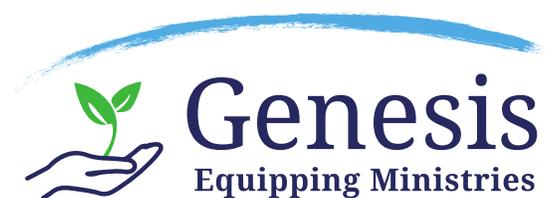


In the Beginning, God...

Irrelevant and Extreme or Relevant and Credible?

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Scripture Text:

Genesis 1:1-2:4 New International Version (NIV)

[Passage Link On Bible Gateway](#)

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² 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.

³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

⁶ And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

⁹ And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each



according to its kind.” And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

²⁹ Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

2 ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.



Sermon Text:

“In the beginning, God.” These 4 first words of the Holy Bible are packed full of meaning, and that meaning is central to our lives as relevant and credible Christians. Did you realize that Christians today are viewed as irrelevant and extreme? David Kinneman and Gabe Lyons wrote a book about it, titled *Good Faith – Being a Christian When Society Thinks You’re Irrelevant and Extreme*. Unfortunately, this is largely of our own doing. We could just shake it off and say, “Who cares? I really don’t care what others think of me.” But I challenge you – if you can’t express what you believe as something relevant and credible, do you really understand what you believe? How can we ever be good witnesses for Christ if we can’t discuss what we believe in ways that are relevant and credible? Let’s begin at the beginning and try, shall we? Please pray with me. (prayer).

Were you taught as I was, that there are some topics polite people just don’t discuss – religion, politics, and maybe money? But avoiding such conversations altogether implies we either don’t care or we can’t respectfully articulate the issues. This is precisely why Paul suggested women of a particular church should keep quiet in church and learn at home from their husbands. They were uneducated and didn’t have enough knowledge or learning to respectfully engage in the issues. The point however is not to stay ignorant and quiet, but to study and become a bit more articulate and able to engage. Jesus talked an awful lot about these three topics especially, so ignorance masquerading as politeness is simply a cop out. Of course this doesn’t happen overnight, but by coming to church and really digesting the Scriptures and sermons, by attending Sunday School and Bible Studies, and by reading carefully selected books and discussing them, and by applying what we DO understand, we are preparing to engage in conversation. We need Christians engaged in every conversation! Especially the difficult ones!

My purpose is not to make you a master conversationalist, but I want to you internalize the real meaning of what we’re reading in Scripture and why it matters. Today’s topic of discussion – Creation.



“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” A study note in my Bible says “This simple statement is one of the most challenging concepts confronting the modern world.” You got that right! At this point, let me put in a plug for getting a good Study Bible. I highly recommend the NIV Life Application Study Bible. Remember I said we should get carefully selected books and discuss them? Well, before you buy book #1, get a good Study Bible! Those who put together the study notes did a great deal of research and their notes were vetted and approved by a number of expert biblical scholars. The notes tend to be well-balanced, credible and relevant – thus the “Life Application” in the title. Anyway, think about it. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Do you believe this? If we don’t believe the first line in Scripture, the rest doesn’t hold much of a chance. So if we believe this, does this mean we disbelieve the theory of evolution? (Paraphrasing a sidebar in my Study Bible) The Bible doesn’t discuss the subject of evolution. Rather its worldview assumes God created the world. The biblical view of creation is not in conflict with science; rather it is in conflict with any worldview that starts without a creator. Hear me in this – there is no requirement for Christians to ignore or disprove the discoveries of science. Many of the best scientists of old believed they were studying God’s creation, and had no clue that future generations would polarize the two, science from theology.

Equally committed and sincere Christians have struggled with the subject of Creation and come to differing conclusions. This is expected as the evidence is very old and quite fragmented. We all should avoid black/white thinking or polarizations. Students of the Bible must be careful not to make the Bible say what it doesn’t say, and students of science must not make science say what it doesn’t say. On both sides, there’s been a lot of “whisper down the lane” sharing that takes us far from scientific evidence or claims in Scripture.

