

Doing Theology



Introduction

We're setting out to **incarnate** the Word of God in the **power** of the Holy Spirit in **community** with the people of God **engaging** with the realities of our world.

Text | We're looking directly at the text, gaining an understanding of what the Bible actually says.

Context | We're reflecting on the text, and looking outward so that we can focus on the world around us and see it from God's perspective.

Soul | We're reflecting on the text, and looking inward, seeking to be transformed into the image of Jesus.

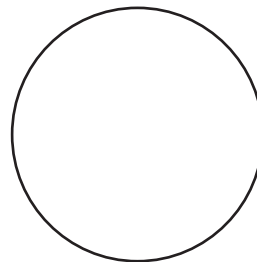
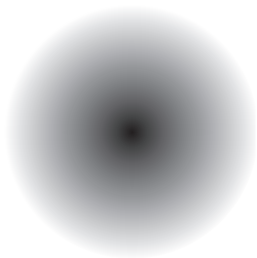
Isaiah 66:1-2 • Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. (ESV)

Humility

A **contrite** spirit

Submission to the Word

Two Approaches



The Nicene Creed (4th c)

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

The Masai Creed (1960)

We believe in the one High God, who out of love created the beautiful world and everything good in it. He created Man and wanted Man to be happy in the world. God loves the world and every nation and tribe on the Earth. We have known this High God in darkness, and now we know Him in the light. God promised in the book of His word, the Bible, that He would save the world and all the nations and tribes.

We believe that God made good His promise by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, a man in the flesh, a Jew by tribe, born poor in a little village, who left His home and was always on safari doing good, curing people by the power of God, teaching about God and man, showing the meaning of religion is love. He was rejected by his people, tortured and nailed hands and feet to a cross, and died. He lay buried in the grave, but the hyenas did not touch him, and on the third day, He rose from the grave. He ascended to the skies. He is the Lord.

We believe that all our sins are forgiven through Him. All who have faith in Him must be sorry for their sins, be baptised in the Holy Spirit of God, live the rules of love and share the bread together in love, to announce the Good News to others until Jesus comes again. We are waiting for Him. He is alive. He lives. This we believe.

Common Points of Difference Among Evangelicals

1. Inspiration of Scripture

- a. Inerrant
- b. Infallible
- c. Case study

Matthew 10:9-10 • Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.

Mark 6:8-10 • These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic.”

Luke 9:3 • He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic.”

2. Creation

3. Free Will

Psalms 135:6 • “The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.”

Daniel 4:35 • “All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?””

Ephesians 1:4-5 • “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will”

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 • “See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

2 Chronicles 36:11-17 • “Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD. He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God’s name. He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the LORD, the God of Israel. Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged.”

4. Foreknowledge

- a. God knows all that will happen, from beginning to end.
- b. God knows all that is knowable. In some cases, he knows all the possible outcomes but does not know which will actually occur.

5. Human Constitution

- a. Body & soul
- b. Body, soul & spirit
- c. One person

6. Salvation

- a. Calvinism
- b. Armenianism

7. Eternal Security

- a. Secure in the power of God
- b. The need to persist in faith

8. Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel

- a. There is no name under heaven by which we must be saved
- b. He has not left himself without a witness
- c. There is hope beyond the grave

9. Baptism

- a. Believer's baptism
- b. Infant baptism

10. Charismata

- a. All the gifts & more are for today
- b. Certain gifts were for the NT era and have ceased

11. Communion

- a. This is my body
- b. Do this in remembrance of me

12. Women in ministry

- a. Complementarian: equal with complementary roles
- b. Egalitarian: gender is irrelevant for gifting & spiritual leadership

13. The end times

- a. Premillennial
- b. Postmillennial
- c. Amillennial

14. Hell

- a. Unending torment of the wicked
- b. The wicked shall be no more



Principle | Understand the primary positions on the debated issue well enough to explain it to the satisfaction of its best defenders. Suspend judgment until you're able to do so.



Genesis 1 | Interpretive Models

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created human beings in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Model 1 | Young Earth

1. Clearly, the Bible says that God created the universe and all that is in it in 6 days.
 - a. The ordinary meaning of יוֹם “day” is a 24 hour period.
 - b. Why complicate the matter?
2. First, the Hebrew word יוֹם yom almost always refers to a 24-hour period.
 - a. Any period of time referred to by that word, then, is 24 hours long, unless we have some direct indication in the text that it isn't.
3. Second, whenever “yom” is used with a specific number before it, it always refers to a normal 24-hour day.
4. Third, the fact that the author uses “evening” and “morning” when describing each creation “day” makes it clear that he intended the reader to see these as normal days.
 - a. It is unusual to speak of a long period of time having a morning and an evening.
5. Fourth, Gen 1:14 talks about days and years; nobody questions that the days and years here are literal.
 - a. And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years’.
 - b. It doesn't make sense to assume that the author suddenly shifted from one usage of yom to another, in the same passage, without any indication.
6. Finally, God commanded Israel to imitate the pattern he set in Genesis 1 by working 6 days out of the week and resting on the 7th.
 - a. Remember the Sabbath day, and 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; you shall not do any work... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it. (Ex 20:8-11)

