

Yesterday's Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less

In the Beginning (Week 1) - A Better Story:

1. Remember - we only need to agree in some form or fashion that "God created," as says the opening line of The Apostles' Creed...on all the details, we can disagree respectfully and be guided by our own consciences.



2. There is a massive difference between what Genesis 1-2 is trying to say and all the questions, often scientific, that we ask of those chapters.

3. You cannot understand the content of Genesis 1-2 without understanding its context (setting): it was written during Israel's Babylonian exile, during which the estranged Hebrews were keen on preserving and protecting their unique theological understanding of the world.

4. Specifically, the opening two chapters of the Old Testament are a polemic or apologetic against the prevailing Babylonian creation story, called Enuma Elish, so the real purpose of Genesis 1-2 shines forth through a comparison and contrast study with that other text.

5. Enuma Elish, which you can read in full below if you wish, is a violent story of conflict among many gods, with the Babylonian chief deity Marduk winning in the end.

6. One key difference between Enuma Elish and the biblical record is how humanity is portrayed: in the Babylonian epic, we are "lullu" in Akkadian, mere "barbarians or savages," an afterthought intended to placate and provide for the needs of the gods.

7. But, as eminent Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann puts it, the chief intent of Genesis 1-2 is to show the Old Testament's distinct perspective on a) the character of God, and b) how He relates to His universe.

8. Over and against the Babylonian myth, Genesis 1-2 shows us that nature shouldn't be confused or conflated with God Himself, and that creation was not a violent affair, with its victor or king never being in doubt.

9. And moreover, in the Hebrew creation account there is only one God over all things and people, not many gods and not national or territorial gods.

10. And, last, the Babylonian gods end up acting like the very worst of human nature, demonstrating that, as Thomas Merton put it, "Our idea about God tells us more about ourselves than it does about God."

A Prayer for the Week

From "The Web of Creation" worship resource:

"Loving God,
all creation calls You blessed,
and so do we, and so do we.

Your spirit imprints the whole universe with life and mystery.
Yes, all creation proclaims Your love.
We now join this chorus of praise.

Loving God,
all of nature calls You blessed,
and so do we,
amen."

Explore More This Week

- As prep for the next three Sundays, it might be wise to reacquaint yourself with the biblical creation account, so consider reading through and pondering Genesis 1-2 at least once over the next six days: [Genesis 1-2 NRSVA - Six Days of Creation and the Sabbath - Bible Gateway](#)

- Use these three Psalms, each focused on the wonder of creation, during your devotional time this week:

[Psalm 8 NRSVA](#)

[Psalm 19 NRSVA](#)

[Psalm 139 NRSVA](#)

- The Babylonian creation epic is 1100 lines long (a few pages in length). If you want to check out the whole thing for yourself, and get the big story behind Pastor Chris' consolidated overview in yesterday's sermon, click here: [ENUMA ELISH](#)

- Check out this article from a preeminent American Old Testament scholar on the differences, and even some of the similarities, between the Enuma Elish and Genesis 1-2: [Genesis 1 and a Babylonian Creation Story](#)

- In 2016, our denomination (the PCUSA) approved its 3+ page "Affirmation of Creation," & in fact 1-2 folks at KirkWood played a part in it. It's really well written and does a great job of talking through the compatibility of science and faith. It's worth a look if for no other reason because it's one of the resources being used for our "In The Beginning" series: [Affirmation of Creation](#)