

# Preparing the Stage

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**Genesis 1:6-13**  
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As we continue in our journey through Genesis today, I'd like to invite and encourage you to open your Bibles to Genesis 1, the Book of Genesis 1. And while you're turning there, I want to remind us of something we observed from the text last week, and that was the phrase "without form and void", from verse 2. As I mentioned before, in the original Hebrew, these are two rhyming words, "tohu" and "bohu". So, formless and empty. And if you recall, we said that when God initially created the heavens and the earth, He did so by creating it first like a blank canvas, like an empty space that He had crafted for Himself as the master architect and designer, to begin what would be His creative masterpiece.

So, it's with that in mind as we begin today, that I want us to see the divine blueprint, if you will, that God used during the six days of creation. And so if you'll look with me, beginning on the left-hand side of the screen behind me, you'll see the heading titled "Form". And so in contrast to the word "tohu", or formlessness, what we're going to discover today is that during the first half of the creation week, in days one through three, God began to act as the divine potter, shaping and molding, as it were, His creation, and bringing forth form from formlessness. So on day one, He creates and brings forth the existence of physical light, in all of its faculties. On day two, He creates the expanse of heaven or the atmosphere, and He gives the sea its shape. And then on day three, He creates and establishes the earth, or dry land, along with the vegetation.

But then as we look to the other side of the screen, we also see the heading "Fill". And so in contrast to the Hebrew word "Bohu", which means empty or void, we're also going to discover, later in this series, is that the Lord, on days four through six, after the fundamental construction of the cosmos was complete, began to fill His previously empty, newly formed creation. So, on day four, He begins to fill the expanse with the sun and the moon and the stars, utilizing the light He created on day one to rule the day and the night. On day five, He begins to fill more of the expanse and the seas, which He formed on day two, with birds and fish and sea creatures, creatures that would have the ability to multiply and fill the earth rapidly and exponentially. And then on day six, God begins to fill the earth with land animals and creeping organisms. And then finally, as the culmination of His creation, God creates human beings, His image bearers, and giving them, as we'll see, the creation mandate, which is to fill the earth, steward it, and to subdue it.

So what I want us to see today, as we begin this next section in our journey through Genesis, is that there is a parallelism found within the week of creation. There's a parallel set of triads found in the creation week, two sets of three days: the first accomplishing the fundamental purpose of forming, and the second accomplishing the fundamental purpose of filling, all of which

demonstrating the sovereign plans, purposes, and power of the one true and living God. And today we're going to focus in on the first of those two triads, days one through three, as we see God preparing the stage, preparing the stage. So with that in mind, I'll ask you now if you're able to stand with me for the reading of God's Word. Although we've already worked our way through verses three through five, we're going to pick back up at the beginning of the creation week as we read, for the sake of continuity, and we'll make our way through verse 13.

So, Genesis 1:3-13, and there, God's Word reads, "And God said, 'Let there be light.' And there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. There was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' And God made the expanse, and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day."

"And God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the waters that were gathered together, He called seas, and God saw that it was good. And God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind on the earth.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day." And with that, you may be seated, as we ask God to bless the reading and the preaching of His Word.

Father, what a tremendous privilege it is to be gathered together as your people, a people who are called by your name, who have submitted to your lordship, believed in your gospel. Help us not to take for granted the opportunity that we have before us, to worship you as one body. And now as we open your holy Word, I pray, oh God, that we would set aside whatever preconceived ideas we may have about the topic at hand. Help us to navigate and sort through the theological baggage that we have gathered along the way. And help us to simply take you at your Word, submit ourselves like children sitting before our heavenly Father, listening to the truth coming forth from your mouth.

And I pray that by the power and the grace of your Spirit, you will work mightily in our midst, that you'll empower us to understand your Word and your truth, that you'll increase our affections for your Word and Christ. Help us, Lord, to have a greater understanding of who you are and of what you've done. Help us to more clearly see our purpose, and the reason for which you have made us. And as we treasure your Word, help us to apply this truth. As we look at your creation, may we see the beauty and the splendor of our salvation, which is found in Christ. And it's in His name we pray. Amen.

