

SCRIPTURE STUDY SHEET FOR SEPTEMBER 12, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Genesis 1:1—2:4a
THE COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

¹ When God began to **create** the heavens and the earth— ² the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and *God's wind* swept over the waters— ³ God said, "Let there be light." And so light appeared. ⁴ God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God named the light Day and the darkness Night.

There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

⁶ God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other." ⁷ God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. ⁸ God named the dome Sky.

There was evening and there was morning: the second day.

⁹ God said, "Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear." And that's what happened. ¹⁰ God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. ¹¹ God said, "Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth." And that's what happened. ¹² The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.

¹³ There was evening and there was morning: the third day.

¹⁴ God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵ They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth." And that's what happened. ¹⁶ God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. ¹⁷ God put

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Genesis – the first book of the Hebrew Bible – gets us off on the right foot. Genesis pulls us into a sense of reality that is God-shaped and God-filled. It gives us a vocabulary for speaking accurately and comprehensively about our lives – where we come from and where we are going, what we think and what we do, the people we live with and how to get along with them, the troubles we find ourselves in and the blessings that keep arriving.

Genesis uses words to make a foundation that is solid and true. Everything we think and do and feel is material in a building operation in which we are engaged all our lives long. There is immense significance in everything that we do. Our speech and our actions and our prayers are all, every detail of them, involved in this vast building operation comprehensively known as the kingdom of God. But we don't build the foundation. The foundation is given. The foundation is firmly in place.

Genesis presents not us this to us as an abstract, bloodless truth or principle. We are given a succession of stories with named people – people who loved and quarreled, believed and doubted, had children and married, experienced sin and grace. If we pay attention we find that we ourselves are living variations of the foundational stories told in Genesis from Creation to bondage in Egypt.

(adapted from the introduction to the Psalms in The Message)

create:: In Hebrew the word is *Bara* בָּרָא meaning "to create or shape". It's possibly a word borrowed from Arabic in which it meant to form or fashion by cutting, shape out, pare a reed for writing, a stick for an arrow.

them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was.

¹⁹ *There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.*

²⁰ God said, “Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky.” ²¹ God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. ²² Then God blessed them: “Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

²³ *There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.*

²⁴ God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened. ²⁵ God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. ²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may TAKE CHARGE OF the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.”

²⁷ God created humanity in *God’s own image*, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.” ²⁹ Then God said, “I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. ³⁰ To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food.”

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

the earth was without shape or form:: We often think that the story says that God created something from nothing (which in Latin is referred to as *Creatio ex nihilo*); but if you look closely the story of creation has God taking what already was and reshaping and forming it into something else.... It’s a good reminder that we need to look closer, with our own eyes, not just read from assumptions made by tradition.

God’s wind:: In Hebrew the word is *ruach* רוח meaning “breath,” “wind,” and/or “spirit”. It adds a personal or relational aspect to this story of shaping creation and us.

TAKE CHARGE OF:: In Hebrew the word is *radah* רדה meaning “breath,” “wind,” and/or “spirit”. It adds a personal often translated as “to have dominion, rule, dominate over, to subjugate”. But that word has a hierarchical, transactional connotation; that humanity is in charge and everything is subservient to it, and exists for it. But the text, and the word here, implies something more along the lines of interdependent relationship, mutual responsibility and community.

God’s own image :: “the image of God here is both male and female. The implication of this is that we need someone else to complete us. This doesn’t mean that we can’t be whole persons until we’re married. Relationship isn’t limited to family life or to the expression of sexual intimacy between two people. But it does mean that we need one another. If I make myself the center and gather the world into myself, arranging life around me for my own convenience, I become smaller, not larger. I don’t grow; I diminish. There’s no completion, no wholeness.” – Eugene Peterson, a note on Genesis from *The Message Translation*.

holy:: The word in Hebrew *Qadosh* קדוש means “to be set apart or consecrated. To declare, or make holy. To purify.” It’s an insistence upon something being unique, special, set aside for something particular for God’s purpose and desire.

