

The Bible in Context Ep 6: Gen 1:20-26

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Alright, ready to dive into day five of creation? Yes, let's do it. Alright, okay so before we dive into day five, let's actually just take a second to recap where we've been in the last episode and just the last few episodes because here we're getting to

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of creation with the creation of the creatures and ultimately the creation of the image of God. We may get to the image this episode, I don't know, we'll see, but we're getting near that. So I just want to recap where we've been. So we've been seeing Yahweh come to these elements of darkness, these elements of de-creation and death and disease, enemies of Yahweh, just things that have these kind of bad connotations, everything that's broken in the world. And Yahweh is

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restraining those elements. He is separating things out to create destinies that cause the bad to be restrained and for good to come about. And so we just saw in the previous day the stars were created and they are delegated authority to help Yahweh or to serve Yahweh.

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in restraining the darkness and relaying days and festivals which Israel uses to remember Yahweh's deliverance in celebrating those festivals. So now we're going to move on to the creation of the creatures on the land, in the sea, in the air. We've seen the stars up above, so now we're getting to the creation of all the stuff that's down here that we see on a daily basis.

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So, to get us into that, would you like to read Day 5, verses 20 through 23? Sure. And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth, across the expanse of the heavens. So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm.

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according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind, and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters and the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening and there was morning the fifth day. Awesome. So here we have.

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Again, God's filling the spaces he's created with life and ordering it so that life can thrive. He's created the fish to increase and swarm in the waters. He's created the birds to fly up on the

rakia or next to it and to dwell in that space. Now, I want to point out in these verses, the great sea creature. The Hebrew word here is actually

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Tananim or Tanin and singular and Some other translations have used this word not as just as great sea creatures, but as dragon or sea monster This is not just a big fish. This is not just the creation of the whale or Something like that. So let me read Isaiah 27 Isaiah 27 verse 1

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In that day, Yahweh with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan, the fleeing serpent. Leviathan, the twisting serpent, he will slay the dragon, the tannin, that is in the sea. So here Isaiah is comparing the tannin, this great sea creature, with the serpent, with Leviathan.

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throughout the biblical story as we saw in Psalm 74 becomes an enemy to Yahweh. So what the biblical author is doing here is right now the Tanin is just created to play in the sea, be part of God's good, glorious creation. And later it will rebel and we'll also see that this is the serpent responsible for tempting the humans.

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but it is not some rival god that existed prior to creation and opposed his creation. It's part of it. It's just part of creation that has gone astray.

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I know that the Leviathans mentioned again in Psalm 104, and it describes the Leviathan as something that God formed to play in the ocean. Yeah, exactly. Again, it's just a good part of his creation that was supposed to be proclaiming his glory along with the rest of it, but it went astray. But it has no power. It derives its life from Yahweh who made it. It doesn't have some kind of life of its own that it can use to

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Thwart Yahweh's plans. It also, it almost makes me feel like sometimes in Genesis, the author is almost making fun of some of these other creation stories. Yeah, I'm sure that's happening. He's taking the nation's gods and just turning them into these little, I mean, just a rubber ducky. Right, exactly. Like in the, we already talked about in the Numenah-i-Lish with Tiamat, who's a rival to Marduk.

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And that's kind of what this creature maps onto in that culture. And then also in the Baal cycle, if you remember the god Baal in the Old Testament, there's a, well there's many different Baals, but the Canaanite Baal, there's a mythology about him and in that, in order to build his palace, build his temple, he has to first defeat this god named Yam, or Nahar. And both of these names mean...

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sea and river. So he has to defeat the sea, river god, the water god, and he takes a mace and he bashes his head in, and then he's able to build his temple. So again, just these sea deities that are so fearsome and oppose their gods in the neighboring societies, these are no longer threatening gods, they're just playthings, just little creatures that God made to go in his big ocean.

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So now Yahweh has formed and filled the space of the sea and the sky. And I think we can move on into verse 26 and... Oh no, I'm sorry. Now we can move on to verse 24. Now we're into the sixth day. And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds, livestock and creeping things, and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.

