *eretz*. And he called the *eretz* the *eretz*. Now, what happened on the third day is God caused dryness, a dry surface apparently to appear out of the waters and dry area appeared.

And he gave that term, the name earth. Now, here's the problem we have. We use the word earth a number of ways.

Dirt we call earth, right? But we also call the planet we live on earth. Now, it's not 100% sure whether the Bible uses the word earth with reference to a planet. I'm not real sure if the biblical writers spoke in planetary terms.

Usually the word earth, *eretz*, could better be translated land. And many times it is. Whenever you read about the land of Israel, it's the word *eretz*, the earth of Israel.

Because earth and land are the same word in the Hebrew. And therefore, when we have in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, I have always taken that to mean he created the starry heavens without the stars yet. And he created the planet earth in a certain location, the planet earth.

In my conversations with Frank, who has some different understanding of Genesis 1, he raised the question whether the word earth in the Bible really ever means what we mean by the planet earth. It's much more common for it to mean land or even dirt or possibly just stuff from which the land, what we call the earth, was later made. Just the ingredients that later became matter.

This is at least one way that it can be seen. I mentioned Frank because he and two of his friends have been working for years on an analysis of Genesis 1, and they have sort of their own understanding of things. And they believe that the word heavens means just space.

Not particularly what we call outer space, just area, space. And earth refers to matter, later organized into planets and things like that. I don't know if that's correct or not.

As I say, the opening verse can be seen that way. It can be seen various ways. In any case, what is being said here is that space and matter came into existence by God creating it.

And it does not actually say in verse 1 that he did it by speaking, though he did. We know this from other passages in Scripture, but it tells us the first thing he spoke that's recorded is, let there be light. Now, Frank has pointed out to me that light, all matter, all molecules emit light.

And so until there was light, there couldn't be any matter. Now, that would be true perhaps if we're thinking of light and strictly as scientists understand. I don't know that the ancient people would be thinking of light that way.

They might be just thinking of the visible spectrum of light. It's hard to say. Certainly, the light period was day.

The dark period was presumably when it wasn't light, yet there was matter, you know. There's matter at night too, but there's day and night, light and darkness. It's hard to know exactly how or to understand the creation of matter.

And the reason I raise these questions is because, of course, there's a tremendous conflict between the Genesis account and the common view of modern people about the origin of all things. These days, almost all scientists believe in what was called the Big Bang. The Big Bang is believed to have been something that happened maybe 30 billion years ago or more, which where all that is now matter was compressed into a tiny little, almost microscopic dot.

I suppose this is judged from the fact that if you took all the subatomic particles and pressed them together, there's no space between them, they would be that tiny. Because although things are very large, they're made of atoms, most atoms are comprised of almost entirely of space in them. And so scientists believe that everything, most scientists believe that everything was compressed into a tiny little cosmic egg that hatched, a little dot that exploded.

And when it exploded, all the atoms were formed, molecules were formed, matter was formed, and planets and planetary systems and stars and so forth were formed. And part of the reason for believing this is that the universe appears to be expanding. That is, every object in the universe appears to be expanding further from all the other objects, as if they all started from one place and everything's going away from the original place, as if there's an explosion.

This is almost universally held among scientists today. And sometimes Christians have been a bit threatened by the Big Bang idea because they know the Bible says God created the heavens and the earth. It's not impossible that God created the heavens and the earth with the Big Bang.

I don't believe it was 30 billion years ago. God could have caused a Big Bang anytime he wanted to, and it could have been thousands of years ago, or millions or billions, as far as God is concerned, he could do it anytime he wants to. But the idea that all happened with the Big Bang of some sort is not an impossible thesis, even if we accept the idea of God being the creator of all things.

What's interesting about this is that until the Big Bang cosmology became predominant in scientific thinking, evolutionists had an easier time. That is, the Big Bang was not a welcome theory by most evolutionists, because evolutionists, for the most part, wanted to believe that the universe always existed. Way back in the early 1900s, the atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell said Christians aren't thinking rationally when they say that everything had to be begun by something, and therefore God was the beginner of everything.

He said, no, why can't the earth, why can't the world itself, can't the universe itself have always been here? That's the way people thought in the early 1900s. They thought, well, the earth and matter and everything has always been here. It just, it's had gazillions of years to organize itself into various universes.

