

The Point of Genesis 1 – The Torah Series

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MAIN VERSES

[Genesis 1:1](#) • [Genesis 1:2](#) • [Psalm 36:9](#) • [Revelation 22:5](#) • [Psalm 148:4](#) • [Jeremiah 4:23](#) • [Isaiah 65:17](#) • [John 1:1-5](#) • [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)

Resources for the Journey

So here we go. Before I get started, I want to go over a few resources. There are some great... I mean, we live in a time and an age where we've discovered so many things about the Bible—all of the biblical manuscripts and letters. Textual criticism is at its peak right now, which is a good thing. We can view the overall history of the Bible and compare different letters over the course of time and just get a clearer vision of what the Bible is, what it says. Archaeology has increased past the 1920s and 30s. We've discovered things in history—in Israel, we've discovered ancient Canaanite tablets there. We've discovered ancient Babylon. We've uprooted Egypt. We've had a lot of great things happen over the past hundred years that bring insight to the Bible and to the biblical text in the context of the things that we read.

And then we have men and women who have devoted their lives—so much so, not only pouring out their lives to the faith of Yeshua, but spending their lives studying all of these things. Lots of books read, lots of archaeology analyzed, and they've devoted themselves to study the Bible. So I have a few resources. If this is a topic that interests you, these are some of the resources that I used to kind of formulate the direction of this message, and I just want to share them with you.

The first is Lost World of [Genesis 1](#) by John Walton. John Walton is a professor at Wheaton College. He spent 20 years at Moody Bible Institute before that—very, very intelligent man, taught in many conservative seminaries today. Genesis Unbound by John Sailhamer—he's a professor at Golden Gate Baptist Seminary, and he has some very interesting views on Genesis. [Genesis 1](#)—you always hear everybody has a different view on [Genesis 1](#), everyone has their little nuances—but he has one that I really appreciate, and I respect the work that he's done.

There's also a great section in the Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch, edited by T. Desmond Alexander and David Baker. And if you don't like reading long, boring stuff, but you want to maybe learn a little bit more about what modern scholarship has done for the Bible, go to the Bible Project's YouTube page. It's an amazing resource. Professor Tim Mackie is an ancient language professor, and their section on [Genesis 1](#) through 11 is just stupendous.

Launching the Torah Series

So, that being said, here we go. Today we are launching our Torah series. And everybody's excited—yeah, I'm super stoked about it. This is going to be fun, and hopefully it will be challenging, and most of all, I hope it will be edifying to explore the prologue of the entire biblical story.

If you're unfamiliar with what the Torah is, the Torah is really just another way of referencing the first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And it's commonly misidentified as law. You hear people reference the Torah as law all the time. What's fascinating about the Torah is that the first 69 chapters of the Torah are a narrative—it's a story. So it's not all just law. That's a misidentification of the section.

This section of Scripture is the start of the story of the Bible—from creation, through God advancing his mission to bring forth his reign and love to the world, to choosing a family to deliver blessings through the Abraham story, to analyzing the basic struggles that we all tend to relate to about giving in and struggling with the selfish desires of our flesh instead of listening to the voice of the Lord. We have the exodus from Egypt in the Torah. And then we have a lot of commandments that God gives—the Ten Commandments and a lot of others—that God gives to Israel to guide them and to give them wisdom in their pursuit and vocation to become the light to the world.

So in this series, we're going to explore some high points of the narrative along with some of the important commandments that God gave, that helped shape the Israelite world as well as the world that Yeshua lives in, and how they should directly impact us as believers today. But we need to make sure, before we start the story and the account of the Bible—the huge, unified story of the Bible—we need to make sure it starts off right. And that's what I hope to do today.

The Imagination Game

So with that, we're going to jump right into everybody's favorite chapter of Genesis, [Genesis 1](#). And I want to play an imagination game. Some of you maybe aren't familiar with the games I

like to play with imagining things—we're going to have fun. I saw a professor during one of his presentations and lectures do this, and it was great, it's a great way to start this message off. I think it was either Walton or Mackie. But we're going to play the imagination game, and we're going to pull up a verse.

I want you—you can close your eyes if you need to—I want you to take this seriously. I want you to grasp the very first image that is painted in your mind when you see this verse: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." You can close your eyes. What—in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now go ahead and open your eyes if you closed them. What did you see? You saw an earth, right? Did anyone see like the earth? A couple people, maybe? Did anyone see something like that? Yeah, so you got space, the heavens and the earth.

And now here's a great question I'm going to ask, and it's not to be too overcomplicated—why did you see a globe? Why did we—what possessed us—there is a reason why we saw this image, most of us saw this image, but have we ever explored why? Why on earth do we—myself included—think that the author, thousands of years ago, writing to a people thousands of years ago, had this image in his head when he wrote these words?

It's not too complicated, it's actually very simple. The first satellite photo, where we began to get this imagery, this detailed imagery in our head, didn't arrive to humans publicly until the 60s. We've only had this image in our heads for a very short period of time. And yet when we read the very first verse of the Bible, we're like, boom—Earth.

