

## Genesis - Chapter 1

The Biblical creation story has been at the center of the ongoing battle between those who believe in evolution as a valid scientific theory and those who believe that six days means six twenty-four days and thus the earth is only about 6,000 years old.<sup>i</sup> This battle, unfortunately, has caused many people to miss the wonderful insights about God and us, that this chapter contains. Below you will find six insights that we are offered by the writer, or writers of this story. For much of what follows, I am indebted to Walter Brueggemann's work on Genesis.<sup>ii</sup>

First, we can take a fresh look at the opening verse of this chapter. The Hebrew allows us to read, *"In the beginning when God created..."* as *"In the beginning when God began to create..."* This translation helps us see that God continues to be at work creating and recreating. That God's work was not completed in "six days" but that God remains active in the world, and thus the creation and all that is in it, including ourselves, are works in progress.

Second, we are shown that God brings order out of chaos. While much of Christian tradition teaches that God created *"ex nihilo"*, or, out of nothing, the text does not lend itself easily to this interpretation. Instead, the Spirit of God is described as hovering over the chaotic waters of creation. In other words, God has arrived in the scene to bring order to a chaotic world. God not only brings about order, but does so in an orderly way; working step by step to create a world which is thriving with life.

Third, God's speaking does not bring into existence an inanimate object, but brings about a living, thriving creation. A creation filled with a diversity of plants, animals and even people, which God creates as male and female. There is something joyful about this description of swarming, flying and multiplying creatures. This is not a static world. It is one alive with possibilities.

Fourth, we witness equality. Unlike the second creation story which we will examine next week, this story has men and women being created at the same moment. *"...God created them...male and female..."* In some Jewish midrashim (Jewish commentaries on scripture), when God created male and female, God actually created a single being, half male and half female. Though this is not part of our tradition, it reminds us that the Hebrew text does not give preference to men or women, but links them together in divine equality.

Fifth, human beings are given responsibility to care for God's creation. This idea is what is at the heart of the famous line, *"God created humankind in God's image."* There have been many ways in which the "image of God" has been understood. But one that has come to light more recently is that an "image" referred to the authority given to a local ruler to oversee matters on behalf of a king who cannot be present. Thus, for us to have been created in God's image means that we are assigned by God to take care of this living creation which God has brought into being.

Sixth, rest and sabbath matter. We know this because even God rested after the initial actions of creation. This is a reminder that life is not to be all about work, but it is also to be about enjoying the creation we have been given and the God who has given it to us.

Questions:

1. Which of these six insights intrigues you the most and why?
2. How have you dealt with the issue of evolution versus the Biblical story?
3. How have you understood the image of God?

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://answersingenesis.org/dinosaurs/dinosaurs-and-the-bible/>

<sup>ii</sup> Brueggeman, Walter (1982) *Genesis, Interpretation Series*, Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press