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And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

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Okay, so again, here we are with God introducing life and creatures. Now he's filling the land, he's filled the seas, he's filling the sky, and now he's filling the land. And everything is to reproduce according to its kinds. So in that, it mirrors the trees, actually, where they're supposed to reproduce according to their kinds. Everything has this delineated order. And I do want to point out that I didn't say this when we were talking about the trees,

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The trees were not created to fill a space. They're actually a part of the land. They're part of the land that is going to be for the creatures and the humans. So in that way, the creatures and humans are differentiated from the trees. So yeah, just quick review. So the trees were created back in day three and day three was really the creation of the land, but.

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the trees were also created there to prepare the land to be filled by the animals and ultimately by the humans, right? Right, yeah. The land is not for the trees. The trees are part of what make the land habitable for the creatures and the humans. Exactly. Yeah. Then God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heaven and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping...

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that creeps on the earth. So, God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. What do you want to tackle first in this? The image?

09:20

Council at all, let us? Let pronouns. Let's take a look at the, that let us. I can't remember when we talked about this, when you preached on this, where did you come down on the let us? So the way that I presented on Sunday during the sermon was that this could be the Trinity, but more than likely the original hearers of this text probably...

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looked at this as God talking to his divine counsel. And then I, and then I pointed a couple of verses out that showed that. Yeah, that's where I'm at. Sometimes I flip-flop on this because there's a really good case for the seeds of the Trinity in this text and also throughout Genesis. There's a really good book, The Angel of the Lord by Doug Van Dorn and Matthew Foreman. And they start in Genesis and show how this

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character the angel lord shows up with all these different titles in different places and it's the second person of yale and so there is a concept of multiple persons of yale in genesis so this very well could be something where the author is talking about yale speaking to other persons of

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it occurs in a few different places in Genesis. The next time it occurs is Genesis 11 verse 7. – Actually, I think it occurs in Genesis 4. Oh no, at the end of chapter 3. – Okay, what's that one? – Verse 22, Then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us, and knowing good and evil. Now lest he reach out his hand and take also that from the tree of life, and eat...

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light forever therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden. Oh okay yeah the the become like us part. So yeah so not an explicit let us but the same basic thing is going on there. Yahweh is either talking to people of or the the persons of the trinity or he's talking to other Elohim part of his divine council. Now that phrase let us explicitly appears the next time in Genesis 11 verse 7 where he says

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let us go down and confuse the languages of Babel. There he's either talking to, again, persons of the Trinity or he's talking to his divine counsel saying, all right, these rebels have built this tower, let's go down and disperse them and judge this wicked city. Now, what I think is really interesting is that within the pattern of God coming down and judging a city or coming to see how wicked it is and then judging it, we see in...

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Genesis 19 where Yahweh comes down to see how wicked Sodom is. And the phrase, let us, doesn't occur there, but when he comes down to observe Sodom, he has two other angels with him. So it might be that these two other angels are part of his divine council that came with him

to judge this city. And it would make sense that whenever he came down to judge Babel, he was also talking to parts of his divine council rather than persons of the Trinity.

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And yes, it's not made explicit in Babel that these are members of the divine council, but really Genesis works on building these themes. So when you start seeing these patterns, we'll talk about this more as we get through the book, but when you start seeing these patterns, the author is usually overlapping ideas and stories. And so it makes sense to see these two angels that came with Yahweh to observe and then judge Sodom and Gomorrah in conjunction with the

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the us in Genesis 3 that Yahweh is talking to when he says, when he says, let us guard the tree of life, lest the man take of it and live forever. And then also the, the let us in Genesis 1. I mean, we see this divine council show up throughout scripture. You think of the first chapter of Job where the sons of God come to gather before Yahweh and he's here having a kind of a staff meeting. And then also in first Kings 22, there's this wicked king.

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Ahab who Yahweh wants to overthrow and so the angelic beings, the spiritual beings, the other Elohim come to him and he asks them, how am I going to throw down this king? And then one spirit stands up and says, hey, I'll go become a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets. And we see there some spiritual beings that are taking part in Yahweh administering justice in the world. There's this council of spiritual beings that Yahweh allows to rule with him.

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reading on that divine council idea. There's a really good scholar named Michael Heiser and he has written a really good book called Unseen Realm or a simpler version he has a book called Supernatural. He's done a lot of really good writing but that's a good book to go to to look at the idea of the divine council in the Bible, in the ancient Near Eastern culture, and really what it means for us as Christians. Now having said all that,

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There are definitely passages within the book of Genesis that allude to multiple persons of Yahweh. So you could read this text in that light and say, yes, this is Yahweh speaking within the Trinity. And that's fine. I think either way you read this passage, it's not really going to affect the overall storyline of how you read Genesis. And if you do take the view that it's the divine council scene, it doesn't threaten the doctrine of the Trinity because we we don't really.

