



PEOPLE OF THE LAND

A Biblical Exploration

WEEK 1: ORIGIN STORIES

PEOPLE OF
THE LAND



What was (or is) your life like growing up?

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- Think about your own personal “growing up” family origin stories

We must see

the world

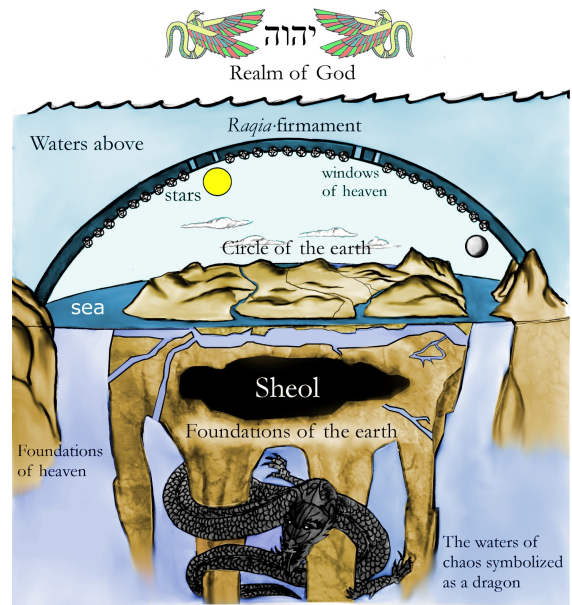
the way the text
sees the world



- The ancient Middle-Eastern peoples would not know what this picture represented
- For them, the earth was flat and they weren't asking scientific structural questions
- What questions were the ancient peoples seeking answers to about the world in which they lived? What questions are you seeking answers to in this modern world?
- As we reflect upon the Genesis origin stories, we must read the text and try to observe what questions the author was attempting to answer from his/her own cultural worldview.

