

## It's Creative Not Chaotic Genesis 1:2

Regarding our verse this morning there are many Biblical scholars who don't agree on its interpretation. Much of it has to do with their consideration of what science has to say about the age of the earth. As I have studied I will share with you my understanding of this verse in light of verse 1 and about creation. You may disagree with me based on your own study and understanding and I'll still love you.

My aim is to do this all in one message but there is enough here to spend a month of Sundays in discussion. I have five thoughts from the passage.

- The misunderstandings about creation
- The mass at creation
- The murkiness at creation
- The movement at creation
- The miracle of the new creation

### I. THE MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT CREATION

Both science and religion have added to the confusion and misunderstanding about this verse. Science wants to avoid the theological implications all together and many religious views want to interpret the verse in light of science which also adds to the confusion.

Some biblical scholars believe that this verse must be interpreted culturally meaning that we must consider the prevailing ideology of the day about creation. For example, according to some critical scholars they argue that the word deep is a remnant of Mesopotamian mythology from the creation account called Enuma Elish. In that account Marduk is the supreme god who wants to create the universe, but before he could do that he had to defeat Tiamut the goddess of the deep or the goddess of chaos. These scholars connect the Babylonian word Tiamut and the Hebrew word

Tehom refers to the same thing. They conclude that the Hebrew God had to defeat the chaos deity Tiamut who was the darkness in order to bring about His creation from the chaos that had ensued for time unknown.

Other scholars and scientists suggest that earlier civilizations had limited or primitive understanding about the field of science which led them to hold beliefs that are now disproved today by what they consider to be scientific evidence for origins. They say the evidence for such origins is overwhelmingly convincing. Let me suggest that it is only convincing based on the foundation from which you build your origins model. For example, the evidence for the evolutionist is the same evidence used by the creationist. The outcomes are entirely different because one views it from man's word, the other views it from God's Word.

So, let's look at some of the theories about origins as it relates to this verse.

The obvious place to begin since we are discussing misunderstandings about creation is the theory of evolution.

#### A. The Theory of Evolution

For almost 40 years my twin brother has taught anatomy and physiology at both the high school and college level in both Christian and secular institutions. A couple of years ago he began teaching a college course in biology at Cornerstone University alongside of a professor who will be retiring. For almost 30 years he has taught his anatomy course at the Junior college in Grand Rapids. Last semester they asked him to teach a course in biology, but it was with the understanding that he had to teach the material in the book and could not teach biology from a creationist perspective. He had to teach evolution. He couldn't even suggest that there were ideas other than evolution. He couldn't even tell the students

that if they wanted to discuss other ideas about creation to see him after class. He did however have a student approach him after class and they met in his office. The student was a Christian and was confused on the whole creation thing so my brother discussed the Biblical view of 6 days.

Evolution simply means change in any direction. To say that there has been a great evolution in the field of electronics would be a correct way to use the word. But to a scientist who believes in the evolutionary process of origins they mean change by natural processes that comes through mutations which they say are for the better. The theory suggests that several billion years ago there was a chemical reaction in the sea caused by the sun and cosmic energy resulting in a zap if you will within the muck that brought about a single celled organism. Over time it continued to mutate and through the process of natural selection eventually developed into living plants, then into animals, and into people. So never mind that your ancestor may be a monkey, if you are a vegan you may be eating a relative.

For evolution to work lots of time is needed for these incremental changes to occur. The problem is, they keep moving the dates. When Darwin made his famous trip to the Galapagos Islands to study nature he concluded that the evolutionary theory of Charles Lyell was correct and wrote his book *Origin of the Species* postulating his theory. Much of his conclusions came from observing what became known as Darwin's Finches. He saw different kinds of Finch's and concluded based on the size of the birds and the shape of their beaks that they had mutated into different kinds. Among other so called evidences he concluded evolution was the process of origins.

People who are a lot smarter than me look at the same Finches and conclude that they are in fact still Finches. Living in a different habitat was the reason they adapted to their environment. In one area

Finches fed on seeds and only needed a small beak. In another area their diet was on nuts and needed a harder, bigger beak. They didn't change in kind, they changed within the species.

They didn't mutate into another kind of bird or animal which is what evolution suggests happens over time. Evolutionists believe that dinosaurs evolved from birds.

Over millions of years the mutations eventually resulted in you and me. In his writings Darwin stated that the process of evolution could be witnessed in humans suggesting that the European Homo Sapien was superior. The negro and especially the Aborigines of Australia were the most inferior kinds of humans, lower on the evolutionary ladder. They even went so far as to show man's missing link by putting a pygmy on display in a cage at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair.

Let me sum up evolution with three main points.

