

Foreword

Despite being the first book in the Bible, Genesis is generally not the first book within that you should read. Our modern Christian faith usually starts with exposure to the gospels of the New Testament (NT), progressing through Revelation. However, many people (Christians or not, old or new) don't read the Old Testament (OT). Why?

I've discussed the answer to this in detail in previous studies, but a short list is as follows:

1. We're rarely encouraged to. In some circles, we're told it isn't even necessary anymore.
Do you read the second book in a series but not the first? Do you watch the movie sequel but not the original? Prequels fill in the gaps and provide backstory for later episodes. You do not have a full understanding (or appreciation) of the NT without reading the OT!
2. "The OT God is different than the NT God."
Read *Exodus 3:14, Numbers 23:19 and Hebrews 13:8*. God does not change. A big part of the problem is that those who hold to this belief haven't read the OT in context. That is, they only read (or listen to) snippets from biased platforms such as social media. The point of a verse-by-verse (deeper, meatier) study is to read each verse, taking into account the surrounding verses, chapters, history and culture of the time.
3. "The OT God is too mean!"
Again, not in context. God is incredibly merciful to both pagans and the faithful in the OT. If you believe that He's patient and loving (etc) now, you have to believe He was then and seek for it (I promise you will find).
4. "It's booring!"
Well, if you're reading genealogies or the counts of plates donated to the temple, maybe...though those were incredibly important to the people of the time (again, context). But, ignoring all of what we learn about God and ourselves, ignoring all of the prophecies that would be and are being fulfilled today, the OT contains a massive amount of factual, fascinating history and drama. We've scolded people for watching smutty shows like *Game of Thrones*, when they could instead read the OT to get their fill of non-fiction intrigue, love triangles, sex, murder, rape, incest, family feuds, dragons, angels, demons, giants and more. These books have an abundance of Jerry Springer, Friday the 13th and Disney fairytale endings within and God wants you to read them.

The Bible is jam-packed with immensely-important information and I can't list it all here (Nor do we ever stop learning new things when we re-read His Word, amen?). Further, I can't give you every possible opinion on topics that are up for debate. The intent here is to get you interested in digging into God's Word and strengthen your relationship with Him. Further, an increased knowledge of God's Word will help you recognize the false teachings that abound in our world.

Remember: God's Word is The Truth. My commentary here (personal or compiled), or the footnotes in your study Bible or even your pastor's sermons do not hold the same, perfect, holy authority as the Bible itself. We compare everything to the Word of God to separate the truth from the lies (*2 Cor 10:4-6*).

Background

Genesis ("The Beginning") was written/compiled by Moses, through the inspiration of God. Despite secular belief, the book only spends two of its fifty chapters describing creation. The rest is filled with history that sheds light on the Trinity, the fall of man, God's plan for a Savior for both Jew and Gentile, marriage, sex, and parenting, among others. Further, we'll see how the nation of Israel (and its modern enemies) came to be, and why they're such important players in the world today.

Note: You may want to bookmark the website www.answersingenesis.org as it contains a plethora of scientifically/archaeologically-backed information on many of the tough questions we won't have space to cover here. In fact, you may notice a familiar name from the Lightner family among article credits there.

Read Genesis 1

v1 "In the beginning" refers to human time. As we'll see elsewhere in Scripture, God has always existed and it appears that angels had already been created. Further, it looks like Satan's rebellion had already taken place (or would be, shortly).

Q (v2): Who created the heavens and the earth?

God, of course - not a cosmic accident with infinitesimally small chances of occurrence. An intelligent and loving parent carefully crafted each and every sub-particle of the universe and everything in it.

But wait, there's more:

The term for God here, "Elohim", is actually plural...and yet "created" is singular (*). One verse into the Bible, and we already have hints of the triune God and the human inability to wrap our comparatively feeble minds around the concept of three in one.

(*) This grammatical contradiction is more apparent in other languages that conjugate verbs differently based upon the quantity of subjects. In English, a simple example would be something like this:

"She (singular) owns the cat." and "They (plural) own the cat." Those both sound correct, right? How about "God own the cat." That doesn't sound right, and yet it sort of is. God is both plural and singular.

Another example you may think of is when Jesus said (*Jn 8:48*), "Before Abraham was (past), I Am (ever-present)." God ruins our grammar! But rightly so...He cannot be contained by our minds.

(Wait, you mean Jesus existed before time as well? Yep. He took part in creation. We'll see elsewhere in Scripture that the Holy Spirit was there as well...if not already mentioned over the waters in this verse.)

Maybe you like the idea of a god that you can fully-understand...compartmentalize...control? Yet, what is the benefit of a god that lives by your rules, by your morals or is limited by your mental capacity? History and mythology are littered with human-made, petty, impotent gods. They make us feel good about ourselves, but they're powerless to save and never worthy of admiration or hope.