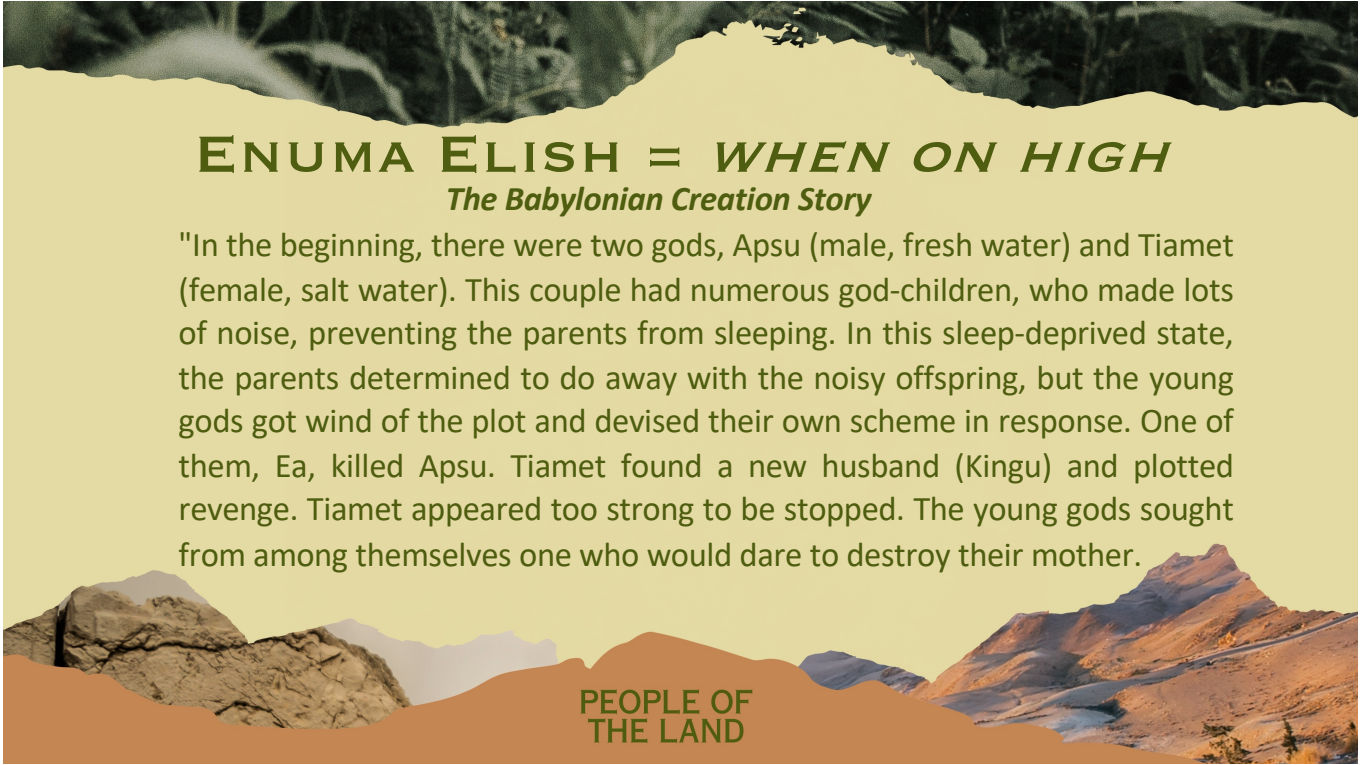
ANCIENT NEAR-EASTERN COSMOLOGY

Assyria
Phoenicia
Hittite
Phrygia
Egypt
Babylon
Israel
Persia
Media



THE FIRMAMENT Gen 1:7-8; Job 37:18; Ex 24:10; Ezk 1:22-26	WATERS ABOVE Gen 1:7-8; Ps 148:4-6	REALM OF GOD Ps 104:2-3; 29:10; Job 22:12-14	WINDOWS OF HEAVEN Gen 7:11; 8:2; Is 24:18
CIRCLE OF EARTH Isa 40:22; Job 26:10; Prov 8:27	FOUNDATIONS OF EARTH Job 9:6; Ps 75:3; 102:25	FOUNDATIONS OF HEAVEN Job 26:11; 2 Sam 22:8	THE CHAOS DRAGON Ps 74:13-15; Job 7:12; 9:13; 26:12-13

- This is how the Ancient Israelites viewed the world, which is similar to how ALL people viewed the world in ancient times
- The following Babylonian creation story is also similar to those of surrounding nations