Not long ago, the author of a book I was reading shared this story about his family, and he said this. "A few years ago, my wife and I took our four children on a day trip to Cunningham Falls

State Park in western Maryland. As we were leaving, a kind, elderly gentleman urged us not to head back toward Baltimore until we got a good look at the sky, on what promised to be a crystal-clear evening. 'You'll never be able to see such a pretty sight back in the city, with all that haze and light pollution blocking your view,' he warned. We gladly took his advice, stopping at a Dairy Queen Drive-Thru, and finding the nearest overlook off Route 70. We sat there in the fading light, finishing our cones, talking and anticipating the natural beauty we're about to behold."

"As dusk settled in, however, so did our grip on reality. We realized we wouldn't have been able to see a meteor shooting 10 feet away, because we were looking through the smudged windshield of a well-used minivan belonging to a family with four small children." I can say amen to that. "Fortunately, with a little glass cleaner from the glove compartment and the roll of paper towels no family minivan should ever be without, my wife was able to remove years of nasty film formed by the mysterious substances of childhood. In minutes, the glass was so clean that it blended imperceptibly with the world just outside. As the darkness of a summer evening fell, our family was mesmerized by the stunning splendor of a full moon vivid in the eastern Maryland sky and set among what seemed like twice as many stars as there ought to be. We sat in speechless awe as the heavens declared God's glory. And not once did anyone say, 'What a beautifully clear windshield.'"

And so while that windshield was nothing more than a lens by which to see the glorious beauty of creation, the Bible tells us that the most magnificent sites of splendor in this universe are nothing more than a lens by which we are able to see the glory of God. And yet, if we're being honest today, we have to admit that there are times when we allow the humanistic ideologies of this world to be like those smudges on the windshield of our worldview. So, we need the Word of God to be like that glass cleaner, to wipe away the nasty film from our framework so that we can clearly see the glorious brilliance of our creator. And I believe that our text for today has the potential to do exactly that.

So, with that in mind, as we continue walking our way through the opening chapter of Genesis and of scripture itself, it's important that we do so with the overarching theology of the Bible in mind. For example, many come to the Book of Genesis with this erroneous and misplaced idea that God created the heavens and the earth because He was somehow lonely. That He simply wanted to create human beings for the purpose of fellowship. The problem with that notion, however, aside from being blatantly unbiblical, is that it undermines what scripture teaches about the triune nature of God. The Bible teaches that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit have existed together in perfect harmony and in perfect unity for all of eternity. Forever and ever and ever. Therefore, God has never lacked communion, He has never felt the need for fellowship. He has that in the triune nature of His own being.

And so if we approach scripture with that premise in mind, then not only have we adopted an extremely shallow and shortsighted purpose for our own existence, but we're also missing the weightiness and the gravity of the redemptive plan of God. The reality, of course, is that God

actually created the cosmos with the cross in mind. My friends, the cross has never been plan B. It is, and has always been, God's plan A. He created the heavens and the earth and all that is within them for the express purpose of glorifying Himself, according to His sovereign grace. We see this explicitly stated in Ephesians 1:3-6, which says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Him with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him..." When? "... before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved."

We also see it in, perhaps, a place that we don't often think, and that's the parable that Jesus gives on the sheep and the goats from Matthew 25:34, when He said, concerning the sheep. "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" And so what we realize, then, is that when God began to form the complexities and intricacies of our human existence, He was actually preparing the stage upon which He would bring about His sovereign plan of redemption. A plan centered upon the cross of Christ and designed to accomplish the eternal exaltation of His glorious grace. An exaltation that begins in this life, but that extends for all of eternity, that forever and ever and ever the church will be the Lord's evidence that He is a kind and gracious God.

So, as we walk our way through the first three days of the creation week, it is imperative that we do so while contemplating the nature of salvation, because that is the ultimate purpose for all that we see God doing in our text for today. So, with that in mind, as we survey the first triad of the creation week, those first three days, I want to briefly revisit day one. And as we saw last week, it's there on day one that we discover *The Existence of Light*. Day one, *The Existence of Light*. And again, we see that in verse three which says, "And God said, 'Let there be light.' And there was light."