Land and Sky, Not Globe and Space

The seventh word in the Bible is the word Eretz. It's been translated as earth, which is not a bad translation—it could mean the world. But in its generic meaning, what does Eretz mean? Anybody? Land. Land. And then the word before it is translated as heavens. And of course we're like, well, I don't think that means like the place with pearly gates, it must mean the universe. But in its generic meaning, Shemayim just means sky.

So literally, the first verse of the Bible, if we look at it simplistically—in the beginning, God made the land and the sky. Up and down. And what we tend to do in the West is we tend to take phrases from the Scriptures or ancient documents and force our own version of the word onto it, our own definition of the word. And we do it all the time—it's so easy to do.

Remember when we discussed, in the message titled "What the Bible Is Not" a month or two ago—any of you guys here for that?—remember when we discussed how God commissioned

humans to write the Bible? Like, it's not a conspiracy, that's how the Bible was written. That's how it says it was written—through humans. And guess what? Spoiler alert—guess what? The humans would have communicated in something that we call language. They would have spoken or written words that had a specific meaning. It would have been a specific meaning for them, and a meaning that their audience understood during that time.

Nowhere in the Bible does it ever assert that when people are just writing an account of something, the Holy Spirit comes and forces and injects foreign images that they have no idea what they are into their head. An ancient author likely wouldn't have pictured a globe. He wouldn't have pictured outer space.

Fart Control

To illustrate the point—why are you laughing? Why are you laughing? This is a road sign in Denmark, and it means there's a speed management zone, a speed regulation zone, ahead. *Fart* is the Danish word for speed, and control is management. What did you think it said? *Fart* control. Do you know what you just did by laughing? And we do this all the time, it's human nature. We just force our own definition of what we think a word should mean onto another culture and another language, and you can see how inappropriate that becomes very quickly.

They had another sign that was called a "fart hump"—fart humper—and it's a speed bump. Again, people are laughing—I don't understand, why are you forcing your definition onto this? This is what it looks like a lot of times when we read the Bible. This is what it looks like a lot of times when we go through the Scriptures and we don't understand that this Scripture, this text, was written for us, but it wasn't necessarily written to us.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"—or literally, in the Hebrew, the sky and the land. And when an ancient Israelite read, or more likely heard—because back in the day not everyone had their own Bible, it was meant to be orally transmitted—so when an ancient Israelite was standing in the middle of a plaza or wherever, surrounded by his community, and they were reading this account, what would they have imagined here?

They wouldn't have imagined a globe with shooting stars, although that would have been pretty gnarly, and they probably would have freaked out. No, they would have looked up at the sky, and they would have seen this in their minds. In the beginning, looking up here and now, not having an out-of-body experience, not removing yourself from your life right now, God created this. God created everything. Now, did God create the earth and the universe? Yes. But what I'm

saying is if we're going to read an ancient document, that we need to read it or at least attempt to read it like an ancient person would have read it. Everybody with me?

Now, after the ancient Israelite would have looked down and would have looked up and seen all of the creation that he would have known, sky and there's stuff up there and down here, what's up there and what's down here? God made it all. The next appropriate question to ask if God created everything is what? What's the next question that you would ask? Why? Hey, I'm glad you asked that question. The answer is actually at the climax of the chapter, near the end of the chapter. So when does the Bible say that God created what's above us and what is below us? You said it. What was it? In the beginning. So the word there, the very first word of the Bible is reshit. Reshit. Most of us probably have heard it with a prefix of a bait, so it's breshit. The bait's there to kind of give it direction. It's like at, in or at. But reshit is the beginning.

In the Beginning

And now what's really cool, what's really cool, I think, is the author could have chosen about two or three different Hebrew words to start the Bible with that would have actually pinpointed a definite time in history. There's at least one other one I know of, but he doesn't. He doesn't. He chooses reshit. It's the same word for firstfruits. When you bring your firstfruits before God, reshit. The ones that come forth at the beginning, at the start of the season, firstfruits. And it's a very vague word. It's a really vague word as far as time period. In [Jeremiah 28](#), verse 1, Jeremiah uses this word, breshit, to speak of the first few years of King Hezekiah's reign. A very, very vague... The NIV does a fantastic job interpreting this verse. They interpret it as in the early years of King Hezekiah, instead of in the beginning, because it lasted for years, right? When used in [Genesis 1](#), the very first word, the same scope and purpose can be applied. In Hebrew, it carries the same connotation. It kind of carries the same connotation as a long, long, long, long time ago. Or way back when, yonder, God created the heavens and the earth. And I find that, and forgive me for pausing, I like to contemplate how I'm going to say something. I find that so humbling because there's a lot of tension around [Genesis 1](#) and 1. And there's a lot of different debates and arguments and fighting and frustration about when, and we want to look at [Genesis 1](#) and we want to say when. And what I found so humbling is that the original author could care less. Way back when God created the land and the sky. And then he moves on. Like, he's like, now that we have that out of the way, verse 2. I find that funny, but maybe you don't. So we move on to verse 2.

