



CREATION – Week 1 (The theme of “Creation” will span from Gen 1-11)

Bere'shit = “in the beginning” = the beginning of God’s story – creation, human disobedience, divine redemption

- Also the beginning of the Pentateuch/Torah, which is the story of God’s choosing and making a covenant with a people through whom he would bless ALL peoples.
- This is not an independent book, but the beginning of a longer, unified story through to Canaan.

Genesis 1 -2

- Genesis doesn’t start with trying to prove there is a God, because that wasn’t the issue. It intends to establish that there is one God, who is Creator of all.
- “In the beginning” = origin story
 - Genesis describes the origins of the realities in which the people lived at that time, so it adapts to the culture of the time and also speaks against it.
- The people of the ancient Near East, when they concerned themselves with origin stories, it was not because they were interested in the materiality of it (the science of it), but rather with finding the order to the system within which they lived and knowing the purpose they had within that system. The idea of “creating” for them was associated with “naming” and “separating,” which are ordering activities. These were

important things to the people of the ancient world. The ordering process is related to the creating process. And to them, something “exists” when it has a purpose, a function, a role to play in the system. In the ancient world, this was assigned by the gods. In the Bible, our one true God creates, names, separates, orders, and assigns identity, role, purpose.

2 Creation Stories?

- One entity, looking at creation from different perspectives and with different aspects to focus on. Genesis 1 tells the making of heavens and earth, Genesis 2 tells what is made from the earth (Adam, and then Even from his rib).

Genesis 1:1 – 2:3	Genesis 2:4 – 2:25
Creation is a sequence of steps that reach an apex in the creation of humanity- everything created prepares the way for human beings	Creation is something that cannot function properly without human beings. It is only when a gardener is placed in the garden that there can be such things as plants and shrubs.
All things are made in advance for humanity.	All things wait for the human (<i>'adam</i>) to work the ground (<i>'adamah</i>)

Things to note in Genesis 1:

- Written in *Toledot* formula – a Hebrew way of writing genealogies/descendants/birthing orders. The “begats.” It reads like a series of begats. Like a song or a poem, which would make it easy for people to remember and repeat.
- 6 days – two parallel groups of three.

- State of the earth before creation = *tohu wavohu* = formless and void (not ordered). God orders.
- The first three days God deals with the “problem” of formlessness by giving structure, shape, boundaries. The earth is made habitable, so God uses the next three days to deal with the second “problem” of an empty earth and he creates creatures.
- The repetition of “God said,” “Let there be,” “and so God made,” “God saw that it was good,” all have a rhythm which feels liturgical. It also reflects the rhythm of time that is being established (night and day, work and rest).
- God speaks all things into being, and on the seventh day there is no speaking – it is rest, ceasing from work and speech.
- “It is good,” does not mean, “it is perfect.” “It is very good,” means the pinnacle of goodness, not perfection. Humans are the pinnacle because they are the very image of God and they are tasked with reflecting his image and doing the work he assigned them – ruling and subduing creation. (This implies that there are things in God’s good world that require being ruled and subdued.)
- “Rule” (*radah*) and “subdue” (*kavash*) were understood not to be done independently from God, but rather under God’s dominion and as God’s representatives. Genesis 2:15 says Adam was assigned the task of “serving” (*avad*) and “keeping” (*shamar*) it – religious language that underscores the importance and sacredness of the task (later in Numbers, the priests are tasked with performing these same roles with the tabernacle).
- God “blesses” the seventh day and makes it “holy.” Later in Genesis (1:22, 28), blessing is tied with fruitfulness and multiplication. The seventh day is to be productive independent of human effort. IT is a day to enjoy divine blessing by observing it in ceasing from work.

Things to note in Genesis 2:

- From “...it was very good...” to “...it is not good...”
- God created the first human/earthling “adam” from “adamah” (dust) – no gender attached. It is not good for this human to be alone, and the human needs “help.”
- “adam” (earthling) becomes “ish” (man) in verse 23 when “ishah” (woman) is created – THAT is when they are differentiated.
- God forms woman from man’s side (better translation than “rib”) – man’s “other half!” The significance of “side/rib” is that it is not “head” or “foot,” which would have superior or inferior connotations. This is equal worth, value, status.
- “helper” = *ezer* : This Hebrew word is used most often for the divine assistance for human beings (cf. Hosea 13:9). “Helper” nearly always points to help from a superior source so that the helpee can perform their tasks. Per Genesis 1, the earthling is tasked with ruling and subduing creation; per Genesis 2, working and caring for the garden. The human vocation in this world can only be achieved in community, not individually.
- These two humans exist in the closest possible relationship (“bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”), and “become one,” an intimacy where they, in effect, return to their original condition of inhabiting one body. This is a vision of right relationships and the foundation of community/society.