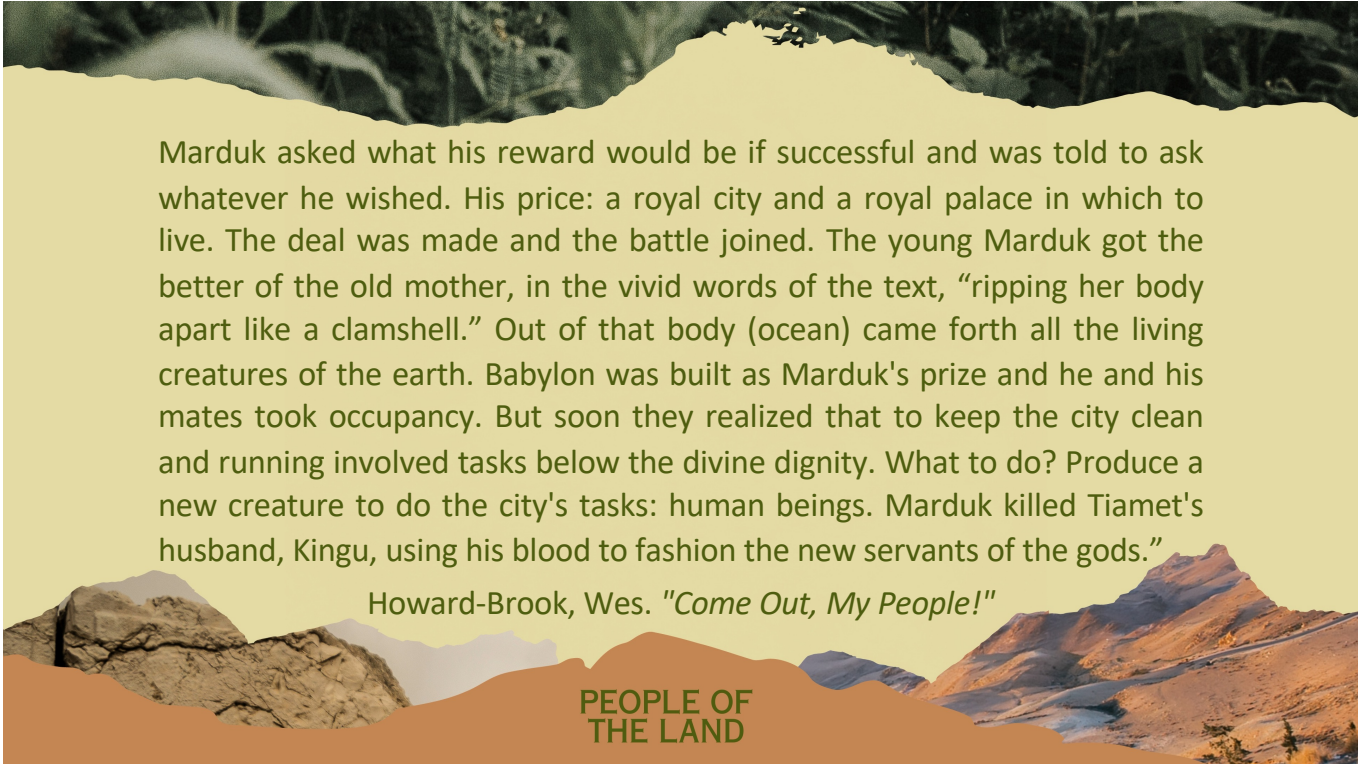
ENUMA ELISH = *WHEN ON HIGH*

The Babylonian Creation Story

"In the beginning, there were two gods, Apsu (male, fresh water) and Tiamet (female, salt water). This couple had numerous god-children, who made lots of noise, preventing the parents from sleeping. In this sleep-deprived state, the parents determined to do away with the noisy offspring, but the young gods got wind of the plot and devised