

In The Beginning

Lesson 1

Introduction: Genesis is the foundation of all Scripture. Both the Old and New Testaments repeatedly affirm its veracity. The New Testament refers Genesis approximately 200 times, with 165 direct quotations and approximately 100 of these references are from Genesis 1-11. For excellent introductory information on Genesis, see *The Book of Genesis* by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum (available on Amazon.com). Dr. Fruchtenbaum's work will serve as a major source for these lessons, and page citations will reference his commentary on Genesis unless otherwise noted.

- I. The Creation—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).
 - A. The Bible begins with the assumption of God without any attempt to prove His existence.
 1. Believing in God is the beginning of faith: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).
 2. While intellectual arguments for the existence of God may be helpful to some skeptics, the Bible simply begins by assuming His existence. The Bible was written to God's people, not to skeptics.
 - B. "The beginning" is the beginning of time as opposed to eternity. Time began (from the human perspective) when creation began.
 - C. "Created"—The Hebrew word is *bara* and it is exclusively used of God. Never is man said to *bara*. (See Fruchtenbaum, p. 29)
 1. *Bara* can mean creation out of nothing (heavens, earth) or creation out of something (God's creating man of the dust of the ground) but it is always an act of God.
 2. When God creates, the act is always "new, fresh, and good" (p. 29). God's *bara* activity is always positive and commendable.
 3. *Bara* has the idea of shaping, forming, transforming.
 4. God created (*bara*) the heavens and the earth, animal life, and man.
 5. "What happens in Genesis 1:1 is that God called the universe into existence, and He created the universe *ex nihilo*, Latin for "out of nothing." (See Romans 4:17 and Hebrews 11:3.)
 - D. "The heavens" were created before the earth.
 1. This includes the entire universe—planets, suns, stars, galaxies, etc.
 2. Heavens is plural, referring to both the first heaven (the atmosphere) and second heaven (stars, planets, etc.).
 - E. "Earth"—As differentiated from the heavens, earth would eventually become the dwelling place of man (Ps. 115:16).
 - F. As we shall see, Genesis 1:1 is an introduction to the 6 days of creation. It is NOT part of the 6 days. This is a very important and controversial point! God did NOT create "the heavens and the earth" on the first day of creation.

- II. The Chaos—“And the earth was without form and void...” (Gen. 1:2)
- A. The Initial Chaos View
1. Some interpreters seek to make verse two describe the process of creation. God created the heavens and the earth, but they were “without form and void”—a mess. In other words, they contend that God made the heavens and earth in the rough and then fixed them up. This is known as the Initial Chaos View.
 2. However, Hebrew grammar indicates that verse two is not a result of verse 1. (For a complete discussion of the Hebrew grammar, see Fruchtenbaum, pp. 34-35.)
 3. “Genesis 1:2 describes the circumstances of the earth before 1:3 and not as a result of 1:1” (p. 34).
 4. The Initial Chaos View sees Genesis 1:1-3 as descriptive of the first day of creation, something the Bible never says. It is important to understand that to insert the creation of “the heavens and the earth” into the first day of creation (as defined in Gen. 1:3) is an assumption without *any* textual merit. It destroys the careful symmetry of the 6 day creation story.
 5. Although this view is popularly held by many Young Earth Creationists (Morris, Whitcomb, Ham, etc.) it is unnecessary to believing in a literal 6 day creation. The earth may be very old but creation as it pertains to the world as we know it today is very young. The concept of old earth/young creation is not contradictory, and it honors the Biblical text.
- B. The Gap Theory
1. Summarized:
 - a. Genesis 1:1 describes the initial creation—beautiful, appealing, good
 - b. Between Genesis 1:2 and 1:2 there is a gap of time of unknown duration. Somewhere in this gap, Satan fell—creating the chaos of verse 2.
 - c. The chaos on the earth was the result of divine judgment for Satan’s transgression (Ezek. 28:11-19).
 - d. Genesis 1:3 marks the beginning of creation—God’s recreating the beauty, perfections, and majesty of the earth. And ultimately God’s creating man and giving him (not Satan) dominion over the earth.
 2. Misrepresented:
 - a. Opponents of the Gap Theory view it as an “accommodation” to modern science, primarily geological science, which came to postulate an old earth.
 - b. Some opponents wrongly view the Gap Theory as a convenient way to dismiss dinosaurs and the entire fossil record. This, however, is not true. Old Earth/Young Creation believers have no problem with dinosaurs and the fossil record. Those are part of the creation and belong to the time period of Adam forward.
 3. Supported:
 - a. The Gap Theory was popularized in the notes of the C.I. Scofield Reference Bible and was welcomed by fundamentalists. Many

conservative Bible scholars hold to the Gap Theory. It is not a fundamental of the Christian faith and is a point about which good Christians may differ.

- b. The Bible affirms that the earth, as originally created, was NOT a wasteland: “For this saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it, he created it not in vain [not a waste], he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else” (Isa. 45:18).
- c. The words “without form and void” (Heb. *tohu, vohu*) are used together in only two other places in the Old Testament. Both times they refer to judgment (Isa 34:11 and Jer. 4:23). Their initial use together in Genesis set the stage for their use later referencing God’s judgment. Remember, the Gap Theory postulates that the earth became “without form and void” as a result of God’s judgment on Satan’s fall.

From *The Gap Is Not a Theory* by Jack W. Langford

1. Both the English translations and the Hebrew text present a formula defining the creative activities of God on the 6 days of creation. Each day begins with “and God said” and ends with “and the evening and the morning were the first (or second, third, etc.) day.” Verses 1 and 2 stand outside of the formula. It is an assumption unmerited by the text to include those verses in the first day. It simply doesn’t say that.
2. There can be no Hebrew “day” until light is created, marking the first day. Light alone was created on day 1. Prior to day one there was the universe, the earth, and darkness.
3. Each day of creation *begins* with the words “And God said...” Verses 1-2 do not have that wording, therefore, they are not part of the first day.
4. The Holy Spirit hovering over the face of the waters signals the beginning of the first day of creation. Note that the earth was already present.
5. The work God accomplished on each day is carefully defined for each day. Creation of the earth is NOT within the defined days.
6. The heavens and the earth were in existence prior to the 6 day creative activity of God. The initial creation was witnessed by the heavenly angelic host (Job 38:1-7). Note the fact that angels witnessed the initial creation of the earth assumes their creation prior to the universe.

The Angelic Connection

1. Angels were created by God prior to the creation of our universe and earth. Think of it as God having two families: The heavenly host (angels) and human beings—both made in His image. The heavenly host was created first; man was created later.
2. Satan had access to the initially created earth, and likely it was his special dwelling place (Ezek. 28:11-16). Fruchtenbaum comments: “...the created earth of Genesis 1:1 became the abode of Satan; and he was the guardian over the earth in its original form (p. 38).