Model 2 | Old Earth

1. The usage of “yom” isn't quite as clear as it would seem.
 - a. While the word can of course refer to a 24-hour period, it can also refer to a longer span of time.
 - b. Gen 2:4
 - i. Clearly the word is being used to refer to the period of time in which God created everything, not just the 24-hour period.
 - c. Other examples:
 - i. Prov 25:13
 - ii. Isa 4:2
 - iii. Zech 14:1
2. Interpreting the days of Gen 1 as 24-hour periods creates difficulties within the text.

- a. The sun does not appear until the fourth day; how then were the mornings and the evenings of the previous three days understood?
 - b. If we stay with the direct understanding of the text, it is difficult to see how some of the events could have happened in a 24-hour period. (1:11-12)
 - c. On the 6th day, Adam named all the animals... this argument might look silly, but if we're taking everything at face value, looking for the simple and direct meaning...
3. Third, several passages of Scripture seem to indicate that God's days are not measured like our days.
- a. A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by. (Psalm 90:4)
 - b. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (2 Peter 3:8)
 - c. Hebrews 4 seems to indicate that we are still in the 7th day of creation.
4. Finally, a number of passages appear to teach that the earth is very old.
- a. He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed—but he marches on forever. (Hab 3:6)
 - b. Hear, you mountains, the LORD's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. (Micah 6:2)
 - c. The frequent use of ancient as a description of the earth appears to correlate better with an earth that isn't 10000 years old.
 - d. At least, these points show that it isn't implausible to believe that the Bible is comfortable with an old earth.

Model 3 | The Gap Theory

1. Explanation:

- a. 1:1 speaks of the original creation. This creation became corrupted through demonic forces and came under judgment. It became a formless void. Then God restored the world and created humanity to love God and care for & protect his creation.
2. Gen 1:2 describes the earth as a formless void (tohu va bohu) in which darkness covered the face of the deep.
- a. These words almost always refer to something that has been corrupted, wasted and judged.
 - i. Deut 32:10
 - ii. Isa 24:10
 - iii. Isa 34:11
 - iv. Jer 4:23
 - b. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Gen 1:2 refers to a condition where the world was under God's judgement.
 - c. In fact, Isa 45:18 says explicitly that the Lord "did not create the world a chaos [tohu]".
 - d. Some Hebrew scholars think that the word translated "was" in 1:2 ought to be translated "became".
3. In general, "the deep" has a negative connotation in the OT.

- a. The waters, the seas, the deep usually signified something that opposed God, that contained evil.
 - b. So when we read that the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters, there is the sense of the Spirit guarding it, watching over it, keeping demonic forces at bay.
 - c. Again, there is the sense that something evil has happened between 1:1 and 1:2.
4. There are other OT passages that speak of creation, and in many of them, God is seen as doing battle with hostile forces.
- a. The waters, the deep, Leviathan...
 - i. Ps 74:12-17
 - ii. Ps 89:8-18
 - iii. Ps 104:1-9
 - b. So we have to reflect on where these conflict passages fit into the creation story of Gen 1-2.
 - c. Also, where does the rebellion and fall of Satan and his angels fall into Gen 1-2 (Jude 6, Rev 12).
5. It is significant that with the exception of animals and humans, Gen 1 does not use the word "create" (bara) but "make" ('asah).
- a. God fashions things out of pre-existing material.
 - b. This fits with the view that we're talking about the restoration of a corrupted world, rather than its original creation from nothing.
6. Finally, the use of the words "dominion" & "keep".
- a. The Hebrew term "kabash" usually suggests suppression, conquering, or enslaving hostile forces.
 - i. Num 32:22, 29
 - ii. Josh 18:1
 - iii. Neh 5:5
 - iv. Jer 34:16
 - v. Micah 7:19
 - vi. Zech 9:15
 - b. God commands Adam to "keep" (shamar) the Garden.
 - i. There's a sense of guarding it from something that shouldn't enter in.
 - ii. Same word used in 3:24 to speak of the angels/cherubim guarding the Garden from Adam & Eve.
 - iii. So what were Adam & Eve guarding the garden from?
 - c. And they fail to guard the garden, evil enters in, so God has to cover the earth with the waters again, and start over with Noah.