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use this passage to build the entire doctrine of the trinity. We shouldn't be building doctrine on a single verse anyway because that usually ends up bad and means we've ignored other parts of scripture. Either way you read this passage, I think it has some validity and won't detract much from the overall narrative. But if you do take the view that this is a divine council scene, there's something else that we should think about.

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But then when it actually gets down to the act of creation in verse 27, it says that God created man in his singular own image. In the image of God, he singular created him, and male and female, he created them. So there's kind of this plurality of people that he's talking to, and when it comes down to the actual creation of humans, it's Yahweh alone who does it. And

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whose image we are in. We're not in the image of the stars or the other spiritual beings that help him rule, even though it would seem that this passage suggests that this divine council that rules with him is in some sense his image as well. And that might sound really weird because we're probably used to thinking of the image as something that is uniquely human, and if this interpretation is correct, then it is saying yes, these spiritual beings are in some sense

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the image as well. So how do we make sense of that? Well, first of all, I think we should keep in mind that the image of God, that phrase and that idea, only occurs a couple times in Genesis and then isn't really mentioned again until the New Testament. So this is some very specific imagery that is really not woven throughout Scripture. It's just something that in the New Testament the apostles see and they see Jesus in it, so they use that imagery.

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But it's something very specific that we're going to talk more about next week, and that will make the idea of the image and multiple beings having the image possibly make a little more sense. Again, if this is the correct interpretation, I think either interpretation you take, whether this is a Trinity scene or a Divine Council scene, either can make sense of the narrative. But to help us think about how other creatures can also have the image, and yet we are not...

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in the image of spiritual beings, think of the image as your last name, just as a metaphor for a thought experiment sake. So if you have a child, you give that child your last name, your image. Now say you have a second child, and you tell your first child, we're going to have a child in our name, in our image. Well, your second child takes your last name.

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your image. It just so happens that your first child shares that same last name and image, but your second child is not in the image or taking the last name of your first child. So in that, if the spiritual beings were created first as the image and then we are created as the image, it doesn't mean that we are in the image of the spiritual beings. It just means that they were around before us and we share the same last name, essentially.

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If that makes sense. So before we actually get into talking about the image, I think there's one more thing that might be somewhat beneficial for us to talk about. So let's go ahead and talk

about the word Elohim. We've already seen that since since verse 1. We've seen that God created the heavens and the earth. You probably just heard my daughter squeal. I'm not sure but that's what that was. Everybody's okay. But yeah, the word

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God in Hebrew is the word Elohim. Now, when you think of God, or maybe not, maybe I'm asking you the wrong question, but when most people think of God, what do you think comes to mind?

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I would say just maybe the Trinity or they think of Yahweh, they think of Jesus, they think of one God. Yeah. Yeah, God is a, it's not a title, maybe it is, but it's a specific person. It's a unique person. But in Hebrew, the word Elohim, it doesn't mean exactly what God means in English. It means something more along the lines of...

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spiritual being. So that's why you'll see in places like Deuteronomy 10, 17 that Yahweh is the God of gods. That's because it's saying He is the spiritual being above every other spiritual being. And there are many other spiritual beings. If you see actually where Saul goes to the medium, the medium of Endor, which is in 1st Samuel 28, she calls Saul, or

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sorry, Samuel up out of the ground. And when she sees Samuel, who is dead, his spirit comes up out of the ground, she says, look, an Elohim, he's a spiritual being now because he's no longer in his body. And so it's just worth noting that in Hebrew, the word Elohim does not mean necessarily God, it just means spiritual being. And so when you see the word God in the Old Testament, that's what you should be thinking because the Old Testament assumes there are other

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spiritual beings. So isn't the word Elohim sometimes translated as angel or even demon? Yeah, actually. Depending on the context? Yeah, depending on the context. In Psalms 8 when it says you have placed man a little lower than the angels, that's actually the Septuagint reading. But the Hebrew reading is you placed man a little lower than the Elohim, a little lower than the spiritual beings such as the stars. All right, so Elohim

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So when we see the word God, we need to think of just a general spiritual being that may be referring to Yahweh depending on the context, but it also may just be referring to a general spiritual being, a deity of some kind. Yeah. Or not even a deity. It could be an angel or just a disembodied spirit.