But then they came up with the Big Bang, and many evolutionists said they found the idea of the Big Bang repugnant, because they said it gives too much ammunition to creationists. Because it does prove, according, if the current theory is credible, and most scientists believe it is, that everything had a beginning. The Big Bang was the beginning.

Now, I don't know if the Big Bang is true or not. I don't, I'm certainly not threatened by the suggestion. I can talk about it as if it was true without any misgivings.

But certainly, if there was a Big Bang, it was God that did it. And one thing that Genesis tells us, which also the Big Bang theory agrees with, is there was a beginning, and scientists before believing in the Big Bang largely did not believe there was a beginning. They believed everything always existed.

So Genesis is pretty much right on the cutting edge of what modern science believes about this particular point. There was a beginning. That is affirmed in the opening words of Genesis.

In the beginning. And it also affirms, of course, that God was there before the beginning, because God couldn't do something in the beginning if he wasn't already present to do it. And therefore, God predates time and matter.

Therefore, God cannot be a part of nature. He cannot be a part of matter. And that's a good thing, too, because you know what? Matter is subject to certain laws, and those laws include the laws of thermodynamics.

And the second law of thermodynamics tells us that everything decays, everything disintegrates. The process is called entropy. Everything becomes more random.

Things that are organized become more disorganized over time. A building is an organized structure, but given enough time, it'll crumble into disorganization. The sun is an organized mass of flaming gases.

Eventually, it'll be all dissolved into individual atoms spread out in various places, not all organized in one place. That's what burning does. Of course, I don't think it's going to have time to do that, to burn out.

The point is, everything that's material degenerates and decays and changes form, becomes more random. And if God was part of nature, then he could not be permanent. Nothing in nature is permanent.

In fact, this should have told the scientists a long time ago that matter is not eternal, because if matter is eternal, then a long time ago, it would have all dissolved, rather than still being organized as it is today. It doesn't take forever and ever and ever for entropy to have its effect. So God is outside of the natural world and therefore not subject to entropy.

He does not age, he does not grow older. And this passage, of course, makes it very clear that God was before the creation. And therefore, of course, the laws that govern his existence, if we could speak of such, are different than the laws that govern nature.

He is not subject to decay. In Psalm 90 and verse 2, Moses wrote Psalm 90, by the way, interestingly enough. This is from Moses.

Moses said, before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. So Moses says, before you form the earth or the world or anything, you, God, are eternal. And so that is presupposed in Genesis 1. God was there before the creation was there.

In the beginning, he acted. And that means he had to exist before the action was taking place. Now, notice that Genesis does not make any arguments for the existence of God.

It is not treated as if it's controversial. Genesis just says, in the beginning, God created. And he doesn't expect anyone to say, what? What do you mean, God? Because in ancient times, essentially everybody knew there was a God or gods.

There were no atheists, really. I mean, there were practical atheists, people who lived like they didn't believe in God. But all societies were religious.

In Moses' day, of course, the Jews had the Jewish religion. But all the other societies had their own religions. There were no secular societies.

All societies had patron deities. All societies had state-supported priests of their deities. There was no secular world.

There was no secular society until the Enlightenment in modern history. Like I said, there were individuals who lived as if they didn't believe there was a God or gods. But there was no society that denied that there were gods or gods.

Now, of course, what we have in Genesis, different from the pagan society, is that God is treated as a single being. True, the word Elohim that is used here is a plural word. But the word Elohim is used 35 times in the first 34 verses.

Those 34 verses were the ones we read. Chapter 1 plus the 3 verses at the beginning of Chapter 2. In those 34 verses, the word Elohim is used 35 times with a verb form that requires a singular subject. And therefore, Elohim is treated as a single God.

Though, obviously, somehow, they're complex beings. Enough so that a plural word seems to be necessary to adequately speak of Him. But He is one God.

And the Jews were the first. Well, I shouldn't say they were the first, because long before the Jews, all societies believed in one God. But they were the first people, perhaps in many centuries, to come up with the worship of one God.

All the pagan societies around them had worshipped many gods. There are several different views of God that have prevailed in different societies. There is, of course, polytheism, which is the belief in many gods.

There is also what's called henotheism. This view prevailed in the time of Abraham, for the most part. Although Abraham didn't necessarily buy it, it was a view that was prominent in the days of Abraham.

Henotheism is the belief that there are more than one God, but only one God per nation. Each nation had a patron god. So, even in Old Testament times, most of the nations believed that Yahweh was a real God.

But He was the God of Israel. Babylon had their god, Bel. Actually, they had two.