Formless and Empty

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. Okay, so can we play the imagination game again? Hold on to the globe universe image that you got with verse 1, which technically isn't correct because God created that too. But hold on to that, and I want you to move on to verse 2. And I want you, first part of verse 2. Now the earth was formless and void, or formless and empty. Something about the deep. The darkness was over the surface of the deep. What do you guys envision there? Everyone thinks, "Oh, I have this really gnarly image and I don't even want to say what it is." Okay, I'm going to play a game. Does it look something like this? Anybody have anything remotely like this jellified, wobbly globe thing because it's formless and void? No one. I am unique. That's fine. Okay. The word phrase there, so the author, remember how we spoke about Isaiah breaking out in like a hip-hop rap in the middle of [Isaiah 5](#) a few weeks back? So the author here, a lot of times you'll see the biblical authors express creativity. And they do it for drama, I believe, because, again, this was meant to be transmitted orally. And so the two words that make up formless and void are the two words, Tohu Vavohu. A couple of you chuckled because you really want to say it, right? Everybody, Tohu Vavohu. Now say it as fast as you can. Tohu v'vohu. It sticks with you, right?

Word Play

So when the author, the reason this is done, I believe, when the author says this, it's, you know, he's telling a story, and it's, Bershit b'ra'et ha'shemayim v'et ha'aretz. Ha'aretz hayah. Tohu v'vohu. Right? Like, you can get into it, and whenever I see word plays and rhymes, it just geeks me out. So, word play. And the land was formless and void. Tohu v'vohu. The author takes these two words and creates this, in my opinion, creates this very unique word play. And this is, again, one of the things that we can appreciate about the human authors of the Bible, that God commissioned to write the Bible. Now, the word tohu... We're a tohu. You're like, man, I thought this message was going to be about something else. No, we're going to geek out in the Bible because every message that I give, I hope, I hope that you get excited about God's word. So, thank you. So, tohu. Tohu is used several places in the Bible, and one of them is [Deuteronomy 32.10](#). He found him in a desert land in the howling waste, tohu, of the wilderness. He encircled him. He cared for him. So tohu kind of carries this definition generally of this wasteland, this barren wasteland. Again, we're not dealing with like up in a satellite view of the globe. We're down here. This is what we're, the wasteland.

Wasteland and Water

Now, Vavohu or Vohu is used three other places in the Bible. And unfortunately for us, it's always used and connected with Tohu. So we're not really sure what Vohu means or Vovohu means. Tohu Vovohu. Everett Fox, a Hebrew professor of Jewish studies, he translates Tohu Vovohu as wild and waste, like a wild and wasteland. While other professors like Robert Alter, you may have heard about him. He's the guy who just translated the Old Testament in this new translation. It's a three-book series. It's actually really, really good. And he translates it as welter and waste. What the author is trying to get at here, and we know this by reading the rest of the chapter, is instead of this jellified world, instead of this like jelly kind of weird kind of place, we should be seeing like a barren, empty wasteland. Like again, ancient Israelite, this would probably be more appropriate. So in the beginning, God creates the sky. What's up there and what's down here? And here's what we have. We have a barren wasteland. But what's the next verse? The darkness covered the deep. What's the deep? Deep what? Deep waters. So we have a wild wasteland kind of like barren wasteland kind of feel, desert wilderness. But then in the same sentence, we have a deep, dark water. Is deep, dark water a great place to hang out? No. Is a wild barren wasteland a great place to hang out? Who wants to move to either one of these places? Can you move to either one of these places? Can you survive as a human being with your family and kids and play in either one of these places? No, of course not.

A Place That Is Uninhabitable

And the first time, I remember, when we read the Bible, sometimes we want to make things fit in a way that they may have not been able to fit. So for us, we're like, well, which one is it? Is it a dry, barren wasteland, or is it like this deep, dark abyss? And I don't think it's, I think the author's choosing these words to describe something bigger. This is a place that is uninhabitable. And so if you're in the land of Israel, you have, what, to your west, you have the vast sea, Mediterranean, and then to your east, you have the Saudi Arabian desert. You have these two places that are completely uninhabitable. No telescopes, no satellites are used. We have to submit ourselves to what the language is trying to tell us. John Selhammer, he says this great, these texts are inspired by God and represent what he intended to say to us, and the meaning of whatever they might mean is the same for us as it was to the original author. So maybe the author is describing a place using the language at his time, a place where you cannot be. And some of us would be like, well, yeah, but what's that have to do with anything? Well, that has to do with the entire chapter of [Genesis 1](#).

The Spirit Hovering

Because we look and we see God can be here. God can be in this place that's Tohu Vavohu. The Spirit can be here in this place that's Tohu Vavohu. You cannot be here in this place that's Tohu Vavohu. Now the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep. And the Spirit of God, the what of God? Spirit of God hovered over the waters. And God said, let there be light. And there was light. And God saw the light. And it was Tov. Hebrew word for good is what? So the opposite of what was not good is a place that's uninhabitable, and it's referred to as Tohu. Tohu Tov. So he saw the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness, and he called the light day, and the darkness he called night.

And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day. So here in the first three verses of the Bible, we have God displayed as the creator in verse 1, the spirit in verse 2, and the word that commands creation in verse 3. It's kind of neat.