So, there are really two major aspects that I want to emphasize from this first day of creation. And the first one has to do with God forming light, before filling the sky with the entities that will utilize that light. Of course, scripture tells us that God Himself is light. It also tells us that He exists in unapproachable light, that the glorious splendor and the holy majesty of His very essence is of such brilliance that no one can approach Him, unless He allows them to do so. So, it shouldn't surprise us that this God has the ability to create a physical manifestation of that light that is powerful enough to provide for the plants and the trees and the vegetation which He created until, one day later, when He would create the sun.

After all, the Bible actually begins in very much the same way that it ends. As we see in the final chapter of God's great story, Revelation 22:5, describes the new heavens and the new earth, and it says this. "And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun." Why? Because "the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever." And so it's not a problem

for God Himself to serve as the light. But to go a step further, I think there's something even more that the Lord is communicating through the order of the creation week.

Obviously even Moses, in his humanity, who is the human author God used to inspire His Word, could clearly perceive that the world's greatest light source was the sun. That's a no-brainer. So this is not a case of human error or confusion found in the Genesis account, that's nonsense. But rather, the God-breathed Words of scripture provide humanity with an emphatic message. It's like a divine statement screaming at us from the sky with an exclamation point. And that message is this. While the sun is blazing hot and blindingly bright, do not think for a second that it is the cause or origin of the day. But rather, remember that the source of the sun's power and light is the Lord of the day. He is the one who has created this brilliant light source. So, how much more powerful must He be? That's the idea.

Therefore, contrary to what so many tribes and people groups throughout history have ignorantly believed in their fallen speculation and vain imagination, the sun is not worthy of our worship. The sun is not worthy of our praise. For God Himself is not only the one who created the sun, but He is the one who emanated the world's light before the sun existed, and He will do so when the sun is no more.

So, with that truth firmly established in our mind, that leads me to the second major aspect of day one that I want to emphasize for us today, and that is the definition of day itself. And we touched on this last week as we ended at the conclusion of verse five, which says, "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day." And so of course, as we walk our way through each day of the creation week, we're going to continue seeing this repeated usage of the same word and the same pattern. And that repetition, my friends, is intentional, just as it is throughout scripture. When we see repetition, that's God emphasizing something to us. It's like Him taking a highlighter and saying, "Focus on this truth."

And so from the perspective of authority, we've already affirmed that God and God alone has the right and the ability to define what a day is. We recognize that day is a name, it's a name that was given by God Himself, and He gave that name to the light. And as we said last week, we do not have the authority on our own accord to redefine that which God has already defined. He's done that for us repeatedly by defining it in the text as an evening and a morning, again and again and again and again. But to add another layer of confidence to that, it's also worth noting from a grammatical perspective that every other time we see the Hebrew word for "day", which is "Yom", accompanied by evening or morning, or modified by a number, it always, without exception, refers to a literal 24-hour period. That's the pattern we see repeated, again and again and again.

But we can go even further. Because, from a functional perspective, God specifically tells us in verse 14 that part of His purpose for creating the sun, the moon, and the stars is so that humanity can keep track of time. "For signs and for seasons, and for days and for years." And so these are literal seasons, these are literal days, and literal years. If they weren't, we wouldn't be able to keep track of time. But wait, there's more, because we can also see this from a practical

perspective. And in doing so, we see God utilize the definition of day that He has given, and the creation week itself, as a pattern to instruct His people, the Israelites, on what their work week should look like every single week. He tells them this in Exodus 20:8-11, and here's what He says.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates." Anyone. And then He anchors it to the creation week, saying this. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." So my friends, regardless of what secular science tries to tell us or to convince us of, upon the authority of the Word of God, from the perspective of God's own definition, Hebrew grammar, human practicality, and the divine pattern of creation itself, the days of the creation week were six literal 24-hour periods.

And it is to the second of those periods that we now turn in our text. And so next I want us to see day two, *The Expanse of Heaven*. Day two, *The Expanse of Heaven*. And we're going to see that in verses 6 through 8. If you look there with me, it says, "And God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day." So, in the midst of the waters, which at that point completely covered the world, God, on day two, commands for an expanse to provide a separation between the waters.