their own scheme in response. One of them, Ea, killed Apsu. Tiamet found a new husband (Kingu) and plotted revenge. Tiamet appeared too strong to be stopped. The young gods sought from among themselves one who would dare to destroy their mother.

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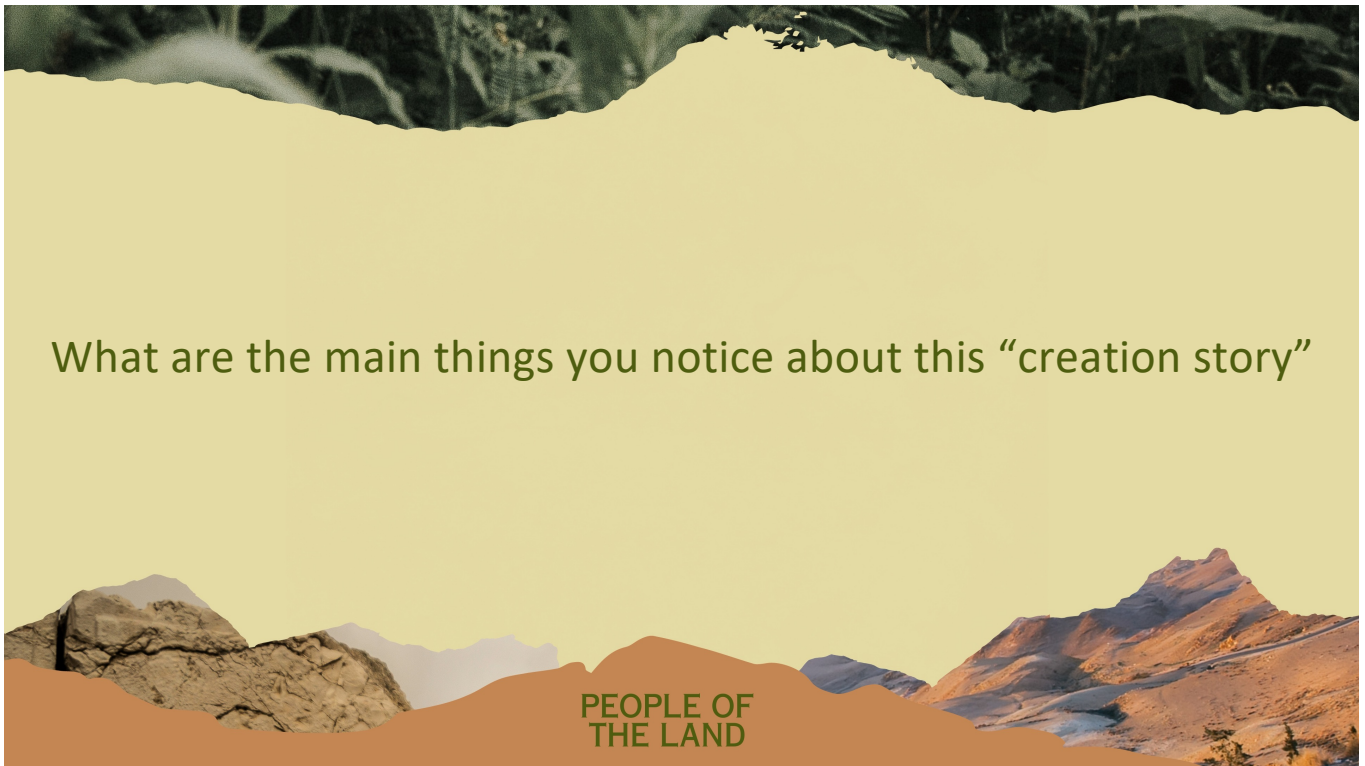
- As you read this story, focus on the main characters and their involvement in the creation story