Now, here's what's interesting: you could argue that God didn't create light on day one. He called it and gave it purpose. That is a main pattern and agenda in [Genesis 1](#). When we see the word created, when it's the word bara, it tends to emphasize giving function over bringing to existence. In the ancient world, every pagan nation had a God that created something or created all things. But not every pagan nation had ever seen the power and the sovereignty of a God that not only created things but managed and gave function to all things. Egypt had a God over crocodiles and a God over the sun. Israelites come in like, "Yeah, our God's over all of it." And so that's one of the patterns of scholarship: to read [Genesis 1](#) not only as God creating everything, but each time He's taking something and giving it complete function and reign. That's a side note.

So day one, God called the light to do something. He called the light to come in and do something, and he separated the light from darkness and he gave it a function.

The Expanse Separated the Waters

Verse 6: And God said, let there be an expanse amidst the waters and let it separate the waters from the waters.

Okay, so everybody still with me? Good.

How many of you guys have read this verse before? How many of you guys have ever struggled with this verse before? Just a little bit? What is happening? What is it talking about?

And here's the thing: sometimes we get in trouble when we read the biblical text and we want to force onto it something that it may not even be saying, but that we want it to say. And so

here, expanse—it's the Hebrew word *rakia*. Everybody say it. *Rakia*.

In older translations such as the KJV, you'll see the word *firmament*. In translations that are interpreted from a much broader selection of manuscripts and biblical texts discovered, you'll see the phrase *expanse* or *vault*.

So when we read this, how many of us want this expanse or this firmament to be like a literal thing that's like over the world? Like a big solid piece on, like a big wall or something that's solid over the world?

As an ancient Israelite hearing this, what would they have done? They would have looked up and they would have seen the space between them in the clouds. And look at verse 8—it actually tells you what the *rakia* is. The *rakia* is called what? *Shemayim*—heaven. It's the sky. It's the sky. The *rakia* is simply the glue that holds everything up there—it's the sky. And what did the expanse do? What did it do? It separated something. What did it separate? Water.

The expanse separated the water. So there were, again, these waters—back a few verses—contributing to this Tohu of Avohu imagery, and the expanse pushes the water down, which in the next section here we'll see forms our oceans and creeks and wells. All the water goes down. And then where does the rest of the water go? Up.

Okay, simple, intuitive. I say this because in our pursuit to sometimes defend the Bible, we unintentionally add to it. In my history of trying to defend the Bible, I've unintentionally added to it. So how many of you guys may have grown up hearing about this? That this verse is speaking about the waters, and they surround the globe, and then they're in space. So what happens in space? A vacuum is a temperature drop. So what happens to the water in space? It freezes. And so now we have an ice-like ecosystem around the earth, and this creates a greenhouse effect, so lizards can grow to dinosaurs, and people live a long time. And then, when the flood came, God melted the ice, and it all fell down and killed everybody.

Has anyone else ever...? I was taught this in Sunday school. Okay, a couple people. I'm trying to be sensitive about this. I heard about this in Sunday school, and the issue with this is: not only is that not what the Bible says, but the biblical authors did not believe this.

Psalms 148: The Waters Above Praise God

[Psalms 148](#)—we have a beautiful Psalm praising God for creation. And here's what he says:

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise Him in the heights above. Praise Him, all His angels. Praise Him, all His heavenly hosts. Praise Him, sun, moon. Praise Him, all the

shining stars. Praise Him, the highest heavens. And you, waters above the sky, Shemayim, let Him praise the name of the Lord. Let them praise the name of the Lord. For at His command they were created, and He established them forever and ever. He issued a decree that will never pass away.

Someone forgot to inform the author of this beautiful psalm, which dates arguably to the 5th or 6th century B.C., that the waters that he's claiming are going to last forever, and the waters that he says should be praising God right now fell and killed everybody a long time ago.

Let me ask you something. So this is very intuitive, and we make it difficult. I make it difficult because I'm stuck in 2019, and I have a much broader selection of images, discoveries, and language than ancient Israelites.

So if I were to ask you to color water for me on a piece of paper, what color would you use? And don't say clear. What color would you use?

Blue. Blue. What a brilliant way to explain that God has created this stuff up there. It looks like an ocean, and sometimes it falls. Every single morning it falls and gets us wet. Some of it leaks out. It's brilliant. It's genius. It's absolutely genius.

Because what is the author doing in [Genesis 1](#)? They are explaining that God is creating all of the things that you see right now.

The Waters Gathered Together

Day 2, the waters are separated. The sky and the deep wells and the oceans are formed together. And then in verse 9, we move on.

Verse 9: And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place. Let the dry land appear, and it was so. And God called the dryness Eretz. And the waters that were gathered together he called seas, which is a generic word that means pools of water. And God saw that it was good.

And God said, let the earth sprout vegetation. What kind of vegetation is the earth going to sprout? Plants yielding seed and fruit trees bearing fruit, each according to its own kind. And it was so, and the earth brought forth vegetation—plants yielding seed according to their own kind, and trees bearing fruit. The pattern repeats itself.

And there was evening, and there was morning, the third day.

So here we go: all of the water that was down here, under the expanse—the sky, the expanse that's called shemayim, the sky—he calls into one place. How many places is the water called into? And then he forms individual, plural pools of water.

