

Genesis 1:1-14: Creation

John Nordin Revised, Jan. 2008

In the beginning when God created¹ the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God¹ swept over the face of the waters. ³

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God 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.

⁶And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of

Issue of translation of v. 1 "When God began to create, the earth was formless ..." Support of creation ex nihilo, or of one God + chaos? BCL: "First this: God created the Heavens and Earth – all you see, all you don't see.

Was darkness created?

Isaiah 45:18-19 ¹⁸ For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it a chaos, he formed it to be inhabited!); I am the LORD, and there is no other. ¹⁹ I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, "Seek me in chaos." I the LORD speak the truth, I declare what is right.

Is the history of the entire world, not of one tribe (as will be the case starting with Gen. 11)

Creation by verbal command.

What sort of light is this?

What is the meaning of "day"? What did it mean?

Victor Hamilton: "... the literal understanding of "day" is not necessarily a more spiritual and biblical interpretation, and therefore is not inherently preferable." The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17, p.53

How heard by the initial audience? Ancient context is polytheistic vs. monotheistic. Not secular vs. religious.

When did the water get created?

What shape of the universe is implied by having the world divided from sky before there are planets?

Compare to

- Other creation stories (Babylonian, "Epic of Creation" (Enûma Elish). Dates to the late second millennium B.C.E.)
- Science

Other creation stories

- Only one creating, active force. No fight with other gods.
- No activity in heaven.
- What are the implications of parallels to other stories?

every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Context & Issues

- Creation stories from other cultures
- What interpretive stance do we take to this as myth? "Demythologizing" or "Dekerygmatizing"

"The purpose of the Torah in this section is to teach us that the whole world and all that it contains were created by the word of the ONE God, according to His will, which operates without restraint." - Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the book of Genesis*, part 1

Sources:

Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the book of Genesis, part 1*, Magness, 1964

Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, Eerdmans, 1990

Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*. (Old Testament Library). Westminster, 1961.

Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Continental Commentaries), Augsburg, 1974.