1. A big bang caused by an explosion of condensed matter of rotating protons and neutrons resulted in the formation of galaxies, stars and planets.
2. The subsequent cosmos eventually brought life completely and randomly by chance when a single celled organism appeared from non-living matter.
3. From that one chance happening moment when life began all other organisms have evolved from simpler life forms to more complex life forms, eventually evolving into man. The formula for evolution is mutation + natural selection x time. Incidentally someone postulated that the probability of evolution as the means of origins is  $10^{243}$  or 1 with 243 zeros after it meaning the fraction is so small you could say the probability of evolution being the source of origins is zero.

We could talk a lot more about evolution but we simply don't have time.

## B. Theistic Evolution Theory

This is how some biblical scholars reconcile evolution and theology. God started it and as the ages ensued occasionally stepped in and give evolution a nudge in the right direction. They do not believe the days of Genesis 1 are literal but believe them to be ages of time, taking at face value the dating methods of secular scientists who suggest that the process of evolution has been millions of years. Eve poses a bit of a conundrum for theistic evolutionists in that they believe Adam came through the natural processes of evolution but Eve did not come from a pre-existing form of life. She was a special creation.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it was a Roman Catholic priest Pierre de Chardin who postulated the idea of theistic evolution and others, even protestant scholars, joined him. Some refer to this as micro evolution that within God's design there are small evolutionary steps that advance the DNA of plants and animals. Essentially they hold that God created but evolution continues to fine tune the creation.

A concern with this theory is that death and disease are evident prior to God's curse in Genesis 3.

## C. The Gap Theory

Another name for this theory is the ruin-reconstruction theory or the restitution theory. Like Theistic evolution which tries to reconcile the origin of man with an evolutionary ideology, the gap theory tries to reconcile verses 1 and 2 with geology. Using such things as radiometric or carbon 14 dating, which looks at the rate of uranium decaying in rock, scientists conclude that the age of rocks are millions and billions of years old.

To test the accuracy of radiometric or carbon dating, some creation scientists took samples of the hardened lava from the Mt. St. Helens eruption that occurred in 1980 and sent them to three independent

labs for dating analysis. They didn't tell them where the samples came from. These scientists knew the date of the rock formation, but when the results came back each lab had a different conclusion on the age of the sample. They concluded from the testing that the samples weren't decades old but each one estimating it to be millions of years. None of the three labs agreed on the date.

Fundamentally the gap theory is held by Biblicists who conclude that God did indeed create in Genesis 1:1 a perfect and beautiful world that was populated by plants and animals. Some even believe there was a form of pre-Adamic man on the earth at that time. Between verses 1 and 2 is the timeframe they believe Satan fell in rebellion against God bringing sin to the universe. They cite Isaiah 45:18 as a supporting passage in which God "fashioned and made the earth, He founded it; He did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited."

God brought judgment, hence the ensuing chaos and darkness in verse 2 that included a global flood followed by the darkness and ice age in which everything, including man if he existed was destroyed. All the fossil records in the various layers are a result of this judgment. What follows in verse 3 is a reconstruction or recreation of the earth. It is a restored earth not an original creation. I know of some who believe that this reconstruction has occurred multiple times, that God keeps working at it until it's right – recreation, sin, judgment, emptiness, reconstruction and so the cycle continues.

They believe that the word "was" in verse 2 really means "became". In verse 1 the universe was perfect. Between verse 1 and 2 sin came resulting in verse 2 where the universe became chaotic and dark and then in verse 3 God started over. They say that the phrase "without form and void" refers to an evil condition that was not part of God's original plan because He did not make it without form according to Isaiah 45:18. Darkness refers to evil.

They also believe that God's instruction to Adam to replenish the earth infers that it must have been previously populated.

You can see that there are some, well, gaps in this theory.

#### D. The Solar Days or Ages Theory

This theory has four similar but separate theories.

a. The days are literal 24 hour days.

b. The days are understood to be long ages or what science calls the geological ages that occurred over long periods of time. Each is millions of years long.

Ordovician age – 440 million years ago

Devonian age – 375 million years ago

Permian age – 251 million years ago

Triassic age – 200 million years ago

Cretaceous age – 66 million years ago

They defend this view with a verse like II Peter 3:8 which says a day and thousand years are the same to the Lord, which by the way, is a passage on salvation not about creation.

c. The days of creation are literal 24 hour days but there are long ages between each of the days.

d. The revolutionary-day theory which holds that the days have nothing to do with God's creating the universe, but rather when Moses wrote Genesis God took six days to tell him about creation.

Next week we'll talk more about the word day when we begin to look at the 6 days of creation.

