Beyond Fact and Fiction:
The Creation Story of Genesis 1

I was recently approached by a friend who was interested in talking about the ongoing debates concerning the origins of the world. Most of the squabbling about creation/Intelligent Design/evolution centers on the creation story found in Genesis 1. If you haven’t read it recently, take a few minutes and refresh your memory about what the story says and what it doesn’t say.

I propose that much of our confusion about what to make of this text originates in our asking the wrong set of questions about the text.

What if we set the science questions aside for a moment and ask instead:

- What does this passage tell us about God?
- What does this passage tell us about men and women?
- What does this passage tell us about the relationship between God and human beings?

Asking different questions can give us different answers. Genesis 1 becomes the story of a single creator, carefully and intentionally creating a good universe. God creates and provides for humankind.

This view of the creator and the cosmos contrasts with the dominant views of other cultures in the ancient middle east. Scholars spend their entire careers reading and studying these texts and there are all sorts of internet sources (some better than others). But check [http://faculty.gvsu.edu/websterm/Enuma_Elish.html](http://faculty.gvsu.edu/websterm/Enuma_Elish.html) for information about the Babylonian creation story. There are also translations of the text available online.

Ask the same questions of the Babylonian creation story. What does this tell us about the gods? What does this tell up about human kind? What does this passage tell us about the relationship between the gods and human beings?

(continued on page 2)
The Babylonian view is it is a violent world, filled with wars and destruction. Humankind is created to serve the gods.

Ancient Babylon and ancient Israel have very different views of the world. Remember everyone else in the ancient world are polytheists, except for Israel. But beyond that, how the gods or God relate to the world and humankind is very different. In Genesis 1, Israel proclaims a unique view of creation. In a very real sense Genesis 1 is a statement of faith.

This text received its final form at or just after the Babylonian Exile. Israel has been soundly defeated, and the “best and the brightest” were carted off to Babylon. The exiles are confronted with a big, prosperous, rich Babylonian culture. The temptation to assimilate into the dominate culture must have been overwhelming. The place on earth were God is present to Israel, the Temple, has been destroyed. It is a time of cultural and theological crisis. Has God abandoned Israel? Since Israel has been defeated by Babylon, has Israel’s God been defeated by the Babylonian gods?

Genesis 1 - as statement of faith- says NO. Our God, the God of Israel is the creator. The sun and moon and stars are not gods as the Babylonians suppose, they are the creation of the true God. The true God, the creator God of Israel, has been and continues to be in control of the world.

The devastating experience of the Exile causes Israel to think seriously about who God is and how God acts. Not everything Israel believes about God is found in Genesis 1. The story doesn’t end after one chapter. But Israel firmly declares who God is in relation to the universe, the world and humankind.

I know some of you are still saying, what about the science? Didn’t the original audience believe this was how, physically how, the universe was created? And if this is the word of God, isn’t Genesis 1 then, how the creation happened?

Genesis may reflect the best understanding of the physical creation available to ancient audiences. I don’t think we should be surprised or alarmed by that. I find John Calvin is quite helpful here. As he writes in his Commentary on Genesis, these texts were written appropriate to the understanding of its first audience. It makes no sense for Genesis 1 to speak of things beyond their comprehension. In Scripture, God comes to us, reveals God’s self to us, in ways that we can understand. If Genesis were to be written today, the science would be different. Through modern science we have discovered much- but not all- about the origins of the universe and humankind. But the purpose of the text, to tell us about God and about humankind and about the relationship between God and humankind would be the same.

I would love to visit with anyone interested in exploring this topic more.

Grace and peace,

Alan

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If you have a family member or know of someone who is graduating from high school, college, etc., please let the office know so we can celebrate with you on Rose Sunday in June.
This summer, our worship themes and messages will be based primarily on the Psalms. We will begin on Sunday, June 3\(^{rd}\), by exploring Psalm 146. If you have a Psalm you would like the pastor to preach about please call the church (533-7845) or email Alan at agriffin46528@comcast.net.

Our Cancer Support Group will now be meeting monthly on the second Thursday of each month. The Support Group offers a safe place for people at all stages of the cancer journey to share their experiences and find help. Anyone with a cancer diagnosis is welcome to attend; participants do not need to be church members. If you are attending this support group meeting for the first time, we recommend that you call ahead of time to confirm that no changes in the schedule have been made. The group is led by Rhonda Griffin, a Certified Oncology Nurse, and Alan Griffin, pastor.

