

THE STORY — Week 3

Genesis 1:1-13

From Chaos to Order

REVIEW:

A CRITICAL SET OF INTERPRETIVE PRINCIPLES

Our Rules for the Road

1. The Bible was written for me but not to me.
2. The Bible is a library with different literary genres (**Narrative**, Poetry & Discourse)
3. The Bible must be read in Context (Ancient, Situational & Biblical)
4. The Bible must be read with an understanding of language and words (Repeated words drive dominant themes)
5. The Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus

From Chaos to Order

Genesis 1:1-13

I. Understanding the Creation Narrative

Narrative literature has Characters, a setting, a plot, a conflict, a climax, and a resolution.

Verse 1 Introduces us to the main **character** and the **setting**.

Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning **God** created the **heavens and the earth**.”

- In Hebrew, God (*Elohim*) and heaven & earth (*Shamayim & Erets*).

Verse 2a introduces us to the **plot's conflict**

Genesis 1:2a “Now the earth was **formless and empty, darkness** was over the surface of the **deep...**”

- In Hebrew there are **three** elements or spheres of **disordered** space being described:
- The earth - “Formless & Empty” (*tohu va vohu*): wild and waste
- The space around the earth - “darkness” (the absence of light)
- The water's - “surface of the deep” (*tehom*): primeval water, the abyss and the grave.

These descriptions in scripture are always **negative, dangerous, and scary**. Not the place to be.

Verse 2b introduces us to the **hero** in the creation story

Genesis 1:2b “And the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.”

- In Hebrew “Spirit” (*Ruakh*) spirit/breath/wind

II. Understanding the Context (Ancient, Situational, Biblical)

Ancient Cosmology = the origin of the universe

In the Ancient world, there were no atheists.

We superimpose onto the Genesis text an argument to prove there is a God. That was not its purpose. Genesis isn’t seeking to prove there is a god, but to introduce the God who is.

- **Egyptian cosmology: Atum and his creation process.**

The waters speak

I am the Waters, unique, without second.

Atum speaks

That is where I evolved,

on the great occasion of my floating that happened to me.

I (Atum the creator) am the one who once evolved —

Circlet, who is in his egg.

I am the one who began therein, (in) the Waters.

See, the Flood is subtracted from me:

see, I am the remainder.

I made my body evolve through my own effectiveness.

I am the one who made me.

I built myself as I wished, according to my heart.

—From the Coffin (sarcophagus) texts

- **Babylonian cosmology: Marduk and Tiamat’s creation battle**

III. The Spirit of God (*Ruakh of Elohim*) addresses all three spheres of disorder

Genesis 1:2-13: “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. And God said, ‘**Let there be light, and there was light.**’ God saw that the light was **good**, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he called ‘night.’ And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.”

- Day 1 from darkness to **light**, and the basic measurement of time.

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

- Day 2 from chaos waters to **ordered waters**

*“And God said, ‘Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and **let dry ground appear.**’ And it was so. God called the **dry ground ‘land,’** and the gathered waters he called ‘seas.’ And God saw that it was **good....** And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.”*

- Day 3 from uninhabitable water to the **inhabitable land.**

IV. The Bible is a **Unified Story** that leads to Jesus

Remember the Rule that language and its purpose to create are important themes & metaphors throughout scripture—God’s ultimate story of redemption.

1. The metaphor of wind. “Spirit” *Ruach of Elohim/pneuma* — breath/spirit/wind

John 20:22 (Jesus) “**Breathed** on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy **Spirit.**’”

Acts 2:2-4 “Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty **wind**, and it filled the house where they were sitting.... And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit...”

Our story/His story:

- I can’t breathe! - We die without breath

2. The metaphor of light. Light of the World

John 1:1-5 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the **light of all mankind.** The **light shines in the darkness,** and the darkness has not overcome it.”

Our story/His story:

- I can’t see! - We are lost without light

3. The metaphor of water. Jesus as the water of life & He who has power over the waters.

In **John 4:10**, Jesus describes himself as the living water.

Matthew 8:24-27 *“Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! **We’re going to drown!**’ He replied, ‘You of little faith, why are you so afraid?’ Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, ‘What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!’”*

Our story/His story

- **I am drowning! - We drown without him**

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

Take a few minutes to check in with each other to see how everyone is doing, then do the following mixer and questions.

Ice Breaker/Mixer Q: As a group, share and describe to one another if you've ever felt like your life was in chaos; what was going on?

1. See if anyone can name all five of the principles for interpretation (Rules for the Road).
2. Ask if anyone can articulate what they are learning about the way narrative literature works and why that can help us to better understand biblical passages?
3. Ask if anyone has a story from being on or in the ocean, and feeling it as a powerful or scary place?
4. The first three days of creation address the chaos described in verse 2, what else do you notice about the first three days of creation?
5. How do the Biblical writers and Jesus' own words address the chaos of our lives? Can you describe a time when one of the following felt true of your life, relationships or circumstances:
I can't breath
I can't see
I am drowning
6. Do you, or how would you describe a healthy Rule of life, as a road map to go from chaos to order?

Journal or SOAP any of the passages from each day of reading, or answer any of the small group or "Quick questions" as a journal entry.

Monday: Re-read Genesis 1 and see if you can see any connection or correspondence between days 1,2,& 3 & days 4,5, & 6.

Tuesday: Read Psalms 8 and notice how it relates and connects to Genesis 1.

Wednesday: Read John 20:19-23. What is going on for the disciples that might feel like chaos and what does Jesus do to bring calm?

Thursday: Read and SOAP John 1:1-5.

Friday: Read Matthew 8:23-27 and reflect on what Jesus does to bring calm and how God brings calm to chaos waters. How can we trust God's power to bring calm into our troubled waters?

Quick Questions:

If God wants to calm our chaos, why do you think we don't live lives of greater calm?

What spiritual practices are most helpful for you to experience calm?

Is there anything that you have heard other people say that helps them to experience calm that you have not genuinely tried?

Is there anything that you believe is creating chaos in your life that you could stop doing?