This verse is one reason why some scholars, and this is a popular thought, believe that [Genesis 1:1](#) is speaking about the totality of all creation—everything—and verses 2 throughout the rest of the chapter are speaking specifically of the land of Israel. Because it kind of riffs off of chapters 2 and 3 being the place where the seed-bearing trees grow up in the garden, the place where he's going to place his people. It's an interesting thought. But this is why: because all of the waters are called into one place. Well, where were they before if they were already on the earth? So the idea is that they are called into one place, and then in this one place they were separated into the pools of water.

So the argument goes that this is, of course, Sea of Galilee, the Mediterranean Sea, Dead Sea, and so on and so forth. It's an idea. That's one of the views in [Genesis 1](#). It's neat, sure. And if that's the case, then it actually flows into the [Genesis 3](#) motif.

The Garden as Blessing, The Exile as Pattern

So God creates a place and a blessing where he puts his image bearers to go out and be the light to all nations. And then in [Genesis 3](#), they sin against God, they break the rules of the land, and then they're exiled. And this follows the same pattern of Israel. Israel was called into a land that was blessed—milk and honey—the Garden of Eden motif, and they sinned against God and they were exiled.

Getting off topic.

God creates vegetation. And what kind of vegetation? I want you to remember this: seed-bearing vegetation. Okay, keep a pen in that. This is how creation begins in the story.

And for the sake of time, I'm going to assume that you're familiar with the rest of the chapter. So we don't need to read every single verse; we're just going to skip along because there's some neat stuff.

So on day four, what happens? God takes the dark and the light and he molds them into daytime and nighttime. Thank God. And then he creates the sun and the moon, right?

Day five, and God says—Notice what two things are made on day five? The fish and the what? Birds. What do they have in common? You have the ocean flyers and the sky swimmers, right?

Day six is when God creates the livestock, the animals, everything that creeps on the ground, everything other than birds and fish.

The Point of It All

Separate land, sea land. God formed, He made ready, God carved out all of the waters to create water. He will create oceans and pools and rivers and creeks and lakes. And God has positioned the clouds and the sky, if we follow the story, we know this happens after Noah, but for us, they're able to carry water to replenish the earth when it dries, to give life to all of the vegetation. God has intentionally set in place the sun and the moon, a constant that rises every single day. Back to the original question, why? Why? What is the point of all of it? What is His motivation?

Is God done yet after He creates the animals in [Genesis 1](#)? What is the last thing, at least in the [Genesis 1](#) creation story? [Genesis 2](#) gets mixed up a little bit, but in [Genesis 1](#), what's the last thing that God forms, that He brings forth, that He breathes His life, His spirit into? What's the last thing? This is the climax of the creation story. We've arrived, and I should have built it up more. We've reached the pinnacle of [Genesis 1](#) right here. This is the pinnacle of everything that God has done since verse 1. For what purpose?

Then God said, Let us make man in our image and in our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God creates man in His own image. In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He creates them. And God blessed them, and He said to them, Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, 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.

Introducing Us to a God Who Pursues Relationship

What was the point of God doing all of this? For you. For you. For humans. I would assert [Genesis 1](#) is not simply a detailed creation account. I would hope it would be longer and more detailed if that were the case. It's not just a detailed creation account, because it's rather vague at times, to be honest. It isn't just trying to make sense of all of the scientific mysteries in the universe and the cosmos. It's not necessarily trying to give some type of black and white scientific explanation for every single thing that we see.

No, the point, the big point of [Genesis 1](#), is to introduce us to a God who wants to pursue a relationship with humans, who wants to pursue a relationship with you. That's the climax of [Genesis 1](#). From the author's point of view, when we look down, when we look up, we see the skies, the clouds, the waters, the whales, the squirrels, the moose, the cows, pomegranates, bananas, sunsets, moonlight, rain, all of it. All of it was so that He could create a place to dwell with you. And it's beautiful. It's beautiful.

Are there neat things in [Genesis 1](#)? Are there displays of some type of historicity in how God created or gave function to the things in our universe? Yes. But that was not the climax of the chapter. It wasn't the point. Mankind was. This is how the story of the Bible starts, with a God who sees a place that's barren, a watery, deep chaos, where humans cannot dwell. He can dwell there. We cannot. And so He gets to work. And He does whatever it takes so that He can experience an intimate relationship with you. This is the potency of the character of our God that the author is displaying to us. And it's amazing. It gets me excited, and it kind of makes me feel loved, if I can be completely transparent.

A Community of Love Before Creation

He would do whatever it takes to make sure that His love can be shared in a community fashion. So Yeshua, in His prayer in John, He speaks about, before creation, the Father loved Me. Before creation, there was already a community of shared love. Let's look down. Let's make man in our image. We've got this chaos, this watery mix. We need to create a place that we can meet man in. Let's get to work.

Everything in creation was formed so that mankind could not only exist but be invited into that eternal divine community of love with the Father, with Yeshua. Yeshua continues to pray, and He says, Father, I pray that they would experience, that they would be one with You as I am, and that Your community of love would continue to grow and grow and grow, and subdue the earth, and overtake the earth, and have dominion over the earth and all things. That's beautiful. That's me. I think that's beautiful.