So for us, the first thing we need to do then is to define this word "expanse". It is a word that literally means something extended or spread out. So, for instance, in Isaiah 40:9, the word is used to refer to overlaying a statue with gold. In Ezekiel, it's used to refer to a sheet of crystal, like a ceiling over the heads of the living creatures that were surrounding the throne of God. And so the idea then, here in Genesis, is the one that David alludes to in Psalm 104, when he says this, "Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, you are very great. You are clothed with splendor and majesty. Covering yourself with light as with a garment; stretching out the heavens like a tent." I love that imagery. So, the picture here, then, is of God creating a blanket of separation within the waters, and like a sheet from our beds being spread out and tossed into the air, He lifts it up effortlessly, and He places it in the sky, fixing the water above the expanse to stay precisely in its place.

And we know that the expanse is above, because in verse 8, it tells us that God also names this expanse. Says, "And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day." And so the name God gives to the expanse is heaven, and that means lofty waters. And it's within these lofty waters, this heaven, as God calls it, where He will go on,

on day four, to place the sun and the moon and the stars. And so to use our modern language, this expanse God created on day two is the atmosphere.

In fact, it's interesting that many in the field of atmospheric science will actually sometimes refer to the atmosphere as this blanket of air. And yet it's been here in the text of scripture all the while. That blanket, which is comprised of water vapor, oxygen, hydrogen, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen, is critical for us to live and thrive on planet Earth. For example, it is the atmosphere that contains the ozone layer, which absorbs ultraviolet radiation from the sun, protecting us from an overabundance of UV light. That's probably a coincidence, right? It's the atmosphere that helps to moderate the Earth's temperature, so that we don't burn up or freeze to death. And it's the atmosphere where weather takes place and is crucial as part of the water cycle. So, everything that has to do with evaporation and precipitation and everything in between.

And so again, we see here, on the second day of the creation week, the genius of God. Even before the sun has been created, He is preparing the exact location where it will reside, and He's doing it in preparation to create human beings. To create us and a planet for us to live and thrive and flourish, and to bring Him glory.

And so all of that then brings us to verses 9 through 13. And it's there that we're going to discover day three, ***The Emergence of the Earth***. Day three, ***The Emergence of the Earth***. And so the creation week continues, if you look there with me, saying, "And God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind on the earth.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day."

And so now here, on day three, God begins to deal specifically with the waters under the expanse. And in doing so, He commands for the water to come together into one body. And then, likewise, He commands, by the sovereign power of His Word, for dry land to appear in the midst of those waters. To think about this from the standpoint of chemistry, what we see the Lord doing here is creating and then implementing the increasing usage of the elements, many of which we, as human beings, have now discovered. In addition to the primary elements used up to this point like hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon, we now know that the Lord begins to use here, like a divine artist adding color to His masterpiece, elements like silicon, and aluminum, and iron, all of which are atoms comprised of protons, neutrons, electrons, and quartz, which we now know are the basic building blocks God has created and combined to form all matter. As Hebrews 11:3 says, "The things which are seen or visible, created by things which are invisible."

And just as He's done with each day up to this point, the Lord names both the newly gathered waters and the land. The waters, He gives the name seas, and the land, He gives the name earth, with seas coming from a root word meaning to roar, and earth coming from a root word meaning

firm. And so the picture we're given then is this; in the midst of the presumably roaring waters crashing upon the newly created and firmly formed shores, the Lord gives another command. This time, it's for the earth to begin to flourish, and to be fruitful with vegetation.

And what is the result of the Lord's Word? With just a single command from the majestic Word of the sovereign Lord of creation, the earth obeys its creator. Every aspect and every nuance of God's command is fulfilled by His creation perfectly, without error. And I love how the fourth century pastor and theologian Basil describes what the scene of the Earth's obedience may have looked like in these moments. He said, "And in the briefest moment of time the earth, beginning with germination, in order that it might keep the laws of its creator, passing through every form of increase, immediately brought the shoots to perfection. The meadows were deep with the abundant grass; the fertile plains were playing with standing crops, presented the picture of a swelling sea with its moving heads of grain. And every herb and every kind of vegetable and whatever shrubs and the legumes that were, rose from the earth at that time in all profusion."