Marduk asked what his reward would be if successful and was told to ask whatever he wished. His price: a royal city and a royal palace in which to live. The deal was made and the battle joined. The young Marduk got the better of the old mother, in the vivid words of the text, “ripping her body apart like a clamshell.” Out of that body (ocean) came forth all the living creatures of the earth. Babylon was built as Marduk's prize and he and his mates took occupancy. But soon they realized that to keep the city clean and running involved tasks below the divine dignity. What to do? Produce a new creature to do the city's tasks: human beings. Marduk killed Tiamet's husband, Kingu, using his blood to fashion the new servants of the gods.”

Howard-Brook, Wes. *"Come Out, My People!"*

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What are the main things you notice about this “creation story”

- Did you notice the conflict between the gods, their extreme violence, the reason for human’s being created, and the hierarchal leadership position of Marduk
- Did you notice how the story mirrors the hierarchical domination structure of the Ancient Near-Eastern Cosmology diagram on page 4?



GENESIS 1- DAY 1

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

² The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

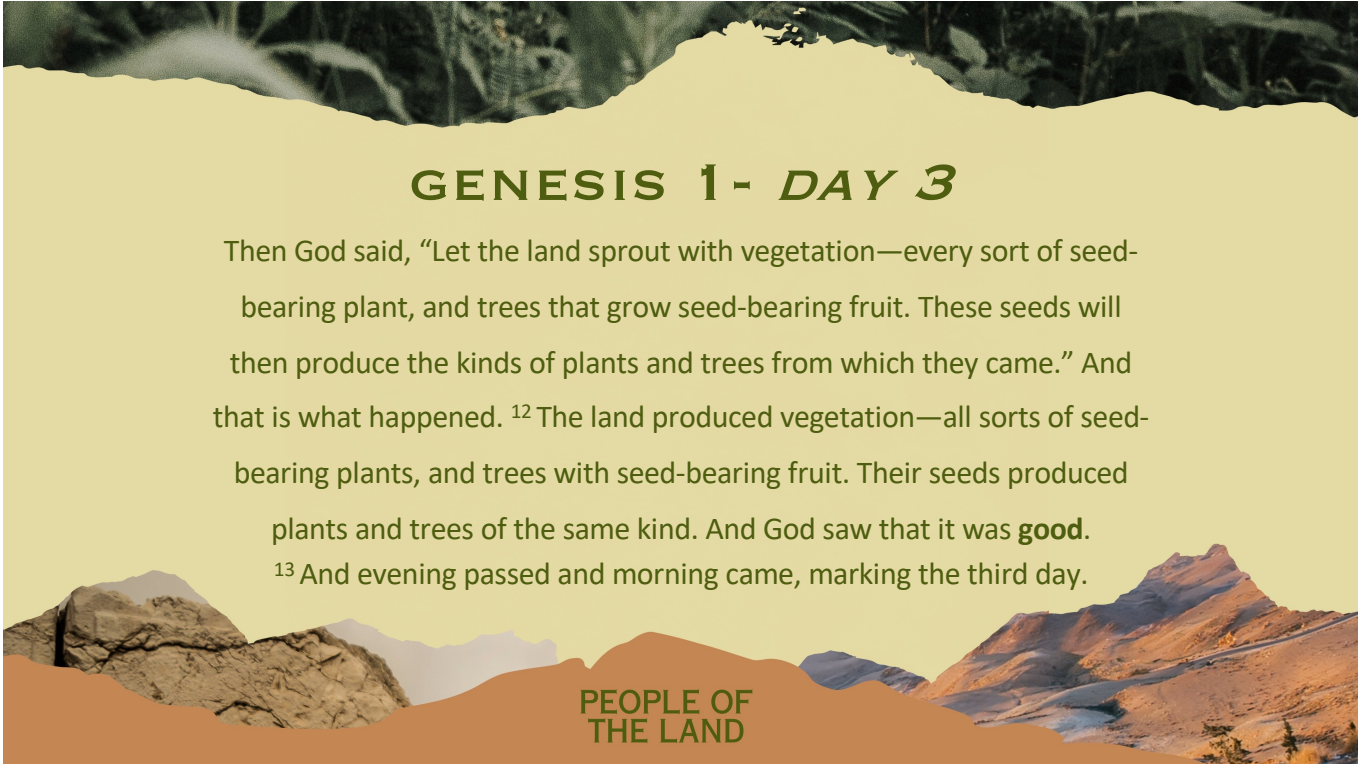
³ Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was **good**. Then he separated the light from the darkness.

⁵ God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

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- Note the line between verse 1 where God creates ex-nihilo (out of nothing) and verse 2 onwards where God brings order out of chaos (formless, empty, darkness) = two different origin stories (origin of material world vs origin of a functional world)
- Each day's creative work is "good"



GENESIS 1- DAY 3

Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. ¹² The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was **good**.

¹³ And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

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- Note how God gives agency to all that he is creating (the land produces fruitfulness according to each one’s kind) and it is all “good”