June 1 First Fridays
5:30 pm — 9:00 pm
GHS Men’s Choir at 6:30 and 7:30 pm
Free Chili Dogs and Chips
The Session has decided to hold monthly church workdays. These will be held on the third Saturday of each month (June 16) from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. Each month there will be opportunities for both inside and outside tasks. There will be some tasks each month that can mostly be done while sitting. We invite you to come help the ministry of our congregation by participating in these workdays whenever your schedule allows. The fellowship is always good. In addition, we plan to post a list of tasks that could be adopted and completed at other times during the month for those unable to attend the Saturday morning workdays.

Security Updates
The Session has been exploring ways to improve security at First Presbyterian Church for the last several months. This review began after the church shooting in Texas. The first two steps include the updating of our alarm system and the installation of a security camera system that will record movement in the building (completed). The third step will be locking the entry doors a few minutes after the service begins. The interior glass doors have buzzers so that latecomers can be admitted. The front wooden door off Lincoln into the sanctuary will also be locked. If you are late, please plan on entering the building through the glass doors. The Session continues to study the issue and learn from other congregations.

Children/Youth Sunday School has ended for the 2017-2018 school season. Our last Sunday was 5/20/18. A special thanks to Jackie Kramer who taught the Primary Class this year. Also a big thanks to volunteers who filled in on Sundays that we were not available. Most of all, thank you to the parents who brought their children to Sunday School each week and trusted us to lead and teach them. Have a great fun filled summer! Gretchen Wise

Church World Services Hygiene Kit Project: Thanks to all who donated to the “penny pots” for this project. As you hopefully saw, we exceeded our goal of 50 kits. Total money collected was $302.01 plus the many items placed into the blue collection bin. A total of 56 kits were delivered to Church World Service Annex in Elkhart on 5/23/18. Thanks for your generous support in making this project a success and helping our youth recognize the importance of Mission giving. For more information about CWS Kit Projects, see the informational pamphlet on the bulletin board. God bless you!
Election of Officers: Annual Congregational Meeting (January 28, 2018) and Congregational Meeting (May 20)

Elders
- Class of 2018: Susan Long, Marilyn Morris, Tom Stout
- Class of 2019: Herb Apel, Marie Palacios, Marcia Yost
- Class of 2020: Cathie Cripe, Chris Hole, David Pepple

Deacons
- Class of 2018: Bruni Claudio, Susie Hooley, Betsy Kastro, Mike Kastro
- Class of 2019: Lorelei Apel, Kirby Eysol, Jenny Holbrook, Karen Wellington
- Class of 2020: Jenny Jenkins, Jenny Paetsch, Jean Wallace, Gretchen Wise

Foundation
- Class of 2018: Terri Deahl, Steve Hooley
- Class of 2019: Marilyn Drummond, John Ulmer
- Class of 2020: Donna Palacios, Linda Sorg

Nominating
- Class of 2018: Lorelei Apel, Mary Lou Hetler, Judi Sorg, Christine Winkler

Thursday Small Group: This group meets once a month on the 2nd Thursday, usually at 6:00 or 6:15 pm. Meeting sites may be homes, coffee shops, or restaurants, at the option of the group members. The next gathering will take place on Thursday, June 14, 6:00 pm. Contact is Julia Stauffer.

Stitchers Luncheon at the home of Donna and Marie Palacios, 12:00 noon on Wednesday, June 13. The Stitchers Bible Study will resume in the fall.

Our Mission
At First Presbyterian Church we live our commitment to God and one another by:
- Reaching UP > to worship God
- Reaching IN > to seek abundant life through Jesus Christ
- Reaching OUT > to share God’s love with all people

Our Values
- We Value the Application of Scripture
- We Value Prayer
- We Value Worship
- We Value Service
- We Value Excellence
- We Value People’s Giftedness
- We Value People’s Differences
- We Value People’s Time
- We Value Continual Learning
- We Value Growth
- We Value Commitment
June Birthdays

6/5 Kellie Griffin Tracz
6/7 Lorelei Apel
6/12 John Sorg
6/14 Dennis Huff
6/22 Chris Stout
6/24 Kaycee Jordan-Brent Cooper
6/24 Jim Wellington
6/26 Mia Wellington
6/28 Mary Lou Hetler

June Anniversaries

6/13 Herb and Lorelei Apel (54 years)
6/15 Tom and Chris Stout (34 years)
6/20 Jay and Marilyn Morris (64 years)
6/23 Larry and Christine Winkler (56 years)