You can see just from these theories that there is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding even among biblical scholars who want to reconcile evolution and creation. Let me conclude this point with some thoughts written by Charles Ryrie in his book *Basic Theology* which I hope will help galvanize your

thinking about this passage and launch us into looking at verse 2.

“There was an actual, factual, historical, supernatural Creation of the heavens, earth, and man by God. To deny, adjust, or compromise this by casting doubt on the reliability of Genesis does not do away with this truth, or the original creative activity of God as mentioned elsewhere in the Bible (Exodus 20:11; 31:17; I Chronicles 1:1; Job 38:4-7; Matthew 19:4-5; I Corinthians 11:7-8). If Genesis is untrustworthy, so must other parts of the Bible be... Ultimately we have to believe what God has revealed about Creation. No human being was present when it happened. But the revelation of it was given by God, who is true, to Moses, who was an educated and reliable writer. Though not all the details are included in the record, many facts are, and they should be exegeted in the same way as other Scriptures are. Furthermore, the truths revealed in Genesis are attested to in other parts of the Bible and by our Lord.”

Let me add this thought before we move on and this comes as a reminder from verse 1 and our discussion on the Hebrew word bara which means to create. That word refers to an instantaneous, miraculous act of God to create, as the word means, ex nihilo – out of nothing. God didn't need millions of years, or evolution to create the universe. Some have asked, but couldn't He have used those means to bring about the existence of the universe. To that I say, yes He could have, but that's not what the Bible says or even what it means. It says He created. Elsewhere it says He spoke and it happened. So what then, does it mean in verse 2 that “the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters”?

Let's consider each of those clauses separately. First there is the mass at creation.

#### II. The Mass At Creation

Notice right away that we have come down from the panoramic view of the entire universe in verse 1 to a very specific point or place within the universe focusing on the earth in verse 2. As a matter of fact we can say that in regard to all of His creation, God's focus is on the earth as we see throughout Scripture. Everything that unfolds from here on out is about the apex of His creative act called man. But before we get to man we need to figure out what He meant in verse 2.

First there is this mass called earth. Verse 2 says it was formless and empty or void. Scofield in his notes suggests two options. The first is what is called the Original Chaos interpretation. This view says that the original matter was formless. Essentially it was just a big blob of unformed matter. In this state it was in the first stage of creation and no one knows how long it was in this condition. He then suggests a second theory which is called the Divine Judgment interpretation. We touched on this a moment ago and essentially what he says about verse 2 is that this isn't the original condition of the earth which was made perfect in verse 1 but the sin of Satan rendered it chaotic so God brought judgment on it and made it formless awaiting His reconstruction which would begin in verse 3.

For example, you have a beautiful home with everything you ever wanted in it. One day there is a fire that destroys your home and all that is left is a burnt out shell. You have to wait for insurance to assess the damage and award you with a settlement so that you can rebuild your home.

That's essentially what the Reconstructionist believes. There was a beautiful home called earth. It was laid waste by Satan's sin. God destroyed it and He will recreate it.

The term formless and empty is only used one other place in Scripture and is found in Jeremiah 4:23 where it says the same thing as Genesis 1:2.

Jeremiah likens the spiritual condition of the nation of Israel to the condition of the world at the beginning of creation, they were in a state of emptiness and darkness. That is a description of many people today and certainly that was our condition before Christ.

I believe that what the verse is saying is that in its current condition as described here in verse 2 the earth is uninhabitable. It is not fit for anything to live. It's the first stage of day one. The rest of the chapter will then explain what God did to make it fit for life to exist. He didn't need millions of years, He only needed days.

So is this a description of primitive matter or the result of a catastrophic event?

After studying this passage it is my belief first that this is not the result of a catastrophic event due to the sin and fall of Satan in which the earth became darkened due to sin after its initial perfect creation. If that was the case, the curse God placed on creation in chapter 3 actually occurred before earlier in time. Otherwise you must consider the fall of man and the subsequent curse on the earth to be a second time of chaos on the planet.

I also don't believe that there was just a blob of nothingness that existed for a long time before God made up His mind about what to do with it.

I certainly don't believe that we are the nth attempt at creation in which all previous creations were failed attempts by an inept but well-meaning God who couldn't get it right the first time.

And neither do I accept that it all just happened by chance starting with a big explosion that hurtled into space all the galaxies with its planets one of which just so happened to have the right conditions for life to begin.

It is my belief that in verse 2 we see the basic or fundamental building blocks on which God used as

the foundation to sustain the life He would create each day of the Creation week. He created matter and then shaped it into the earth at the beginning of day one.

It would be like taking a blob of playdough that has no shape and then forming it into something. Or emptying out a bucket of Lego blocks into a big pile and then putting them together to form something.

