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. (Genesis 1:1)

I. A Fresh Perspective

Key terms and phrases that are vital to understanding the message of chapter one.

A. In the beginning

Verse one should be taken as a summary statement that introduces the creation narrative, not as a statement of action. It points to the action (in verses following) but does not itself contain the action. In order to understand what verse one is saying, we could think of it like this: “The following is an account of how it all began, of how God created everything.”

B. Created

Hebrew “bara”. We typically view this passage with the idea in mind that it is describing the act of God speaking things into existence, and that is certainly true but it is far more significant than that. As we dig deeper into the creation narrative, we discover a much more significant message.

However, the Hebrew word “bara” means more than just to create. It also implies assigning purpose to the things created, or as the commentator states, “assigning roles.” Moses doesn’t merely say, “God spoke everything into existence.” He says, “God created everything with a purpose.” And now, as you read the rest of the chapter, you will see that to be true in the more detailed description of the creation.

Gap theorists put an indeterminable span of time between verses 1 and 2, suggesting that verse 1 describes the complete action of creation, and verse 2 describes the chaos that came upon the earth as a result of God’s judgment. They point to Isaiah 45:18 to suggest God did not create the earth in a state of chaos.

For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. KJV

But other translations of this verse give more clarity.

For this is what the LORD says-- he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited-- he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other. NIV

For the LORD is God, and he created the heavens and earth and put everything in place. He made the world to be lived in, not to be a place of empty chaos. "I am the LORD," he says, "and there is no other. NLT

Isaiah was not trying to make a statement about what process God used to create the world. He was simply making a statement about God having purpose for the world He created.

But the gap theorists try to make this verse say, “God did not create the earth in a state of chaos.” It is important for them to try to make that case if they are going to
Order Out Of Chaos

have any support for their theory that the world was created perfect, then fell into chaos because of judgment.

But let’s lay that aside. It is too fragile and complex to give heavy consideration to. According to Moses, God did indeed start with an unorganized creation that he methodically gave organization to. This is a vitally important message for all creationists to value. God didn’t speak it all in to existence, He spoke it into existence and carefully planned and designed everything to have a specific role and function. But why would God do that? One suggestion is that He wanted the record to show He is the God who brings order out of chaos, unlike the false deities that seemed to always bring chaos in to the orderly world.

C. The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Since the Hebrew word used here is used for both wind and Spirit, it is an ongoing debate about which is the best way to translate “ruach” (roo-ack). It has been translated “Spirit” so often that it almost seems blasphemous to suggest it could be translated “wind”, as though we are trying to take something sacred away from scripture. But the case for “wind” is very strong. The context of this passage is a description of the chaotic world before God brought order. Wind circulating over the waters (the better rendering than hovering) matches perfectly the chaotic state.

Furthermore, the ancient Hebrews (the readers of Moses’ writings) know nothing about the Trinity. They were focusing on trying to comprehend the idea of one God, in opposition to the polytheism that dominated the rest of the world (Hear O Israel; the Lord our God is one God). They certainly would not have recognized the Spirit of God as distinct from the “one” God they believed in. But they would have logically seen the wind of God as representing his power, (they commonly associated God’s power with the wind).

II. Day One

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

Here is a perfect example of what we have been talking about. The emphasis here is on God assigning roles to creation. God created light, but more importantly He defined the role of light.

He called the light “day”. More specifically, he called the duration of light “day” and the duration of darkness “night”.

What people often fail to see in this verse is that God, in effect, created time on day one- time as we understand it- the system we use to mark time, which is the synchronized movement of our solar system.

III. The Message of Genesis 1:1-5

A. God is a God of Order
Order Out Of Chaos

This chapter is about God bringing order out of complete chaos. It is about bringing the cosmos into a fully functional state by giving assignments and purpose to everything created. It is about how meticulously everything about us was brought into existence and put into order.

One commentator gives this suggested paraphrase:

“The earth was nonfunctional; primordial, watery darkness prevailed; and a supernatural wind that was permeated with the power of God circulated over the surface of the waters.”