Bel and Nebo were the patron gods. All the other nations had multiple gods, but they had one basic god that was their main god. The Moabites worshipped Chemosh.

The Phoenicians worshipped Baal. The Canaanites worshipped Molech, and so forth. These were the patron gods of these societies.

And henotheism, therefore, is the belief that there are more than one God, but only one primary God for a society. And then there is, of course, monotheism, and that's that there's only one God anywhere. There are no other gods than God.

And Israel was the unique nation in ancient times that believed that. Now, evolutionists believe that this belief in a single God was a late development. They see belief in one God as philosophically enlightened compared to many gods.

Why? Because there's a unifying principle of nature. That if there were independent gods doing different things, you wouldn't expect to see the consistency of everything, the same laws governing the whole universe, as if there's one God that made all the laws. And so scientists who don't even believe in gods still think that monotheism is a late and modern development, relatively speaking.

That ancient Neanderthals maybe didn't believe in gods at all, but sometime afterward they came to believe in what they call animism. Animism is the belief that there are spirits in everything that's material. There's spirits in the rocks and the trees.

There's spirits in the mountains and the volcano and the ocean. There's spirits. They're

not so much developed ideas as deities, so much as just spirits.

And many of the tribal peoples that still live in jungles are animistic in their beliefs. But the evolutionists say, well, animism is the most primitive form of religion. And then it evolved to something higher, where it wasn't so much spirits in the trees and the rocks, because there were individual gods over the volcanoes and the seas and the mountains and the storms and so forth.

So animism evolved into polytheism. And then it got a little more refined into henotheism. And then finally it evolved into the most enlightened idea of monotheism, one God.

That is how secularists describe the evolution of religion. The Bible gives us the opposite picture. The earliest people believed in one God.

If you read the book of Romans chapter 1, it says they knew God, but they did not like to retain the knowledge of God in their memories, so they changed the glory of God into the image of four-footed beasts and men and birds and fishes, and they worshiped the creation rather than the creator. In other words, Romans 1 tells us that people believed in the real God, but their religion devolved into the belief in polytheism and so forth. And we see that, of course, in the stories of Genesis.

Noah and his family gave rise to all the societies that exist today. There's no one on the planet who didn't originate from Noah and his family, but no one is going to believe in one God. So where did polytheism come from? It came later.

People who believed in one God eventually lost that belief and developed a more complex belief. So the actual history of religion goes the opposite direction from what evolutionists say. They say it's from animism and polytheism to monotheism.

The Bible says, no, it started with monotheism. It degenerated from there. And we see it affirmed in the very opening verse.

There's one God, and he made everything. By the way, the idea that God created also leads to the inescapable conclusion that things exist for a reason, for a purpose, because God in Scripture is treated as a purposeful being. He speaks.

He has a will. He commands things. And you don't make things for no reason.

Intelligent beings do create things, but they don't do it for no reason. Whoever invented that walker invented it because there was a use for it, and they wanted to help people who were somewhat disabled. Whoever invented glass windows wanted to be able to see through a space without having the wind blow through it.

Cars, computers, telephones, whatever is invented is invented for a reason, for a

purpose. Now, according to evolution, there really is no purpose. Evolution was a blind and purposeless process, which accidentally and fortunately came up with some good stuff, but didn't intend to.

Evolution is mindless. It didn't have any intentions at all. It's just lucky that good stuff came up from it.

But the Bible teaches that God created it, and if something is created, it was created for a reason, and the implications of that are exactly what atheists today are trying to avoid. Evolution is the creation story of the atheist religion. Atheism is a faith like any other faith.

No one can prove there's no God, so belief that there's no God is a faith. It's a religion. Secular atheists have, as their creation myth, the theory of evolution.

Why? Because then they don't need to have a God in the picture. They don't need to have a purpose. Well, why would anyone not want there to be a purpose? It seems like people would be very gratified to have a purpose.

Purposelessness doesn't seem very gratifying, and yet atheists want things to be purposeless. You know why? Because if there is a purpose, then that means you can conform to the purpose, or you can fail to conform to the purpose. And if there's a purposer, if there's a God who made you for a purpose, and you refuse to conform to that purpose, there might be something about that that makes him upset.

You might have to answer to the one who made you and say, I made you for this. Why did you do that? And the Bible indicates that God made us for a purpose, and he explains in the Bible what that purpose was. Of course, it was to glorify God, to live subject to God, to live in dependency on God, and to share with God a certain dignity of causation.