Q (v2): What form did earth have to start?

Chaos, darkness and water. Note that this conflicts with secular science's theory that it was molten rock.

Q (v3): What is the true source of light?

God. The sun hadn't been created yet. God brings light into darkness. God speaks and creation responds.

v4 is the first of many mentions that God's original creation was good. It was healthy, it was whole, it was acceptable in His righteous, perfectionist sight. Everything God created was good at the start.

v5 Note that the first day started with night. While our new "day" typically starts at sunrise, the Hebrew "day" starts at sunset. Further, God's naming of his creation indicated His authority...we'll come back to this later.

Q: Did God create the universe in six days or six billion/trillion/really big number of years?

Oh ho ho, I'm not touching that with a ten foot pole here! I will make a few points, however:

1. **The root word for "day" here is used elsewhere in the Bible for a literal 24-hour day.**
2. **We fit science into the Bible, not the other way around.**
God created science (systematic knowledge of our world). God *encourages* science. You can be both a Christian and a scientist. The question is whether you treat science or God[*'s* Word] as the authority.

In short, the secular world tries to fit God into our understanding of things.

e.g., The divine parting of Red Sea in the book of Exodus was impossible, so there must have been a combination of certain types of natural disasters to drain the body of water temporarily. Science is the authority that God (and His Word) must yield to.

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e.g., God, as omnipotent Creator, is capable of splitting the water and creating dry ground for the exact amount of time needed. Even if He didn't do this by miraculous means, He certainly controlled the otherwise impossible timing, location and chances of the earthquakes/hurricanes etc required to perform the miracle (and that still doesn't explain the dry ground). God (and His Word) are the authority and our feeble understanding of science must yield to Them.

This leads to #3:

3. **You either believe God or you don't.** *cf. Rev 3:14-16, Joshua 24:15*
There's no middle ground on this one. God either wrote the Bible (through His Divinely-inspired servants) or He didn't. The Bible either is true or it's a lie. Do you believe that God is capable of creating the universe in six days? How about one day? I, personally, encourage you to hold to what the Bible says literally. However, if I find out in heaven that it was a metaphorical day, I'm ok with that too.

This leads to #4:

4. **This issue, within reason, isn't unto salvation.**
What does "unto salvation" mean? Well, so long as I'm following the cautions in #2 and 3 above, it doesn't really have any bearing on my salvation. That is, I have accepted Jesus Christ as the perfect Son of God, whose atoning sacrifice for my sins has reconciled me with God, and who I now dutifully serve.

**God's requirements for salvation didn't include whether I think the sabbath is Saturday or Sunday.
 God's requirements for salvation didn't include whether I think wearing antiperspirant is unnatural.
 God's requirements for salvation didn't include whether I tithe on my gross or net income.**

**The issues that don't affect our faith (salvation) in God and His Son aren't worth arguing about.
 So, again, within reason, let's not bicker over petty stuff...it makes Christians look bad to the world.**

v6-8 The translation of the word "vault", "expanse" or "firmament" can be misleading here. It's referring to the sky. God created a container of water in the sky, separated from the water below. The earth is now a ball of water, with an atmosphere that may have been very cloudy and dense with moisture. This theory (again, we don't know for sure) will come into play later.

Advanced Note: The sky here is called "heaven." Do you remember in 2 Cor 12:2 where Paul talks about being taken up to the "third heaven?" It probably made you start thinking about God's heavenly realm as having multiple layers...much as the fictional Dante's Divine Comedy helped popularize the idea of layers of heaven and hell - each having more intense holiness or suffering, respectively. Yeah well, there's no Biblical precedent for that. Neat story; likely not true. In any case, in Biblical times, the visible sky was called the first heaven, space was the second heaven and the third was God's realm.

v9-10 Here God creates the land, making note of its distinction from the seas. "Seas" in Hebrew is always plural, so we're not really sure if there were multiple bodies of water, or just one massive continent and one massive ocean around it.

There's a possibility that it was just one supercontinent...you may have heard of Pangea? If you look at a map of the globe, you may notice that most of the continents look like puzzle pieces that would neatly fit into one another. There is scientific evidence that would lead us to believe this is true. It would also explain how man and animal spread so quickly through the world, if the continents parted during cataclysmic events such as the worldwide flood and some of the massive earthquakes mentioned in the OT. (This is fitting science into the Bible, as mentioned before. It's exciting to see it in action.)

v11-13 Plant life is created on the third day; each according to its kind, with reference to reproduction through seed.

Q (v14-19): For what reasons did God create the sun, moon and stars?