That is a powerful description of the chaotic state of the unorganized earth.

It provides a distinct picture of our God in stark contrast to the various gods of the other religions. The gods of other religions were notorious for causing chaos, but ineffective in turning chaos into order. But this account shows the most high God as taking complete chaos and transforming it into perfect functional order. Again, let’s be reminded that the message of Genesis is designed to teach us more about God than it is to teach us about the work God did. It is equally important for us today to help the world understand there is more to God than what he does. They need to know who He is. They need to know His heart, His power, His master plan.

It is comforting to us to know our God takes disorganized chaos and methodically brings order and function. If we can relate to the message of “order out of chaos” in the creation narrative, we can find strength and hope in knowing there is no state of chaos we can possibly live in that God can’t fix.

We need that understanding. We need that assurance. Life can be so chaotic. I know there have to be times when you think your world is spinning out of control. It seems everything is going wrong at once. It seems you are facing insurmountable problems. Everywhere you turn, it seems chaotic. Chaos has come into your home as your family, once close and loving, is suddenly torn apart. Chaos in your marriage. Everything was sailing along fine for a while, then the sudden storm hits and you have not yet recovered. Chaos in your personal life. You suddenly, unexpectedly lost your job. You discovered your new car is a lemon and the manufacturer won’t stand behind it. The stock market fell and you lost your retirement. You were feeling fine last week, and this week the doctor looks into your eyes and tells you to get your affairs in order. Death came knocking at the door and took your loved one. Where is God in all the chaos of your life? Does He seem so far away, so disconnected? Do your circumstances seem so overwhelming that you can’t see any possibility of God restoring your life to order and some semblance of sanity and normalcy? Read Genesis 1 again. The earth was void and without form. Darkness was upon the face of the deep. A powerful, turbulent wind driven by the power of God swept across the waters. And God started His methodical process of taming the winds, corralling the wildness, and establishing complete order where there was none at all.

B. God is not responsible for the mess humankind has made.

God didn’t create chaos to be the ongoing condition man would inherit. God took chaos and made order and function out of it. That is what man inherited, a world that functioned like a Swiss watch. And, it would have continued to function flawlessly had
Order Out Of Chaos

it not been for man failing God, and God cursing the earth in response to man’s disobedience. Man would not enjoy the paradise he once knew, but would labor and toil to survive in an antagonistic environment.

When people look at the present world and see heartbreaking, deplorable conditions, isn’t it curious they often use that as an argument against the existence of God? “If there is a God, why is there suffering? Why are their natural disasters? Why is their starvation? Why are innocent people brutalized? Why are children abducted and abused?”

But the story of creation in Genesis clearly points the finger at rebellious man. Man did this! God gave man every advantage he could possibly imagine and man brought the curse upon himself because of his rebellion. Why do people either blame God or dismiss God for what man has done?

IV. God can and will do it again.

This world is in chaos. We have never seen anything like this. Our nation is in chaos. The United States of America is quickly becoming the Divided States of America. Rumors of civil war keep cropping up. There is an aggressive agenda in our nation to generate a rabid hatred of America and everything traditionally American. We are living in shocking, heartbreaking chaos. Christianity is being chased out of our nation and anything and everything else is being welcomed in. We are in chaos.

On a worldwide scale, we are in chaos. In total, there are believed to be around 16,300 nuclear weapons spread between these nine countries. The United States, Russia, the UK, France, China, North Korea, India, Pakistan, and Israel all control some nuclear weaponry. Jan 6, 2016 (Statista)

Here in the United States, people are deeply concerned about the hatred that is splitting our nation. People are crying out, “Why can’t we all just get along?” That is noble but it doesn’t fix he problem. The problem is the sin-darkened heart of mankind. Nobody can fix the chaos. It is too far gone for human solutions. But the same God who presided over the chaotic earth “in the beginning” can bring order back to our chaos. Only God. He is our only solution.