Model 4 | The Literary Framework View

1. Explanation:

- a. Young earth creationists seek to fit modern science into a simplistic reading of Genesis 1. Old earth folk seek to fit Genesis 1 into modern science. The Gap theorists insert a speculative gap and seek to have their cake and eat it too.
- b. All three are fundamentally misguided in how they approach the text.
- c. They've missed the forest for the trees.
- d. They haven't considered seriously the kind of literature we are dealing with in Gen 1.
- e. The text is clearly poetic, a literary structure rather than a chronological or sequential structure.
- f. Therefore to try to match it up with scientific chronologies is an error of genre – in other words, the text does not address the age of the earth at all.

2. Gen 1:1 functions as a general introductory & summary statement.

3. Gen 1:2 sets forth the problem that the rest of the chapter is to deal with.

- a. Specifically, three problems are laid out.
- b. One, there is darkness.
- c. Second, the earth is covered by the deep, the waters, that which contains evil covers the whole earth.
- d. Third, the earth itself is formless and void.

4. The creation week is divided into two sets of three days.

- a. Within each three-day group, four creative acts of God are identified by the phrase "Let there be..."
- b. And there's a mirroring, a paralleling between the first set of days/creative acts and the second set of days/creative acts.
- c. Day 4 mirrors day 1, day 5 mirrors day 2, day 6 mirrors day 3.

5. The first set of 3 days addresses the problems of the darkness, the deep, and the formlessness of the earth.

- a. God addresses these problems by creating good spaces within which good things may exist.

6. The second set of 3 days addresses the voidness/emptiness problem of 1:2.

- a. God solves this problem by creating good things to fill the good spaces he created in the first 3 days.

Problem	Solution: step 1	Solution: step 2
Formless void	Forming place	Filling void
Darkness	Day 1: light/separate darkness	Day 4: lights
The deep	Day 2: heavens/separate waters	Day 5: birds & fish
Formless earth	Day 3: earth/vegetation	Day 6: animals & humans

7. This sort of thematic arrangement isn't unusual – the gospel writers do the same sort of thing with the Jesus narrative.

- a. The point is simply that Gen 1 is not concerned with the chronology, it is concerned with explaining a theology of creation using literary means.

Model 5 | The Cosmic Temple Inauguration View

1. Explanation:

- a. This is an extension of the literary framework view.
- b. The primary element of this view is that we're looking at creation from a functional standpoint rather than a material standpoint.

2. The Hebrew word translated "create" (bara') is about establishing function.

- a. In order to interpret the chapter "literally" we need to understand this word "literally", in the sense that it was used in the text, rather than the way we've come to use it.
- b. The verb bara' is used some 50 times in the OT. The subject is always God, and the object varies – people, groups of people, creatures, phenomena – but it's possible to see the primary use of the verb as functional.
- c. No materials are ever mentioned in the use of bara' and traditionally this has been taken to mean creation ex nihilo, or out of nothing, but it could also support the case for the word being used functionally rather than materially.
- d. This does not mean that God is not responsible for material creation – it's just that this account doesn't describe it or the mechanisms of material creation.
- e. So the existence of an object has more to do with it having a function within an ordered system than with it having material properties.

3. The creation account begins in 1:2 with no functions (rather than with no material).

- a. tohu wa bohu – there is stuff, but it's non-functional.

4. The first three days address the three major functions of life: time, weather, food.

- a. God doesn't call the light "light" but "day" – functional description.
- b. So imagine reading the text replacing "light" by "period of light".
- c. "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease." (Genesis 8:22 NIV)

5. Days four to six establish those things that will fulfill these functions & roles.

6. The recurring comment that "it is good" refers to functionality (relative to people).

7. And so, when it is all set up, God enters into the temple prepared for him.

- a. Sabbath isn't a rest, as in doing nothing – rather, it is the work that God enters into once he has set everything up just the way he planned it.

8. So the whole creation account is then seen as a seven-day inauguration of the cosmic temple, setting up its functions for the benefit of humanity, with God dwelling in relationship with his creatures.

9. Implications:

- a. If Genesis 1 is not an account of material origins, then it offers no mechanism for material origins, and we may safely look to science to consider what it suggests for such mechanisms. We may find current scientific theories to be plausible or not, but we cannot on the basis of Genesis 1 object to any mechanism they offer.
- b. The seven days of creation are seen as seven 24-hour periods, but this says nothing to the age of the earth or the universe.

Recommended Resources

Greg Boyd | [Across the Spectrum – Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology](#)

Jaroslav Pelikan | [Credo](#)