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Right, and so that's part of why you see the stars as the nation's gods being demoted to spiritual beings who are servants of Yahweh. The biblical authors, they assume that the nation's gods are real beings, but they're not the high Elohim. They are a lesser Elohim that has been created by Yahweh Elohim. So that's why you'll see statements about, like, God is the...

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the Elohim of Elohim because the English word God assumes one supreme God most of the time. So for us to say God is the greatest God is almost like us saying God is greater than Mickey Mouse. Right. It means nothing. And so to the Israelite, it means a lot, actually. So and I've talked about this on Sundays a lot, but when we see the word Lord in the

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all capital letters, that's the proper name for for Yahweh, right? And when's the first time that the word Yahweh or the word Lord appears in Genesis? That is an excellent question. I don't think it's happened yet. No, but it's pretty soon, actually, I believe. Let me find it. Something else while I'm looking this up that we should just mention here is that in Hebrew, the word Elohim

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is a plural word. It's kind of like the word sheep, where you can have one sheep or many sheep and the word stays the same. So you can be referring to one Elohim, as in like the one Yahweh Elohim, or you can be referring to many Elohim and the word stays the same. So there's another complication in translation. Sometimes you'll see multiple translations will sometimes translate God as God.

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and sometimes they will translate it as God's plural, given the context. I think of Daniel... I think Daniel 2 is one of those cases where... I think it's Daniel 2, but Nebuchadnezzar says Daniel has the spirit of Elohim. Some translations will say, well, he's a pagan, so he's saying Daniel has the spirit of the gods, whereas others will take Nebuchadnezzar as saying he has the spirit of the god.

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Another place is Psalm 8, which I just mentioned a minute ago, where the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translator, thought that the word Elohim there, when David says, he made us a little lower than the Elohim, he took it as spiritual beings, so he translated it as angels. But it's also perfectly valid to say that Yahweh made us a little lower than God Himself. And you know, that does make sense biblically, because when Jesus returns, we're going to rule on His throne with Him.

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On the other hand, the spiritual beings were made way up there in the sky and they actually, some of them serve in Yahweh's actual courtroom, so it makes sense to say that we were created lower than them. Really given the context of Psalm 8 and the surrounding theology, either translation could be valid there. And in both these passages, in Daniel and in the Psalms,

we can see that the translation of Elohim, it doesn't make or break any theology or make or break the passage necessarily, but it is something that's...

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beneficial for us to be aware of and just think twice about as we're reading. Good deal. Good deal. Okay so I think I found the first place where the word Lord is mentioned and tell me if I'm wrong on this but it looks like Genesis chapter 2 verse 5 and so this is right after the first section of Genesis is done. So this is the second section, the generations of the heavens and the earth and then...

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after that introduction, it starts off in verse five, when no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up for the Lord God had not caused the terrain. So the Yahweh Elohim had not caused it to rain. So there you see both of them side by side. Yeah, awesome. Yeah, it's used pretty early. And actually, it's used one verse earlier in chapter two, verse four. That's the earliest occurrence. Oh, yeah, you're right.

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the day of the Lord God made the earth and the heavens the Lord God made it. Yeah, so there's the first introduction to that word, which I think is interesting because that word or that proper name is not given in the narrative until you get to Moses. But if Moses wrote these words, it would make sense that he is trying to... Yeah, that's a really cool rabbit hole to go down.

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Yeah, this is this is supposed to be about Genesis for now. So I'm just gonna set that aside All right No the all the reason Um, sorry the reason for bringing all that up is not to create some kind of confusion over the word god But just to help us to understand what it means And ultimately for us to understand a little bit of the context because if you say again God is greater than all gods. God is the spirit spiritual being above all spiritual beings then If yaweh is greater than mickey mouse

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Okay, so what? But if God is greater than Marduk, the conquering God of your neighbors who actually conquered your nation, well if you're always greater than him that says a lot. So.

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I just thought that was worth bringing up here. I don't know if this is the best place to bring it up, but I hope it's helpful and will help us continue reading as we start to look at man created in the image of God.