

## CREATION CONTEXT

Introduction – To interpret the Bible accurately one must put it in its original cultural context. The first covenant scriptures were written in an ancient Middle Eastern context. First we must understand how the original readers would have interpreted the text before we apply it to our own situation.

- A. Creation stories in the ancient Middle East were about the god or gods overcoming chaos to make the world habitable for human beings. The focus was on functionality, not the material origins of creation.
  - 1. One of the greatest threats to human survival and flourishing had to do with waters. It was needed to drink and water trees and plants. The chaos came in floods, ice ages, hurricanes, and droughts.
  - 2. The gods made human beings their cattle to do the hard work that the gods did not want to do.
  - 3. Humans were to build temples creating sacred spaces where the gods could dwell and bring rest.
  - 4. The gods selected kings to rule over the peoples as their image bearers.
  - 5. As long as the people fed the gods and respected them, they could expect order and prosperity.
- B. Our cultural context is scientific rationalism where the emphasis is on material origins, like evolutionary theory or the big bang. Christians have offered various interpretations of Genesis 1.
  - 1. Theistic evolution
  - 2. The gap theory
  - 3. Creation sciences early earth
  - 4. All these theories make the mistake of assuming the Bible is giving us an outline of the material creation process of the universe and human beings.
  - 5. Israelites were not looking for how the material world came into existence based on science.
  - 6. Genesis 1 is about the restoration of creation or bringing order out of chaos.

Genesis 1:1-2

- C. The original recipients of the creation narrative would have seen it telling how God restored creation and made the universe His temple.
1. That means God intended them to work with Him to create sacred space as His priests on the earth.
  2. Every human being, male or female, was created to be royalty. They were not created to rule over others, but over the physical creation and creatures.

Genesis 1:26-28

Exodus 19:5-6

Conclusion – The message to us is that we are to treat all human beings with the dignity their royalty demands. We also have the responsibility to keep our environment habitable and to be caretakers of it and all animals. God wants us to function as priests with our neighbor so we can bring others into a right relationship with God.

1 Peter 2:9-10