He gave man, you know, dominion to help God rule over the earth and so forth. God made people for the same reason that some people have children, because they want to pass on the family farm or the family business to their offspring. God had a purpose in creating us, and it was that we would glorify God, be submissive to God, be dependent upon God, take on his project and do it his way.

That was the purpose. And when people want to do things their way, they don't want to depend on God, they don't want to glorify God. Then they don't want there to be a God because the implications are all there.

If God created, then he did it for a purpose. If he had a purpose, then we might miss that purpose and we might even want to miss that purpose, but we don't want there to be any ramifications for our choices. But Genesis 1.1 tells us that things had a beginning, God predated that beginning.

God caused that beginning by creating and obviously by implication, he had a purpose. And we find what that purpose is as we read the story unfold. Now, it says in verse two that the earth initially was without form and it was void.

Void means it was empty. It was devoid of life in particular, but it was a barren void. Void, formless earth.

Now, on one view, that means that the earth, it means the planet earth. And of course, at this time, the planet earth would be covered with water because dry earth had not yet been caused to appear until the third day. So if earth means the planet earth, then it is surrounded by water and therefore there's no, you know, water changes shape all the time.

Water has waves and fluctuations and so forth, so you wouldn't have, if you looked at the earth at that time, it wouldn't have any form to it that it conformed to all the time. On another view, if the earth here simply refers to the stuff from which planets later would be made, it might have no form whatsoever. It might just be randomly distributed in space, the various stuff that later became matter.

And that would be a view, I think, that conforms with what Frank and his friends have come up with. In any case, the important point is that things had not taken shape yet. And there's more than one way to see that, but they had not taken shape yet.

And the first important theological point we find is at the end of verse two, where it says the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Now the word hovering is not translated the same way at all in all translations. The King James says moved on the face of the waters and there are some translations that say brooded over the face of the waters or something like that.

This particular Hebrew verb is interesting because it is also used in Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 11, where God is reminding Israel that he brought them out of Egypt and he cared for them the way that a mother eagle cares for her eaglets in the nest. And there's an extended metaphor given in Deuteronomy 32 about God being like a mother eagle. And there's a verb that is used there that says as the eagle hovers over her young.

Hovers is the same Hebrew word that is used here, or broods over her young. The idea is that the mother eagle sees her unmaturing young and broods, hovers, almost anticipates, longs for their maturing so they can leave the nest because then it goes on to say then when they leave the nest, she carries them on her wings and things like that. And the impression I have here from the use of this word is that the Holy Spirit present already when the earth had not taken any form at all, was anticipating, had desires already for things to turn out a certain way, that God's spirit was longing to see things take shape as they eventually would.

Things come to completion or maturity. In other words, again, this was not something that happened randomly. It happened because God's own spirit had a vision for the way things were going to turn out and was brooding over this whole unshapen reality in eager anticipation to see it mature into what it was going to become.

And so God speaks, actually, for the first time that we read about and when he says, let there be light. Now, I raised the point earlier that Genesis 1 does not say that God spoke to create the heavens and the earth, but he did. We know that from other places in the scripture.

For example, Psalm 33. In Psalm 33 and verse 6, it says, By the word of the Lord, presumably that means by God speaking, the heavens were made and the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Technically, I guess one could say this refers to the third day and the fourth day and does not refer to the Genesis 1 one.

But my impression is he's talking about the original creation of the universe here. And in verse 9, it says, For he spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast.

This is the psalm is celebrating what we call the creation. And that doesn't mean the invention of an Italian car. It means Fiat means to give a command of authority and God created by Fiat by command.

He commanded that something should happen and it happened. The universe and what it's made of obey God actually much better than we do sometimes. But the psalm does indicate that the heavens and the earth came into being because of God speaking.

Likewise, in Hebrews chapter 11. In verse 3, the writer of Hebrews says, By faith, we understand that the world were framed by the word of God so that the things which are seen are not made of things which are visible. Now, this says that visible things, what we might call the material world as we know it and see it with our senses.

Was made from things that are invisible. I don't know if the writer of Hebrews is thinking of like before there were visible things that were like spiritual things like God and he created out of that, or some people think he's actually alluding to Adams, what we would today call Adams. You might say, well, the writer of Hebrews would not be expected to know about Adams.