GENESIS 1- DAY 4

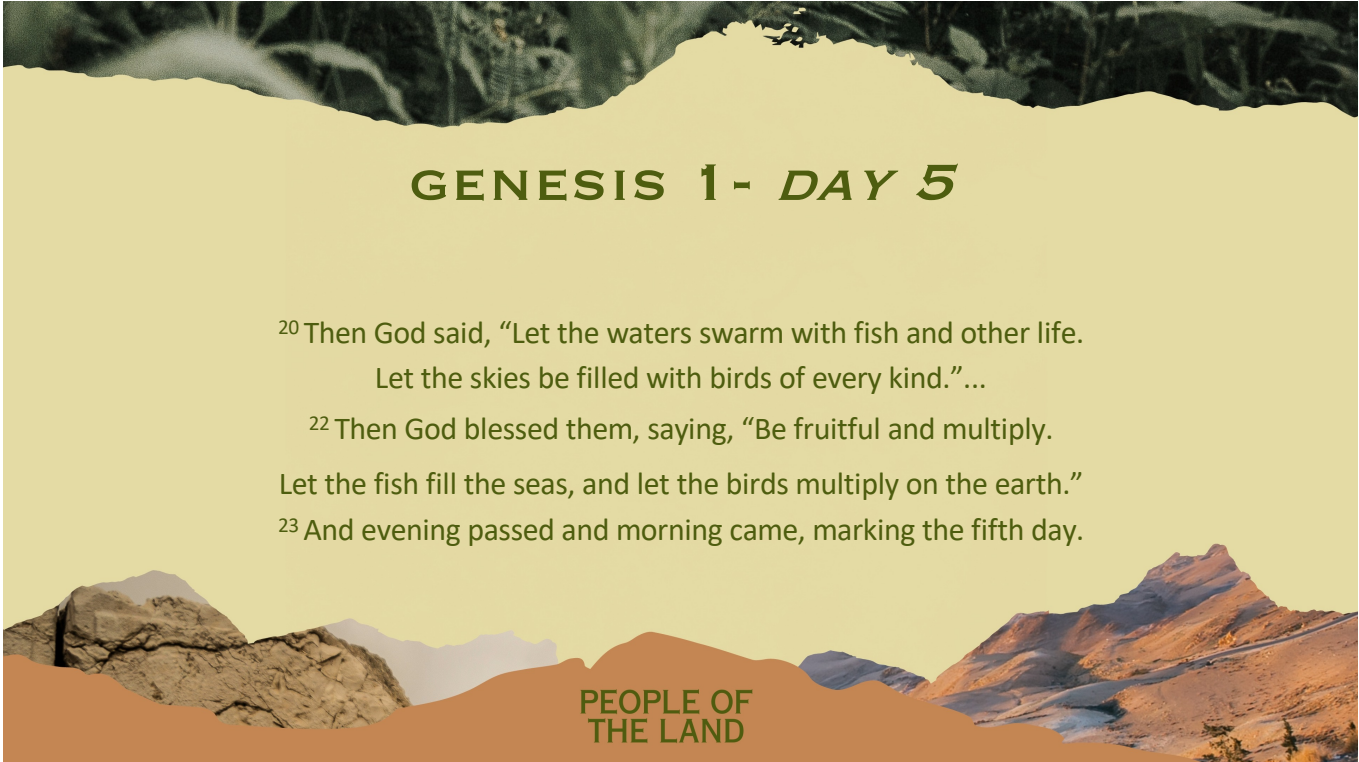
¹⁴ Then God said, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years...

And God saw that it was **good**.

¹⁹ And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

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- Note how God forms “time” and it is “good”



GENESIS 1- DAY 5

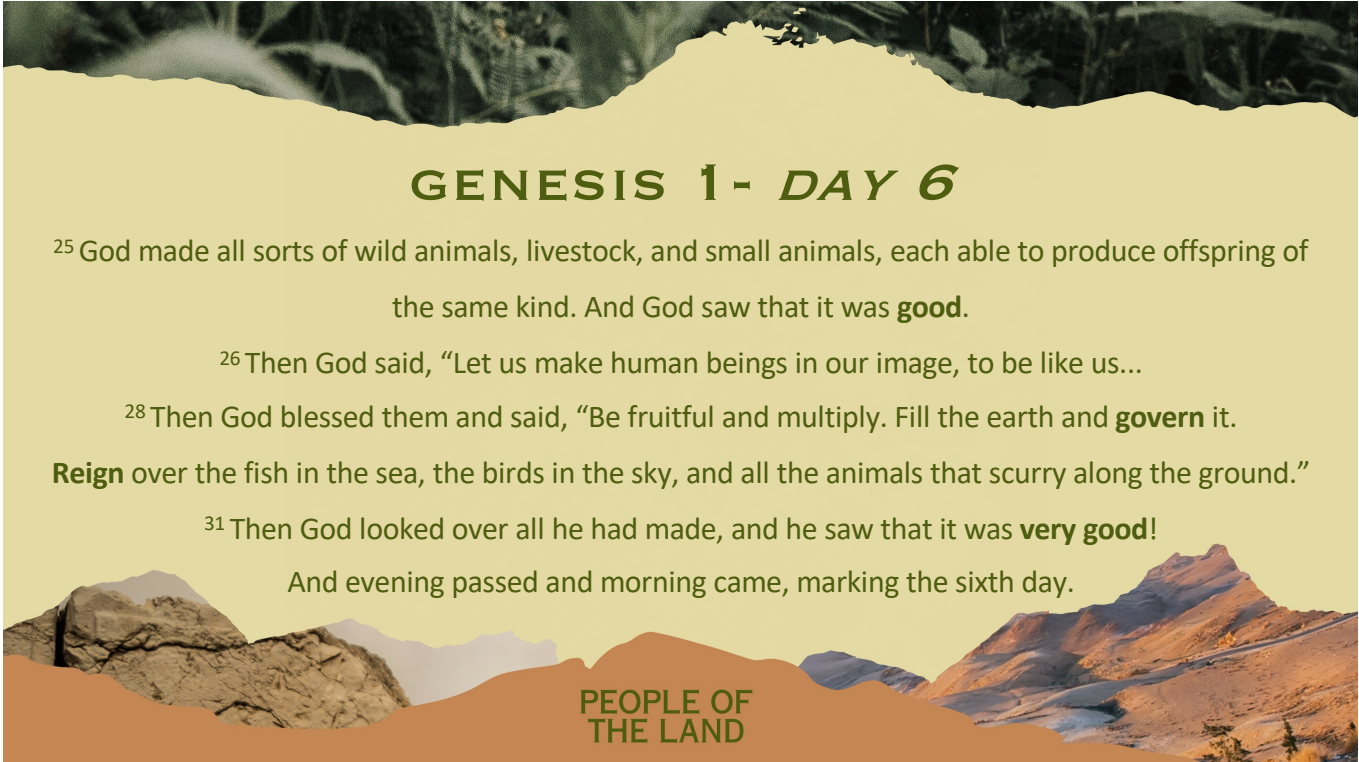
²⁰ Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life.
Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind."...

