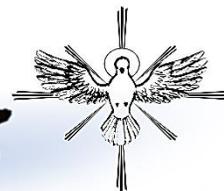




## SESSION 3

# GENESIS



Creation through Water and the Word

### OPENING DISCUSSION

#### THE MAJESTY AND MYSTERY OF GOD

##### 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

*Read Job 38:1-12 & 40:6-9 & 42:1-6*

- Since the time of the ancient Greek philosophers, man has speculated about God. It has generally been assumed that since God must be "above all things" to truly be God then to truly know God is an impossibility because God, by definition, is "above" our understanding. For Plato, the ultimate force (God) was an impersonal force called the *Good*. Plato believed that reality was divided into two realms, the perfect realm of ideas and forms and the imperfect reflection of that realm composed of matter. Hundreds of years later, the Gnostics in the early Christian church would echo much the same idea about God in their writings (which at times threatened to displace orthodox Christianity). Gnosticism could not believe God became man in Jesus Christ. They could not envision God—who is above all things and perfect in every way—being involved in a world so fraught with misery. If God is truly "God" and above everything than for Him to be something less was a fundamental contradiction. God in the flesh was an absurdity.

As we discussed in the first session of our bible study, centuries after the Gnostics and almost a millennium after Plato, the Enlightenment of the Medieval age and the skepticism and material worldview that stemmed from it-- with an emphasis on reason alone as the way to truly know— espoused much the same kind of thinking about God. Intellectual thought coming out of the enlightenment reasoned that God (if He existed) was either too great and too perfect for us to understand and thus He had no place in the realms of reason and science and was useful only in the realm of faith, or God was nonexistent because any God who is powerful enough to create all things but remained engaged in world so world so filled with imperfection, is a God who is a fundamental contradiction.

- *So ingrained was this way of thinking about God by the time of the Victorian era (1800's), that in 1850, a decade before Charles Darwin went public with his theory of evolution, a painter named John Millais exhibited a*

painting entitled “Christ in the House of His Parents” (see the painting below) and it was met with extreme criticism. In the painting, the boy Jesus has an injured hand from a day spent working in his father’s carpentry shop. Mother Mary lovingly attends the boy while father Joseph continues to work. The scene is realistic, with wood scraps laying all around and the other workers look tired and weary. But the scene was altogether lost on the Victorians who believed God to be more distant and abstract and found the realism of the painting inconceivable. The Times complained that the painting was revolting, for “its attempt to associate the holy family with the meanest details of a carpenter’s shop, with no conceivable omission of the misery, of dirt, even of disease, all finished with the same loathsome meticulousness, is disgusting.” Charles Dickens called the painting “mean, odious, revolting and repulsive.



- Given everything stated above, what is the logical error of this way of thinking about God and His involvement in creation?

### **THE IMMENSITY OF GOD’S CREATION**

- ✝ Consider the enormity of the universe: If you could travel at the speed of light (about 186,000 miles per second), you could travel the around the world seven times in one second. It would take you eight minutes to get from the earth to the sun and about five hours to get from earth to Pluto. The reach the nearest star, Proxima Centauri, would take more than four years. To go from there to the center of the Milky Way would take about 22,000 years. The Milky Way belongs to a group of some 20 galaxies known as the Local Group. Depending on where the Milky Way is in the Local Group, you’d have to travel at the speed of light for at least 5 to 10

million years. The Local Group belongs to the Virgo Cluster, part of the even larger Local Supercluster, which would take you 500 million light years to cross. To cross the entire known universe would take you about 20 billion light years! Given this incredible size, is it valid that many people scoff at the idea that the bible teaches that in all this immensity earth would be so special as to be the center of all God's creative work?