Think of creation this way – The Bible attempts to tell us what and why, while science is studying how. Have you ever read Darwin’s Origin of the Species? I had to read large portions of it in Seminary. I was not taught to blindly dismiss any claims, but to read it and understand it. Darwin was not trying to disprove a Creator, in fact he uses the term Creator with a capital C. His theory, and it is still just a theory, is an outline of HOW he believes we reached our current natural world order. Is or was each species created individually and



distinctly or does one evolve into another? His argument involves the survival of the fittest theory and he believes that every species that ever existed is a product of the species that lived before it. But his theory has many holes which are also clearly documented in his book. Why are we not seeing all stages of evolution currently, but only distinctly different ones? Why do some cross-breeds end up infertile while other variations can mate? How do you describe instincts? And the clincher for me... how do we explain simple systems evolving into very complex organs with new and specific functions, like an eyeball or something similar? He admits he has never seen nor has complete evidence of a new species being started... only adapting to its environment. So you see... it's only an imperfect theory. People have attached to it far more credibility perhaps than it deserves. Darwin was not disproving God... just studying the approach of creation. Evidence supports that there were likely many species started at the beginning (created by God) as is told in the Biblical account, and then those created species evolved into what we see today, some becoming extinct and others adapting to thrive. Then there's the Big Bang theory. Again- a HOW, not a THAT or a WHY. There is no need to argue with science. But we need to boldly point out that these scientific theories do not disprove or prove the existence of an almighty God.

Both Creation and evolution take us back to another tough question. What came first? If we answer God and think we've answered the shortcoming of evolution, I might ask you – so who created God? To even ask that question is to assume there was another creator before God. At some point, we are forced to stop asking that question and realize that there had to be something that has always existed. God is that Infinite Being who has always been and who was created by no one. This is difficult to understand because our minds are finite – limited to time and space. We can't comprehend fully the infinite. For example, what's the largest number? We simply cannot limit the infinite God by our finite understanding.

That does not mean that God is simply our answer for everything unexplained (so far) in our universe. Nor can we be threatened when science learns something new. Revisit Scripture and search for understanding. Yes, our interpretations of scripture may be



challenged at different times, but so far, science has not disproved Scripture... in fact there is more and more evidence to support what's written in scripture now than ever.

Through science we learn more and more of the marvels of God's creation! The vast galaxy we live in is spinning at the incredible speed of 490,000 miles an hour, but even at this breakneck speed, our galaxy still needs 200 million years to make one rotation. And there are over one billion other galaxies just like ours in the universe. Some scientists say that the number of stars in creation is equal to all the grains of all the sands on all the beaches of the world. Yet this complex sea of spinning stars functions with remarkable order and efficiency. To say that the universe "just happened" or "evolved" entirely from nothing requires more faith than to believe that God is behind these amazing statistics. God truly did create a wonderful universe!

As we read and try to digest this Creation account, we must remember that there are various kinds of writing found in scripture. There's ancient history, poetry, biography, parable and yes, mythology. There is no modern history or scientific literature found in the Bible. Yet it still contains all we need to know for salvation. At first I was greatly offended when my professor of Old Testament Study referred to parts of Scripture as mythology. Wikipedia says myths are the stories people tell to explain nature, history and customs. And that recent approaches often view myths as manifestations of psychological, cultural, or societal truths, rather than as inaccurate historical accounts. Am I saying that the Creation Story is a myth? Well, if I am, it does NOT mean it doesn't contain important truths for us. Remember, it is a story about the fact THAT God created and about why, NOT HOW.

God did not need to create the universe; he chose to create it. Why? God is love, and love is best expressed toward something or someone else – so God created the world and people as an expression of his love. This is not just about disputing science – God created the universe because he loves us. This is relevant and central to how we experience life! I feel for those who don't know or who deny this! Gods' deepest desire is to relate to and fellowship with the people he created. With you and with me.