²² Then God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply.
Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."

²³ And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

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- Again, note the God-given agency and abundance of the ordered creation



GENESIS 1- DAY 6

²⁵ God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was **good**.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us..."

²⁸ Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and **govern** it.

Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

³¹ Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was **very good!**

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

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- Again, creative agency of animals which is good
- Then creation of human beings in God's image which is "very good"
- God blesses humanity and imparts a divine mandate, privilege and responsibility to be the benevolent overseers, custodians, stewards, servant-leaders over the created order
- The Hebrew verb literally means to rule by going down and walking among the subjects as an equal.

FUNCTIONS IN CREATION

Genesis 1



time



weather



food

Dr John Walton, *Genesis through Ancient Eyes*

- Dr Walton suggests that the Genesis origin story is more about God ordering the functional elements of time, weather and food (out of chaos), rather than it being focused on God creating a material world
- Do you agree or disagree? Why?



GENESIS 2- DAY 7

¹So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ²On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. ³And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

⁴This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

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- Note how different the ending of this Genesis origin story is to the Babylonian origin story
- List the ways it is different.
- How does this influence the way we think of God, ourselves and the world in which we live?



GENESIS 2 & 3- *Second Creation Story*

^{2:7} Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground.

He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

^{2:8} Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made.

^{2:15} The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.

^{3:8} When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees.

^{3:9} Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

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- Where is God in this Second Creation Story and how does He interact with humans?
- Again, how does this influence the way we think of God, ourselves and the world in which we live?
- Compare this story of God, Garden & Humanity with the Babylonian Creation Story and the Ancient Near-Eastern Cosmology diagram.
- Note the major differences and reflect on how they influence the way we view God, ourselves and our world

SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION



Safina Stewart, Wonthaggi, Victoria

- Gaze at Safina's painting of the 7 days of creation. What do you notice?
- See especially the interconnectedness of nature, humans & God in this story

HOUSE OR HOME?

building a house

In the house story we
are insignificant



Dr John Walton, *Genesis through Ancient Eyes*

- Dr Walton suggests that the Hebrew Creation Story is more like a “home story” (answering functional ordered relationship questions) rather than a “house story” (answering scientific material origin questions)
- Discuss...

HOUSE OR HOME?

making a home

In the home story we
are honored guests



Dr John Walton, *Genesis through Ancient Eyes*

- A Home Story where we are honoured guests is significantly different than a House Story where we are insignificant... reflect on this in relation to the Genesis Origin Story as a functional ordering story rather than a structural material creation story
- Do you view this world as a just a house or your home?

COMMUNION



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- Jesus came and “tabernacled” amongst us; He is “Immanuel” (God with us) and promised that he would be with us till the end of the age; He promised His disciples that he was going to prepare a place for them
- As you commune with God, remember Jesus’ death on a cruel cross and all that it reveals about the nature of God, His love for us and what He accomplished in restoring relationship with all creation