The Pattern of the Days

Now I do want to go over some of the literary genius that the author does in the chapter. So that's my passion, and now this is my geekiness. So the days of the week, we notice the days of the week, there's a pattern here. This is a great display of a chart that can be found in many different books. I got this one from the Dictionary of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch section.

It's table one, order of creation. So day one, what was created? Y'all can read it. I gave you the answers, open book.

Light and darkness are not necessarily created, but they're separated. Day and night as a result. Day two, the waters are separated. Sky and sea are a result. Day three, the waters gathered together, carved out. Land appears. So we're going to move the water away from this land, we're going to put that water over here, do this. And plants break forth, vegetation. And then day four, lights are formed, or created, to rule the day and the night, sun, moon, planets, and such. The birds and the sea creatures are created to live in the sky and in the sea, the two domains of water. And living creatures created to live on the land and eat the plants. And humans are also created.

So did you guys notice, and some of you may have, did you guys notice that the planets, the sun, moon, and stars were created like three days later after light was formed? No. And everyone's like, that don't make no sense. What do we do with that? We'll talk about that in a second.

Domains and What Fills Them

I want to show you this pattern, because on the left you will see the spheres of domain that God has created. And I think it's John Walton who talks about how they become more and more intimate with each day moving forward. We have the three days. We have light and darkness created on day one, and then a companion, or what is filled in that domain, is created over on day four. So day one is light and darkness are separated. Day four, now there's functionality within this domain, planets are created. Day two, what is it? The waters are separated. Well, then what happens on day five? The birds and the fish, the things that go with the waters, are put into place. They're introduced to the waters. Day three, the waters are gathered together and then they're sparsed out here, here, here, here, and then vegetation comes in. Well, what's next in the pattern in day six? What's going to eat the vegetation? The animals and humans.

So the author, this was intentional. Isn't that neat? Isn't that neat? And it's really cool. We see a lot of patterns like this in Scripture, and this was intentional, the domains and then what fills them. And I wonder if it's not so much about chronology, as we want to place, and so much about God dividing and ordering things the way that He wants them, in an orderly fashion, which is the total opposite of chaos. God takes chaos and makes order out of it. This is the God that we're introduced to in the first page of the Bible.

Light Before the Sun

So why is it, or how is it, how do we reconcile that God formed or called light on day one? Light's like, yeah, what you want? Called light. And then on day four He creates the sun, moon, and stars. I mean, the vegetation has already been growing before the sunlight. Photosynthesis, this doesn't make sense. What is happening?

So there's a few opinions on this. At some point in your life, you begin appreciating a lot of different opinions because of the thought and energy that's been put into them. There's one that has really sat well with me, and if I'm transparent, here we go. That's the idea, in the ancient world, which is true, that God is the all-encompassing source of all life and light. I know some of us are like, well, duh. I know, right? This is not complicated. This is very intuitive as human beings to read [Genesis 1](#) this way.

So is God the ultimate source of all energy and light and life and everything? Yeah. If we're New Testament Bible believers, then we think Yeshua is the source, okay? And so here we have two verses. [Psalm 36:9](#) is an amazing verse, because we see that theology written out. So the psalmist is praising God: For with You is the fountain of life. In Your light we see light. Some of you got it in your life. Whoa. This is how they perceived God. God, in Your light we see light. Just let that marinate for just a few seconds longer. You are the fountain of life. In Your light, we see light, right?

And it would not be such a far-fetched idea that an author 3,000 years ago used language that everyone at that time understood about their God. The sun doesn't have to be here for light. God is light. This is how they would have thought. Where do you think the sun gets it from? Duh, you know? And sometimes we get upset when we look at language like this. We get upset because we're like, well, we know the sun is a big old ball of burning gas, and that means [Genesis 1](#) is wrong. Hold your horses. Please hold your horses. Don't jump to that conclusion. Why is it wrong that people 3,000 years ago would dare use their philosophy of God being the center and source of all life and light before scientific discoveries?

Dominion and Responsibility

This is the same theology that we believe. It's no different than what we believe today. The very last chapter of the Bible—look at that! [Revelation 22:5](#)—talks about the new Jerusalem. This is the section of scripture about the tree of life, the wisdom of God, manifesting to all nations and bringing healing. There will be no more night. There will be no need to light the lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever and ever. It

says the same thing. It says in the previous chapter that the lamb is the source of light to the city. This is not some bogus, weird theology that we're reaching for. This is quite solid. So the fact that the planets were created a couple of days after light was called forth—that should make so much sense why the author would portray it in that fashion. Because God is the source of everything.

Now, hey, check this out. You good? Are we good to move on? OK, I'm just... This one I stayed with for a while when I got this. I didn't realize this until about a year ago. And God said, "Behold, I have given to you," and this is how he concludes the chapter. So mankind has been given rule over creation. It's their job to be his image bearer and to subdue the earth and to reign over the earth. And now he's given them a responsibility list. And he says, "Behold, I have given to you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree with seed and its fruit—you have them for food. 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. And God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was tov-tov—it was very good. And there was evening and morning—this was the sixth day.