The creation story also teaches us much about God and ourselves. About God we learn that God is creative; as the Creator, God is distinct from his creation; and we learn that God



is eternal and in control of the world. This is comforting. When things seem crazy in my life, I can simply pause. Be still and know that God is still in control.

When God was creating man, God said “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule”. Why use the plural for God? This references the Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We know the Holy Spirit was hovering over the waters at Creation and from several NT scriptures (specifically Colossians 1:16), we know Jesus was at work in creation as well. So from this creation story we learn about the Trinitarian God. This is significant! Today is Trinity Sunday. It’s a day we set aside to recognize that there is a 3-person-in-one-God. Why does this matter? God is relationship. So when God created us in God’s image, He created us to be in relationship – with God, with each other and with all of creation. This is another reason I just can’t accept that God created the world simply by getting things started, then left us alone and let evolution take over entirely. While I accept there is species modification/evolution over time, I believe in a God and experience God as one who is intimately interested in us as his best creation and who is involved in the essence of our daily lives.

God chose to create us, and we are valuable in God’s eyes. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Neither man nor woman is made more in the image of God than the other. From the beginning, the Bible places both man and woman at the pinnacle of God’s creation. Neither sex is exalted, and neither is depreciated. This is significant too! These kinds of truth should cause us to push for this to remain true in our current society. We need to value men in nontraditional roles of parenting, nursing and teaching, and women should receive equal pay for equal work. We should fight against oppression in all of its ugly forms. This is also Peace with Justice Sunday. It is a day when we reaffirm our commitment to respect the dignity and value of every human being- every human being, regardless of gender, race, age, creed or anything else. Every human is precious in God’s eyes.

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” People sometimes feel guilty for having a good time or for feeling good about their accomplishments. No need for that! God felt good about his work and we can too. Of course we should only be pleased with the work that God would also be pleased with. But celebrate your successes!



So – another question that always comes up relative to this scripture - Did God create the world in 6 literal days? Some believe so, but most believe that each day represents an indefinite period of time (even millions of years). The point isn't how long it took God, but that there was order to it, and that God created humankind as unique beings capable of communication with him. No other part of creation can claim that! It is not important how long it took God to create the world, whether a few days or a few billion years, but that he created it just the way he wanted it.

Then of course came the Fall when sin entered the world and evolution took a different path. This is a sermon for another day, but God had to create us with freedom to choose God's way or another way. Love isn't really love unless it's given by choice. Unfortunately, we have a long history of choosing badly and the world suffers for it. God knew this was inevitable and provided the way to be reconciled back to God- He sent his Son Jesus Christ to pay the price for our sins. We have spent eternity trying to get back to that unspoiled state walking in the Garden with our God, and one day we will see that again. It really comes down to a choice. God did all the work – creation and redemption. But do we choose to believe it? It's a life choice. If we choose to believe, it has implications for our lives. If we choose not to believe, that has implications as well. We are choosing our way over God's way – the exact sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of creation.

That's another sermon, but you see, there is not a word in scripture that is irrelevant. It is all relevant and we need to understand it and explain it in credible ways. It should drive our behavior in every way today. Let's not get sidetracked by people who want to argue about things there is no need to argue about. It distracts from the important learning.

God created the world – heavens and earth, and filled it. We do NOT learn from scripture that evolution was not involved...it very well may be. God created it and us out of love and continues to love us today. We can communicate with God and co-create with God as we care for the planet with God-given authority. We mustn't abuse or forget these roles, but enjoy God and God's creation.

Why should we care that God created the world? Why do we want to help others to understand this? Because we want everyone to know that they matter. They are not an accident. There's an amazing God who loves them and knows them! I saw a sign in a gift



store a couple weeks ago... it didn't say "Jesus loves me, this I know", but "Jesus knows me, this I love." So true!

Let's not be Christians who are irrelevant, even if we may seem extreme, but let us speak about things of God because they are relevant and let's do so in credible ways so all may experience God's love and know they matter. Amen.