The fourth century theologian and author Ephrem help us by adding important insight as well, saying this. "Although the grasses were only a moment old at their creation, they appeared as if they were months old. Likewise, the trees, although only a day old when they sprouted forth, were nevertheless like trees years old, as they were fully grown, and fruits were already budding on their branches. The grass that would be required as food for the animals that were to be created two days later were thus made already. And the new fruit that would be food for Adam and his descendants was thus prepared." And of course the text tells us that God, once again, at the conclusion of the day, steps back, if you will, evaluates the masterpiece that He has created before Him, and He concludes, "It is very good." "And there was evening and there was morning, the third day."

And with the world formed, and now shaped exactly to God's exact specifications and precise plans, the earth would now be ready to be filled with the brilliance of His creativity, and the genius of His design, all in perfect obedience to His sovereign command. And as we sit and we think and we reflect upon that reality, and the grand scheme of redemptive history, I want to provide for us the picture that Paul Washer paints for us on this point.

He says this. "Here stands God on the days of creation. He looks at the stars and He says, 'All you stars, move yourselves to this place, and start in this order, and move in a circle, and move exactly as I tell you, until I give you another command. Planets, pick yourselves up and whirl, make this formation at my command, until I give you another word.' He looks at the mountains and He says, 'Be lifted up.' And they obey Him. And He looks at the valleys and He says, 'Be cast down.' And they obey Him. And then He looks at the sea and He says, 'You'll only come this far.' And the sea obeys. And then He looks at you, and He looks at me and He says, 'Come.' And we say, 'No.'"

My friends, as we reflect upon the unparalleled power and the unmatched wisdom of our God, I want us to consider today that as quickly as God created the incredible world in which we live, and all of its brilliance and wisdom, He will be returning even more suddenly to judge it. As the



apostle Peter says in his Second Epistle, chapter 3, beginning in verse 10, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. And then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved. And the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be? In lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn. But according to His promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

"Therefore, beloved, you who are loved in Christ, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation. You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability, but grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

And so, just as God was preparing the stage for His glorification at creation, the stage is now being prepared for His glorification at judgment and the consummation of all things. And yet, we can be eternally thankful today that between creation and judgment, there stands the cross. That God, in His great mercy and glorious grace, has sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, into the world that He has made in order to die in our place, to be crucified upon the very tree that He created, in order to forgive us of our sins, to pay the penalty for our transgressions, to satisfy His holy wrath that we ourselves deserve. To adopt us as sons and daughters into His family, and to bless us with eternal, everlasting life, all according to His grace. And He did that because of His grace and because He loves us, if only we will repent, if only we will turn from our lives of selfishness and sinfulness, and if only we will believe in the gift that He offers to us through His Son.

Through the gospel, we have the opportunity to be brought from spiritual darkness to spiritual light, spiritual death to spiritual life. And my friends, not only did He die in our place, but on the third day, like the seed that came forth, springing from the ground on day three of creation, Jesus Christ came bursting forth from the grave, conquering death in our place. And like the first fruit of the full harvest of souls that God will redeem throughout all of redemptive history, the resurrected Christ raises us to new life, and He causes us to be fruitful, and us to multiply, making disciples throughout the nations by the power of His Spirit.

So my friends, as we consider the beauty of God's truth today, I just want to leave us with the words of the apostle Peter echoing in our minds. "Be diligent to be found in Christ. Be diligent to be found pursuing hard after holiness and be diligent to be at peace with God and at peace with one another." May each and every one of us entrust ourselves to the sovereign creator, sustainer, and savior of our souls. Pray with me.

Father, in so many ways, we are left in awe at who you are and what you've done. And we thank you that you are not just a powerful God, but that you are kind. That not only are you infinite, but that you meet us intimately as a savior and as a friend. I pray, O God, that as we look to the

majesty, and the splendor, and the beauty, and the glory of creation, that that will be a telescope that allows us to see your beauty, and splendor, and salvation, the gospel of your Son, Jesus. Work mightily in our midst today. Break down our hard hearts. Give us a heart that is sensitive to your Word and to your truth. And may the realized purpose of our lives be all about you and your glory. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.