So the humans eat the fruit-bearing and seed-bearing plants and trees, right? We already established this in creation—in day three, right? The animals do not. Do you notice that? What do the animals eat? They eat the green herbs—they eat something different than us, which is a call to responsibility. Because if we're supposed to have dominion over the animals, then we have to make sure that they have food. It's just a neat little nuance there. Richard Bauckham has a great book called **Living with Animals** that really highlights this section of Scripture.

Now, nowhere in the chapter are green herbs ever mentioned being created. Nowhere. Day three? No. Vegetation—generic vegetation—comes out. Then we ask: what kind of vegetation? Everything that bears seed. Seed-bearing plants, seed-bearing trees. This phrase "for green herbs" is not mentioned as being created in that day. Not there. It's the first time we see it in [Genesis 1](#). It's like it's an afterthought. "Oh, yeah, I created this too for the animals." I love that.

Who is the chapter about? Who's it about? Ultimately, the pinnacle of the chapter—humans. And everything that God did, for whom? Humans. And it's highlighting everything God is doing to bring mankind in. I guess he could mention green herbs, but what's that have to do with humans? They're not going to be eating it. So it's an afterthought at the end of the chapter. The animals eat this food, and creation reaches its pinnacle with God dwelling with humans and giving humans a job. To be his image bearers. To show the world what love, justice, and the rule

of God looks like. To rule this world in a way that God wants it ruled—so his image rules through you.

Curse and Consequence

And what happened in [Genesis 3](#)? I'm escaping the chapter. I know I'm not supposed to do that. What happened in [Genesis 3](#)? When mankind chose to rule the world the way that he wanted, he chose to impart self-fueling wisdom—to choose what good and evil was for himself. And what happened? Mankind received a curse. Adam and Eve got a curse, right? And what else was cursed? Creation. Creation took a step back and retracted a little bit.

So [Jeremiah 4](#) picks this up. If you could turn with me to [Jeremiah 4](#), I'd love for you to highlight this section because it's really beautiful. It's one of the three areas where *tohu v'vohu* is actually used. And Jeremiah is speaking to Israel, and he's speaking to this people that has totally turned their backs on God, and they have completely and utterly traded their righteous vocation—to be his image bearers—to pursue transgressions and sinfulness and idolatry in their life.

And it starts off in verse 1. It says, "So God is calling Israel back: Please, come back to me." In the chapter before this, metaphorically, they're married. Israel is married to God, and metaphorically God said, "I wrote you a will of divorce. I've totally pushed you out." But here in [Jeremiah 4](#), he's like, "Come back to me. Be my bride again so that the plan of creation can continue."

Israel's Refusal and Creation's Unraveling

And then in verse 22, of course, he keeps writing, and Israel's not coming back. "For my people are foolish. They know me not. They are stupid children. They have no understanding." Get this. Does this bring back some energy in here? "They think that they are wise. They are a room in doing evil, but how to do good they know not."

This is what it looks like when you take hold of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil while turning your back to God's wisdom. You determine it for yourself. Stupid children. You're morons. You think that you're wise. You think, "Oh, I'm wise. I can do—this is good." No, it's evil. You don't even know what good is because you haven't relied on the wisdom of God, which [Proverbs 3](#) says is the tree of life.

Verse 23: "I looked on the earth, on the land, and behold, it was without form and void. What are those words? To who of who who—and the heavens, and to the heavens I looked, and they had no light. And I looked in the mountains and behold they were quaking, and the hills moved to and fro. And I looked and behold there was no man, and all the birds in the air had fled. And I looked and behold the fruitful land was a desert, and all of its cities were laid to ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger. For thus says the Lord, the whole land was..."

Love that. Because of the sins of the people, God has made his place—his land that he created—for them to retract. [Jeremiah 4](#) is talking about creation being unraveled because of our sins. Literally, we are returning to a place of *tohu vavohu* because we are failing to follow the vocation that God has given to us. Because of the sins of the people, creation was made for mankind. Mankind rejects the reign of God, rejects his presence, rejects his blessing, and creation unravels as a result. The image bearers for which creation is reigned over have walked away from their duties, and creation is being reformed in light of their actions.

The Promise of Restoration

Now, the prophets understood this. They understood what was happening. And God began to speak to the prophets during the Babylonian exile, specifically Isaiah. And he began to say things like, "A time will come. A new image bearer, a king will come. And there will be a new creation—a new heavens and a new earth. A new sky and a new land. A new blessing from me. I will not stop pursuing you." Isaiah really takes the lead on this type of imagery. [Isaiah 65:17](#): "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things will not be remembered nor come to mind." Or [Isaiah 43:18-19](#): "Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. See, I'm doing a new thing."

Now look at the words here—the imagery. Now it springs up. Do you perceive it? "I am making a way in the wilderness and streams are gushing forth in the wasteland." Going back to [Genesis 1](#)—to that *tohu vavohu*—I will bring order to this chaos, this empty place, this wilderness. I will bring life that will sprout forth.

[Isaiah 66:22](#)—this is a verse that is telling us about the character of our God: "For just as the new heavens and the new earth, which I make, will endure before me, nothing is going to make them change. For what I'm about to do, nothing is powerful enough to revert this creation back. So your offspring and your name will also endure. I'm about to do something that's going to change everything and it will endure. And there's nothing anyone can do to try to push it back."