- *Consider the placement of earth: Our planet is perfectly designed to sustain life. If it were closer to the sun, we would burn up. If it were farther from the sun, we would freeze. If the earth were a few miles smaller in diameter, the density of its atmosphere would be so thin that the earth would not retain enough heat to sustain animal or human life. We have delicately balanced magnetic shield that protects the earth from radiation. Earth's magnetic field is generated by what is known as the geodynamo process. In order for or a planet to generate its own magnetic field by the geodynamo process, it must have the following characteristics: The planet rotates fast enough; Its interior must have a fluid medium; The interior fluid must have the ability to conduct electricity; The core must have an internal source of energy that propels convection currents in the liquid interior; The generation of Earth's magnetic field occurs deep within the Earth's interior, in a layer known as the outer core to be precise. Here the convective energy from the slow-moving molten iron is converted to electrical and magnetic energy, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The magnetic field then induces electric currents which in turn generate their own magnetic field which induces more electric currents, in a positive feedback loop. If the earth were a few miles larger in diameter, the air would become so dense that too much heat would be absorbed, resulting in the death of all living things. Also, if conditions were only slightly different, the earth's waters would freeze to such a depth that all other forms of life would perish, so God added salt, in just the right proportion to sustain marine life. And, yet, He designed the hydrologic cycle to provide salt-free rain from the ocean for crops and human consumption. He has designed the seasons and the balance of food for all the animals. We could go on and on! Even evolutionists admit the delicate balance for life on this planet is mind-boggling, but that's just at a planetary level. We haven't even begun to understand how our placement in the Milky Way or the Milky Way's placement in the Universe is, in itself conducive for life.*

## THE SYMMETRY OF SCRIPTURE

- ✠ Consider the profound it is that in the Bible all life—both creation and salvation—comes through water and the word. In Genesis 1 we are told that God's Word with the water and the Spirit (Genesis 1:2) brought forth all creation. In Holy Baptism the same happens to us.

### *Read Genesis 1:1-5*

- ① (Review from last week) Seven times in Genesis 1, we are told that God creates everything "good" out of the "to-hu ba-vo-hu" [without form and void] in verse 2.
- *The difference between how modern society uses the word good and how God uses the word good is staggering. In our day and age, it's not uncommon to hear good being used to describe a new craft beer or an entertaining sitcom or the latest pithy tweet by a celebrity. However, the biblical use of the Hebrew word tov (good) does not mean merely 'pleasant' or 'pleasurable'. It means capable of, or presently engaged in the process of, or destined for completely fulfilling the Divine purpose for which it was created.*

**Genesis 50:20**

*And you, you intended evil against me, but God intended it for good [tov], in order to keep a great many people alive.*

**Psalm 23:6**

*Goodness [tov] and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.*

- 2 It goes through walls and can travel at the speed of 186,282 mph yet can be slowed to a paltry 38 mph in ultra-cold gases. It carries electronic information for radios and TVs, but destroys genetic information in cells. In the form of x-rays, it can penetrate soft flesh and create an image of bones. It bends around buildings like waves and squeezes through pinholes like particles, but ricochets off tiny electrons. It travels at a speed that is thought to make time stand still. It's light. And although we know it primarily as the opposite of darkness, most of light is not even visible to the human eyes. From low energy radio waves to high energy micro waves and gamma rays, light zips around us, bounces off us, and yet can go through us. Without it we couldn't perceive the universe and everything in it, and yet science understands almost nothing about it. So, what is the source of the light that God speaks forth in Genesis 1?

**1 John 1:5**

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

- 3 How do we understand the last three words of verse 5 which reads in English "the first day?" Does Genesis teach that creation happened in six, 24-hour days or just six long periods of time?

*Read Genesis 1:6-8*

- 4 What exactly is created on day 2? Why so much water?

**➤ Some facts about water**

- The earth is the only place in the universe known to have massive amounts of liquid water.
- The earth is 70% covered by water.
- The human body is composed of about 55-65% water.
- Only about 1% of the world's water is ready to drink (but this is enough). About 97% is too salty and 2% is ice.
- Only 1% of household water is used for drinking in Western countries. The rest is used in bathrooms, and on the garden, etc.

*Read Genesis 1:9-13*

- 5 Based what Genesis says God did at the beginning of the third day, what might have been different about the geography of the dry land from the size and shape of dry land today?
  
- 6 Notice how God creates plants and trees not seeds and sprouts. The text implies fully formed, mature plants capable of bearing seed (e.g., most oak trees don't produce acorns until they are 20 or 30 years old). How could this "illusion of age" also explain other signs of age in other various aspects of creation (e.g., rocks and mountains)?