Primarily for light, of course. He also specifically made them for telling time. Again, God wanted us to get involved with science. He looked forward to our discovery and research into astronomy and physics here. Before atomic clocks and GPS satellites, people used the stars to determine the time of day, time of year, celestial events (eclipses, etc) and navigate on land and sea. This leads to another, unwritten point:

We can't help but view the stars and our solar system without being in awe of its beauty and grandeur. Think about the fact that God made it to elicit that "wow" effect from us, and for His glory.

Note that the stars were not created for fortune-telling etc. God encouraged astronomy not astrology. Astrology is strictly forbidden elsewhere in Scripture. Some Biblical translations modify the wording here a bit to make it clear that worship or divination of celestial bodies is not what He had in mind. Interestingly, God doesn't even mention the sun and moon by name. They're just a sidenote compared to Him.

Finally, secular science says that the stars were created before earth...not after.

v20-23 Air and sea life are created on the fifth day. The word for “birds” is literally “fliers,” likely including flying insects and some dinosaurs. The sea life includes mention of “great sea creatures,” again likely referencing aquatic dinosaurs, which possibly lead to references to the Behemoth or Leviathan elsewhere in Scripture. These “mythical” beings fascinated and terrified the ancient world and intrigue us today...and yet creating pseudo-Godzillas was just another day for God. No big deal for the Creator of the universe. **(Read Job 41 for a chilling passage regarding God’s detailed care in creation, man’s place vs God’s and God’s place vs His creation).**

Like plant life, these creatures were also made according to their kinds, and given a blessing to reproduce.

v24-25 Here God creates the land-based animals, with the repeated emphasis on their kinds and encouragement to reproduce, spread out and fill the earth.

Q: So does this chapter prove that evolution is a load of...garbage?

Yes and no. It shows without doubt that God created life in a “mature” state...that is, we didn’t grow over the course of billions of years from amoeba that were planted here by a passing comet. Humans were created humans. Dogs were created dogs.

However, the idea that species evolve over time is not a falsehood. It’s observable, even in our short lifespans that physical characteristics of plants and animals can change based upon environment and breeding. Christians do deny evolution as a rule for change; they deny that it was a source of life.

For example, God did not originally create every one of the hundreds of types of dog that exist today. Many were “created” by years of selective breeding by man for specific purposes (guard dogs, herding dogs, companion dogs). Likewise, many were “created” by years of breeding in specific environments (hot, cold, rugged, domestic etc) which encouraged certain characteristics to thrive. God likely created one or a small number of “base” breeds of dog, cat, hamster, sparrow etc...and they legitimately evolved in shape, size, color etc over the course of time due to their environments. We’ll come back to this later when we get to Noah’s ark. Yet again, science isn’t bad when we fit it into God’s Word.

Q (v26): What does it mean that we were created in God’s image/likeness?

First of all, the “Our” in this verse refers again to the triune God. It’s not a reference to angels, since v28 explicitly states that we’re created in God’s image.

Secondly, it’s highly unlikely that we look like God...two arms, two legs, sexual organs (I won’t use the proper terms since people tend to get squeamish for some reason when I do.) What would He need those for - He’s a spirit, outside of space and time. As a teenager, I was actually thrown out and banned from a Christian group after politely but firmly disagreeing with the leader’s statement that “God must have a penis (oops, I said the forbidden word) because of this verse, and anyone who disagrees is a heretic.”

We take after God’s personal, moral and intellectual image. We love to create (writing, painting, wiring, coding, having children), we are full of emotion (love, joy, laughter, anger) etc. How do you react to having a pet or child? Isn’t preparing for them, protecting them, guiding them, cuddling them, teaching them and observing their interactions with what you’ve provided them a joy? Where do you think we got that from? How amazing is it to notice the differences in each one...and how they look or behave like parts of their parents?

Another possibility worth mentioning is that the preposition “in” can also be translated “as”. “Let Us make man as Our image.” In this case, we’re created to be physical representations of God and His reign on earth. God’s later prohibition of creating [“graven”] images of Him would be in part because we are already the images of His majesty.

In any case, we were created to rule over the earth as his regents. This does not mean He encourages us to trash the place...we are expected to care for His property wisely. Further, it shows us our value...God sees Himself in us. This is why murder is such an offense to God.

v27 is actually written as a poem in the original Hebrew. It’s unfortunately lost in translation for us.

Q (v27): What genders are part of God’s creation?

Male and female. I know that’s not PC now. I’m not here to argue. I’m just telling you what’s in God’s Word. We don’t choose; God does.

v28 Once again, mankind is given the order to reproduce (more on this later) and fill the earth. However, man is not described as being created “according to their kinds.” Mankind is an encompassing group of equal worth. Black, white, tall, short, disabled...God sees them the same.

v29-30 Man and beast all started out as vegetarians. (Note that the Bible supports eating meat elsewhere, but it wasn’t part of His original plan. The book of Isaiah indicates that we will all return to being vegetarians in the new Earth after the end of time.)

v31 Again, God sees that all that He has made is good.