The Gospel of John

As believers in Yeshua, we should be getting slightly excited about the prophecies of Isaiah because we know who they're talking about. We know who they're talking about. There's hope.

And you know, I love John. I talk about John a lot, and I talk about this verse probably in most of my messages. This man, this disciple of the King, decided to begin his account of what God has done. This is so radical, so life-changing, so world-changing, that John doesn't begin the Gospel with Jesus born of a virgin. He doesn't begin the account with "Jesus was born of a virgin." He doesn't begin with, "Yeshua is the Son of God." He doesn't begin with, "Yeshua died for your sins. Yeshua forgave you." No! That's not how John begins. John begins in John chapter 1 with, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The God Who Pursues

And He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of man. The light shines into the darkness, and the darkness could not overcome it. There was a man sent by God whose name was John. He came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in this world, and the world was made through him. Yet the world did not know him. He came to his own and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God, who were born not of blood, not of tribal inheritance, not of DNA, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen his glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John is rewriting the creation story of [Genesis 1](#) in light of what God has done through Yeshua. He's writing the new creation account that was prophesied by Isaiah. Guys, [Genesis 1](#) sets the stage, starting the story about a God who will do anything pursuing a relationship with you. Anything. Anything. [Genesis 1](#) sets the stage to tell us about a God that will not stop at anything to make sure that he will have a dwelling place with you that will endure. That's the point of [Genesis 1](#). That's how the story of the Bible starts, introducing us to that kind of God.

Paul, of course, we know the verses. Paul agrees with this. [2 Corinthians 5](#), 17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old things have passed away. Behold, the new things have come. [2 Corinthians 2](#). For he says, In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the

day of salvation I helped you. Then Paul gets serious now. What's he say? He says, I tell you, now is the time of God's favor. Now is the day of salvation. When? In the future? We always think of the new heavens and the new earth being this like some futuristic thing that's going to happen a long time from now. If we just sit here and be patient and die and believe in Yeshua, like we're going to get there. I hate when people strip stuff out of context, too.

New Creation Has Come

To Paul, the new creation where God's mercy and grace is unescapable. Everything that [Genesis 1](#) was supposed to be, a world where God would pour out his spirit and love onto mankind to be embraced. To Paul, this has happened. This has happened. New creation has come. The former things have passed away. The sin in your life no longer has hold on you. The darkness no longer mixes with the light. A boundary, a sanctuary has been set up to protect you, to cover you. A life of *tohu vavohu* has been made new. No longer are you living in the barren world dawning on darkness. No, there's light. And the light of man has come.

And Paul felt new creation was birthing now, right now, today. Today is the day of your salvation. Don't you know? New creation has been birthed. We talk about enduring to the end. Yeah, I'm going to endure to the end to experience God's glory and salvation and blessing. No, today is the day, and it's happening now, and you have a choice that you can make right now to enter into that new creation and leave behind the life of *Tohu Vavohu* and experience what the orderly love and light of God can be and what can sprout forth from that. New creation has been birthed through the person of Yeshua, and it's continuing to do exactly what it was meant to do. Overtake the earth. Subdue it. [Genesis 1](#) is a story about God creating a place where he will ultimately dwell with us, and we find that place. We find that place in the person of Yeshua.

That's the point of [Genesis 1](#). That's the point of the Bible. That's the point of the gospel, that we would dwell with God.

Dwell with God

So please stand as we conclude services with worship. Worship team, you guys can come up. I don't know where you're at today. I hope that this message has inspired you to dive into the Bible and into this beautiful word that has been passed down for thousands of years for us to experience and learn about the wisdom and the character of this God that loves us so much. It's worthy to pick up and read. And I know sometimes we get in the habit of not reading it or only

reading it. Read this beautiful text that so many people put so much energy into for you. This is the text that tells you about the God that we have faith in.

Guys, during worship, we have a prayer team that's always available to the left and the right. If you need prayer for anything in your life, guys, we have a prayer team that's devoted to going before the Father with you, alongside you. Take advantage of that. I don't know where you're at today. Maybe you're not struggling with a life of *tohu v'vohu*. Maybe you're not struggling with a life that is far from God. Maybe you're struggling in times of your life right now that you feel close with God, but you just don't understand the pain that you're going through, the struggle that you're going through. If you would like someone to go alongside you in prayer for peace, we have people here today.

Alvina Malkinu, our Father, our King, Father, we thank you for this time together. Father, we thank you for your wisdom. We thank you for your word, the truth of your word that lasts forever. Father, we thank you. We thank you that you did not leave us in a place of *tohu v'vohu*, a place of creation undone that we caused, that you would stop at nothing to pursue and endure a relationship with us, that you would send your son Yeshua to birth the new creation where we can find your peace and your love in your arms. In Yeshua's name we pray. Amen. Shalom.

I'm Matthew Vanderels, and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives. If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we would love to hear from you. Send us a message through our contact form on our website and let us know how God has used this ministry to edify your faith and relationship with Him. Don't forget to subscribe by clicking here. And if you'd like to donate to this ministry and be a part of what God is doing through it, you can donate through our website at www.foundingtruth.com or by clicking here. We thank you for your continued support and we look forward to next time. Shalom.

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