And that's what happened. ³¹ God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

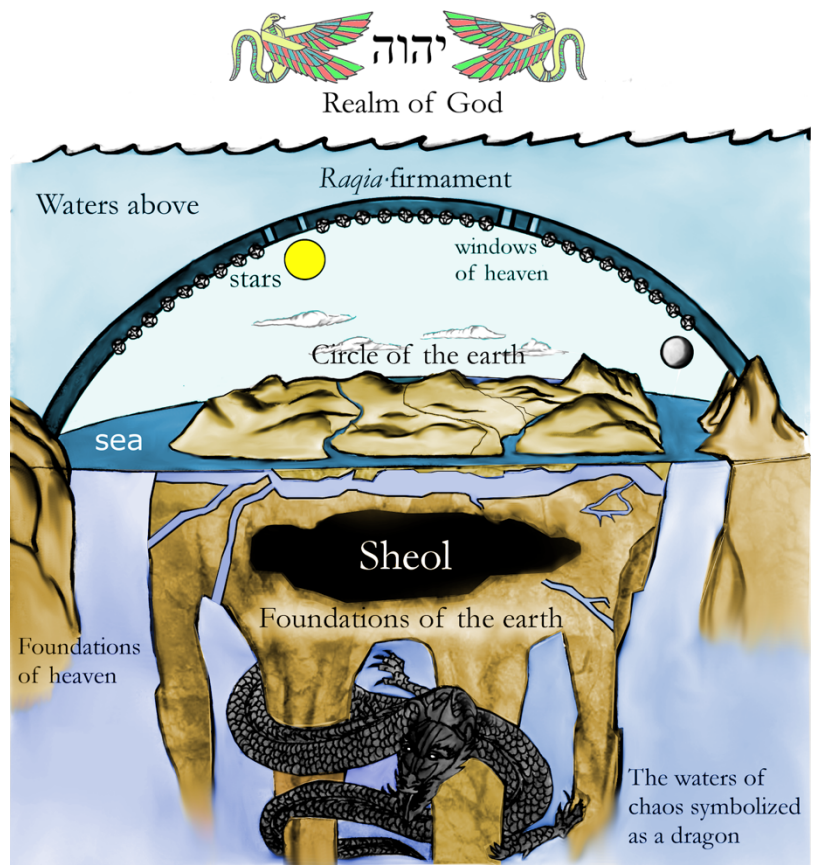
There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

2 ¹ The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. ² On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. ³ God blessed the seventh day and made it *holy*, because on it God rested from all the work of creation. ⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- How does the story of creation paint a picture of the world that is similar, and different from how we understand the world today? Does that matter?
- The story of creation is problematic for us - both inside and outside the Church. Is it historical fact, scientific observation or a parablelike story? What does the story of creation tell us about who we are, about the meaning of life, and our role in the grander scheme of things?
- What does the creation story tell us about who we are, and what life is about? What does it assert and affirm about God? Did you hear anything new or different as you read this story today?
- How is the Spirit of God inviting you – or us as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word?

ANCIENT ISRAELITE COSMOLOGY



COSMOLOGY is the academic word used to describe how we envision the world (or cosmos - the Greek word for world). The above picture is a commonly used drawing of how the Genesis text describes the world. Sometimes it helps to hear what the text is saying by seeing it drawn out. While it can seem crazy, it also can make sense.... The sky appears to be a dome, like an upside bowl. Water that comes up from the ground when we did down below the earth also seems to fall at times from the sky....so we must be surrounded by water both above and below. On thing we often overlook is that the Israelites were farmers. They weren't sailors and ocean navigators. They were afraid of the ocean, and saw the sea as a dangerous place – storms, waves and wind, can seem to appear from out of nowhere...almost as if a mean dragon is out in the seas creating trouble and chaos.