I would contend that that this verse means God created the initial elements, which had no shape, that it lacked order and content. Some would suggest that it also implies that in this condition it had no purpose and the other things created on each day gave earth its purpose. So being without form and empty simply means that it was not yet formed and uninhabited.

Writing in his *Commentary on Genesis*, Harold Sturgis sums it up this way: “Verse 2 is simply a statement of the conditions attendant on the earth as it came from the hand of God and before He began the work of organization to form it into a habitable abode for man.”

Umberto Cassuto explains it this way: “Just as the potter, when he wishes to fashion a beautiful vessel, takes first of all a lump of clay, and places it upon his wheel in order to mold it according to his wish, so the Creator first prepared for Himself the raw material...with a view of giving it afterwards order and life...It is this terrestrial state that is called empty and void.”

That it was formless and empty is the state of the earth in preparation for the next act of creation. In the beginning it was a mass waiting for the Master Sculptor to begin His work.

How about the murkiness at creation?

### III. THE MURKINESS AT CREATION

“and darkness was upon the face of the deep”

Think for a moment about the vastness of space and in its entirety no light. There was only darkness. In the immensity of what we call space there is this little planet which is also immersed in complete darkness, darkness that is everywhere enveloping everything. It is a darkness that Kent Hughes describes as impenetrable to man, but transparent to God.

Psalm 139:11-12 “If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,’ even the darkness will not be dark to You; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to You.”

That there was darkness is a parallel clause to the first clause where we find the earth without form and empty and in that state there was darkness. Both describe the condition of the earth as God prepared to make the world inhabitable. The initial phase of creation was not complete in this state and beginning in verse 3 we will see the unfolding plan of God to finish His handiwork. It was initially empty but not desolate or a wasteland as some would like to translate the word caused by Satan’s fall. It’s like buying a piece of property, building a house and then filling each room with what will make the house a home.

This is not a realm influenced by evil, but rather merely the absence of form and light in this condition.

There is one more clause to consider. It has to do with the movement at creation.

### IV. THE MOVEMENT AT CREATION

“And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

Depending on the context, the word for Spirit can refer to God’s Spirit or to wind. In the Hebrew mind there was little distinction between the two – the Spirit or wind. Was this just a wind then that moved along the waters of the deep or was this

actually the work of the Holy Spirit who had an active role in the Creation process? I believe it is the Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity that we see here in verse 2. Consider that when Bezalel and Oholiab were filled with the Holy Spirit to perform the task of making the Tabernacle and overseeing its work, they were not filled with wind, they were filled with the person of the Holy Spirit specifically for that purpose.

Kent Hughes writes “The Spirit of God fluttered like a nurturing bird over the dark.”

The same word is used in Deuteronomy 32:11 giving us a picture of what God’s Spirit was doing in Genesis 1:2. “like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions.”

God’s Spirit was hovering, moving, and ready to bring to completion in the ensuing days the Creation of God. It’s my belief that verse 3 is a continuation of verse 2 as it begins with the word “and”. Verse 2 might be looked at as a baker preparing to bake a cake. She gathers all the ingredients and completes the cake in several stages. There is the mixing of ingredients and then the baking and then the icing on the cake and it’s done. That’s the picture here of God putting the ingredients in order. It is not chaos but rather the creative process of God beginning from scratch to inhabit the earth.

Let me wrap this up with one final thought. What does this verse have to do with you and me? Consider the miracle of the new creation.

## V. THE MIRACLE OF THE NEW CREATION – II Corinthians 4:6

Using the creation account Paul illustrates our spiritual condition without Christ. We are empty and without purpose. There is a darkness that prevails deep in our heart. But the Spirit of the living God is hovering, waiting for that time in

which faith bids Him to come and make us into a new creation by His power. The transformation is a new creation from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. II Corinthians 5:17 affirms that because we are in Christ we have been made into a new creation. God brings light into the hearts of those who were once in darkness. That was the experience of Paul on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:3 says a “light from heaven flashed around him.” He became a new creation by faith. God’s creative work in us begins with the hovering Spirit (Titus 3:5).

The words of Hank Williams say it best.

I wandered so aimless life filled with sin  
I wouldn't let my dear Savior in  
Then Jesus came like a stranger in the night  
Praise the Lord I saw the light.

I saw the light I saw the light  
No more darkness no more night  
Now I'm so happy no sorrow in sight  
Praise the Lord I saw the light.

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We’ll see next week that God spoke and filled His creation with light.

If you have seen His light in the gospel of grace received by faith you are a new creation and the Spirit who once hovered over you entered in and made that transformation possible.

If you are here today and have never experienced the light of His saving grace, God’s Spirit waits to do His creative work in you.