Please keep in your prayers: Our armed forces and their families; Those affected by flood waters; Tom Kintigh; Toddy Bowser; Mike Kastro, Melissa Martinez (friend of Cathie Cripe); Marcia Griffin (Alan’s sister); Phil Albert (Jenny’s son); Don Griffin in Oklahoma (Alan’s father); Bob Schlobohm; Ernie Jenkins and son Grant (Jenny Jenkins’ son and grandson in OH); Chris Hole; Cathie Cripe; Al Hoogenboom; Mary Hoogenboom; Evelyn Johnson (mother of Sandy Kurtz); Martha Hepler; Tomi Griesenauer (Jenny Paetsch’s mother); Florence Verhulst (Gretchen Wise’s sister in Griffin IN); Don Myers (Helen’s husband); Dennis Huff; Cathy Wray; Sarah Miller (David Pepple’s sister); Bob Main; Brad Gilmore (Jenny Albert’s brother); Julie McCally; Tina Cork (David Pepple’s niece)

Mission Outreach Dinner
Free Community Spaghetti Dinner
Sunday, June 3, Serving from 6:00-7:00 pm

The next Mission Dinner will be Sunday, June 3, from 6-7 pm. Thanks for your donations to our supply of spaghetti and sauce. Monetary donations are appreciated to help offset the cost of the garlic bread, lettuce, dressing, and other supplies. We will also need desserts the day of the meal. A big thanks to all who have helped make this monthly endeavor a growing success. We continue to see new faces at the dinners, and we are hearing and seeing the positive effect this outreach program is creating. We hope to see you and a friend on June 3.

Meet - Greet - Eat - Talk

For all women at FPC, come join a group for a time of greeting and conversation — a time to get to know one another in a casual setting. We will meet on Thursday, June 28, 11:30 am, at Angel’s House of Pancakes. Looking forward to seeing you.

Judi Sorg, Jackie Kramer or Donna Palacios

PC(USA) - Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)
website: http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/pda/
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<td>10:15 am Communion @ Greencroft</td>
<td>6:00 pm Board of Deacons</td>
<td>6:30 pm Worship Planning Team</td>
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<td><strong>10</strong> Pastor's Day Off</td>
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<td>9:00 am Nursery-Preschool</td>
<td>12:00 noon Stitches Luncheon at the home of Donna and Marie Palacios (last get together for the summer)</td>
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<td>6:30 pm Worship Planning Team</td>
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<td>6:00 pm Thursday Group</td>
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<td>7:00 pm Cancer Support Group</td>
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<td>9:00 am Nursery-Preschool</td>
<td>11:30 am Goshen Positive Connections Lunch and Meeting</td>
<td>6:30 pm Worship Planning Team</td>
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<td>9:00 am Nursery-Preschool</td>
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<td>11:30 am Ladies of the Church at Angel's House of Pancakes</td>
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First Word (June 2018)
First Presbyterian Church
215 East Lincoln Avenue
Goshen, IN 46528

First Word
A publication of
First Presbyterian Church
215 East Lincoln Avenue, Goshen, IN 46528-3347

SUNDAY WORSHIP
Nursery-Preschool: 9:00 am
Discover First Worship: 10:20 am
Fellowship before and after Discover First Worship
Free Community Spaghetti Dinner (1st Sunday
after 1st Fridays); 6:00-7:00 pm
TUESDAY
Foundation (2nd); 6:00 pm
WEDNESDAY
Chancel Choir; 6:30 pm
Worship Planning Team: 7:30 pm
THURSDAY
Thursday Group (2nd) 6:00 pm
Cancer Support Group (2nd & 4th); 7:00 pm; Library
Session (3rd): 7:00 pm
FRIDAY
First Fridays (1st): 5:30-9:00 pm
SATURDAY
Monthly Work Day (3rd); 9:00 am-12:00 noon

Church Website:  www.discoverfirstchurch.org
www.facebook.com/discoverfirst
Pastor: agriffin46528@comcast.net
Secretary: jhickman46528@comcast.net
Treasurer: wkramer46528@comcast.net
Phone: (574) 533-7845; fax (574) 533-4864

Office Hours:
Monday-Thursday: 9:00 am-12:00 noon
Monday & Wednesday afternoon: By appointment
Tuesday & Thursday afternoon: 1:00-4:00 pm
Closed Friday

Church Staff:
Pastor: Alan Griffin
Secretary: Jeannie Hickman
Director of Music: Marcia Yost
Organist Emeritus: Dennis Huff
Treasurer: Wayne Kramer
Custodian: Betty Barber