Well, of course, he might if he was inspired. But even if he were not inspired, there was already in Greek philosophy long before New Testament times philosophers who had speculated that everything was made out of tiny little things much too small for man to see. I don't think they call them Adams yet.

That's what they came to be called. But it says, by faith, we understand that God by his word, by the word of the Lord, the world's were framed again. This could refer to something later than Genesis one one, because the world's being framed could be seen

as a more advanced stage of the creation week.

But in John one one, we know that we're reading about Jesus. He's spoken of as the word of God, and some of the things that are said of him have to include Genesis one one, because it says in the beginning was the word in John one one and the word was with God and the word was God. The word was with God.

The word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him as through the word.

And without him, nothing was made that was made. So that would include the heavens of the earth in Genesis one one. They were not made without the word of God.

So that John seems to understand when Psalm thirty three six is by the word of the Lord, the heavens were made. John takes that to mean everything was made by the word of the Lord. That word later became flesh and was Jesus.

But of course, in saying everything was made by the word, which is God. John is no doubt referring back to Genesis one one. In fact, he opens his book with the same words that Genesis opens with in the beginning.

And that is hardly an accident. John is obviously trying to echo Genesis one one in the beginning. And then John talks about the creation.

They talked about the word being the agent of the creation of all things that were created. Nothing was made except through the word. So although we don't read of God speaking before verse three, we have to say that before this point, you know, God had spoken.

Unless, of course, Genesis one one is just a summary of the chapter. And now we're told from the beginning how it happened. It began with God saying, let there be light.

And of course, if every atom, every molecule emits light, then this could have been the origin of physicality, the origin of matter. Or on a more traditional view, the world already existed as a material object covered with water, but it was in the dark until God said, let there be light. Now, it does seem like there must have been some kind of organization of the earth at this point in time, because it says that after God said, let there be light, and there was light, that God saw the light that was good.

God divided the light from the darkness. And he called the light day and the darkness he called night, so that the evening and the morning were the first day. Now, days are measured not out in outer space.

They're measured on the surface of the earth. In fact, they are not really objective realities. They're subjective realities.

It is day for me. It's not day for people on the other side of the world right now. It's night for them.

You can't go out in space and say, is it day or night? It's neither day or night out in space. It's day or night depending on where you're standing on the planet. It's from the perspective of people on earth that it is either a day or a night.

You remove the earth and there's no day or night anywhere. I guess you'd have a day and night on the moon. No, it's always night on one side and always day on the other.

But the point here is the very mention of the creation of day and night, morning and evening seems to presuppose an earth that is turning because that's, of course, what causes day and night, at least from an earthly perspective. And it would appear perhaps that even though there are no people yet on the earth at this point, that the story is being told from the perspective of earth, of earth dwellers experiencing evening and experiencing morning. Now, notice the light is not apparently the light of the sun and the moon and the stars because they are said to have been formed on the fourth day.

Now, there's two ways that this could be seen, I suppose, maybe more. But one way is that actually when God said let there be light, He actually at that moment created the sun and the moon and the stars, or at least the sun. And of course, the sun is that which rules the passing of a day and a night and so forth.

But that they were not yet visible because everything was hazy. And that if you had stood on the earth on this occasion and looked into space, you couldn't see the sun. You could see light, but there's haze throughout the atmosphere, I guess.

And it wasn't until the fourth day that this haze cleared up and they could actually see the sun. The sun appeared in the sky from the standpoint of people on earth. Of course, there weren't people on earth yet, but told from that perspective.

That's one way that it's understood. I know the Schofield Reference Bible suggested something like that, that on the fourth day, it was not that God created from scratch the sun, moon and stars, but that they simply appeared in the night sky or in the day sky from the perspective of earth because whatever haze or whatever had previously blocked the way had dispersed the light. If that were true, then there would be day and night on earth.

There would be light and darkness, even though you couldn't see the orbs from which that light was emanating. Now, I've myself in the past always kind of understood this this way, that the sun and the moon and stars were created on the fourth day and deliberately not at the beginning. Although God wanted there to be light at the beginning, he didn't want it to be from the sun, moon and stars.

Why? Well, for a very good reason. All pagan societies worship the sun as the source of

life and the source of everything. Even atheists believed the sun was here before the earth and that the sun had explosions that were flaming gases were thrown out far enough to remain in orbit, but not far enough to lose contact.

And they began to circle the sun, began to cool down into solid masses, became planets and so forth. Atheism and paganism all see the sun as the source of everything. It didn't take people very long to recognize that the sun made the crops grow and the sun caused ice to thaw and that the sun was necessary for life.

