

STUDY GUIDE:

Are We There Yet? (Week 2) | Creation: "It Was Good"

Week of January 19-25 This winter we are looking at God's plan is for the world. As we step back to review the map of God's plan for human history we can better appreciate our own place. This week we are looking at the opening chapter of the Bible, the Creation Poem.

INTRODUCTION

In Hebrew creation poetry, humans are the image of God—the peak of creation. We can compare this understanding of creation with another ancient creation belief. A neighboring culture to the Hebrews had their version of creation. In the creation account known as the Enuma Elish, we find the dangerous goddess of water in a battle with other gods. The god of wind blows into her mouth and forces her to expand until she splits in half. When the wind god is victorious over the water goddess he splits her into two parts and makes part of her into the sky and part of her into the seas. Her former husband is then punished for his evil rebellion against the rest of the gods. In a bloody battle he is killed by the other gods and his body splatters across the earth. The droplets of blood from this evil god turn into a new savage on earth: humans.

The Hebrews were familiar with this version of creation. Thus, they presented an alternate creation account to announce that humans are created as good in a good creation. Reading the creation poem of Genesis 1, we can look for similarities and differences to their neighboring culture's creation account. For instance, in both accounts the waters are divided into sky and sea. Notice the contrast, however, between humans rising from pieces of an evil, rebellious god versus the Bible teaching that humans are the image of a good God and trusted to rule over the good creation.

CHAT

In the sermon Bruce told a story about a boy being teased and called names. The turning point in his life was when he learned he was God's child, created in the image of God. With which aspects of the story do you resonate? What were some of the nicknames you were called in childhood and youth? Which of them helped you become a better person? Which hurt your feelings?

READ & DISCUSS

Genesis 1

We are reading a creation POEM.

Wait, pause... what genre of literature would you place the creation narrative? Poetry? History? What are the implications of the genre in which you classify it?

We can pick up on the poetic style by noting refrains and repetition. What are the repeated phrases and refrains in this poem? While there is repetition in the poetry, the creation account clearly presents a pattern and progression. Day 1 is connected with Day 4. Day 2 and Day 5 fit together. Day 3 and Day 6 are connected. The first three days the Spirit of God carves out realms and creates habitations. Then we see God assign rulers over each realm. Is there a lesson or message in this structure?

Day 1: Creation of light and darkness

Day 2: Waters are separated into blue ocean and blue sky

Day 3: Dry ground rises from the waters and is covered in vegetation

Day 4: Repeat of Day 1 Sun and Moon rule over day and night.

Day 5: Repeat of Day 2 Fish and Birds rule over sea and sky.

Day 6: Repeat of Day 3 Animals and Humans rule over land and vegetation.

Day 7: God established Sabbath

Read Psalm 8

Note: Humans are created to rule over the planet. We are barely lower than angels.

Discussion questions:

- 1) Compare and contrast the belief that we are the height of creation as God's image with the modern scientific awareness that we are merely a speck on a small planet in a miniscule solar system in a huge expanding universe. How do these two understandings impact how we think and live?
- 2) If God's original intention was for everything to be good, how does this impact our prayers?
- 3) Where and when do you most easily connect with the goodness of God and the goodness of creation?
- 4) How does our belief in a good creation move us toward ecological responsibility for this creation? How are you living in a way that honors God's creation? How might you step up your ecological responsibilities in our world?

Challenge:

Who needs to be reminded they are God's image and how might you compliment, encourage, and build them up this week? In your closing prayer time thank God for the goodness of creation and for the value of others impact on your life.

CLOSE IN PRAYER FOR ONE ANOTHER