And therefore, every pagan society had as its chief god, the sun god. Helios or Ra or whatever, the pagans worship the sun as a god, as the source of life. Now, it's very possible that God simply in order to preempt that, said, I'll tell you what, I'm going to give you light without a sun.

There's even going to be life before there's a sun, because the plants were made before the fourth day. In other words, that God would do things in such an order that it would be impossible to argue that the sun is the origin. It wasn't even there early on.

It was halfway through the week before it showed up. Now, if that suggestion has merit, the question will be, well, then what was the source of the light on the first day? And my best guess would be God himself, the glory of God. After all, it is the glory of God who is the source of life.

And there was life on the third day before the fourth day. And God is the source of all things and of life and of light. And it says in John 1, 1, after it says the word made everything, it says in him was life and that life was the light of men.

He is that true light that enlightens everyone that comes into the world. It says in John 1, 9. Of course, it's using light metaphorically there. But when God made light in the first place, he did so with a mind to speak of it metaphorically at a later date.

God made things purposefully as he did in order that he could draw from them later on the truth that he later did draw from them for us. But what's more, in the book of Revelation, when you read about the new Jerusalem, it said the city had no need of the sun or the moon or the stars to shine it because the glory of God is the light of it. Again, underscoring the fact that the sun and the moon and stars are not the source of life, they're not even needed in the new Jerusalem because the glory of God provides that function.

And it's possible that the glory of God provided that function for the first three days of creation before he seems to have brought the sun, moon and stars into view. Whether he created them from scratch on the fourth day or they existed earlier and were not visible until the fourth day is one of those disputed points. But one thing important to note here is that what God did initially here was cause a division.

And we see several of the successive acts of creation as causing division. In verse four, it says God divided the light from the darkness. In verse seven, it says God made a firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above it.

And in verse 14, it says he made the light from the firmament to divide the day from the night. Right from the beginning, God is not making all things the same. There is division between light and darkness.

Remember what it says in 1 John chapter one. This is the message we have heard of him and declare to you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another in the blood of Jesus Christ who cleanses us from all sin. God is in the light and he is separated from darkness. He makes a distinction between light and darkness.

In 2 Corinthians chapter six, Paul says, what fellowship has light with darkness? Rhetorically suggesting none. There is no shared territory between light and darkness. That is in 2 Corinthians 6 verse 14.

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? What communion has light with darkness? None. God divided between those two. Light and dark are contrary to each other and God made a clear division.

Later on, he would use this division as an illustration of the difference between people who are in the light and people who are in the dark. That we are supposed to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. We are children of the light and of the day, not of the darkness and so forth.

You see, Hinduism has a very different view of things. In Hinduism, the worldview is called monism. It is the oneness of everything.

Everything is one. You have probably seen that symbol, the yin and the yang symbol, the circle with the sort of S-shaped division in it and part of it is white with a black dot in it, parts of it are black with a white dot in it. That is the Hindu symbol for the idea that all of reality is really one.

There is sort of a dark side and a light side of reality, but they are intermixed. Even the light side has a dark dot in it. Even the dark side has a light dot in it.

There is no pure division between light and darkness. All is one in the Hindu worldview and thus in the New Age worldview, which is Hindu. And yet, God's worldview is different.

No, there is a difference between light and darkness. God established that right from square one. The very first thing he did was divide between light and darkness and make a distinction between them.

Later he made other divisions. And these divisions, I think, are significant theologically as well as in terms of physical creation. And it says, he called the light day and the darkness he called night.

So the evening and the morning were the first day. Now here we have something that I could have brought up earlier and that is something related to the timing of the creation. And it's something I'll have to wait until after our break to get into.

But what is a day? Some people believe a day is a very long period of time and that God created over billions of years. And a day does not mean a 24-hour day, some people think. Other people have other expedients by which they try to harmonize the Genesis account with the alleged ancient ages of the universe.

Like I said, I could have brought this up at an earlier point. This is a good point to bring it up because the definition of a day is given right here. But we're going to take a break simply because this is about as convenient a place to do so as any and come back and take some more of this chapter.

But I want to talk to you when we come back about this very matter. How does the story of Genesis harmonize, if at all, with the modern scientific ideas that the universe is billions of years old? When Genesis 1 would seem to make it only thousands of years old. We'll talk about that after we take a break together.