In our first encounter with the Bible’s and the church’s faith in creation, two realizations become particularly clear.… As Christians we read Holy Scripture with Christ. He is our guide all the way through it. He indicates to us in reliable fashion what an image is and where the real, enduring content of a biblical expression may be found. At the same time, he is freedom from a false slavery to literalism and a guarantee of the solid, realistic truth of the Bible.… Our second realization was this: Faith in creation is reasonable.

Pope Benedict XVI, *In the Beginning* (Grand Rapids, MI: *Eerdmans,* 1995), p. 21

Because of the opening story. Jews refer to this book by its opening word *Bereshith*, or “In the beginning.” The Gospel of John begins with the same words, but John’s beginning goes back before time began, while Genesis refers to the beginning of time.

**The First Day God creates light** before any other thing, for “God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5) and the Blessed Savior says “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).

Some critics of Genesis maintain that creating light before the sun, moon or stars exist is contrary to science. This may conflict with popular science, but not real science. Light is energy. Energy and matter exist in a symbiotic relationship to one another. When striking a match, flipping on lights or seeing lightning, some form of energy contained in matter is released, appearing in the form of light. Therefore, light as a phenomenon of the physical universe is more fundamental than any of the sources of light as such. What we have on Day One of Genesis is not mythology, but physical science. Genesis does not stand against the work of early physical philosophers, such as *Democrites* or *Lucretius*, but stands as an important monument of early scientific understanding. Only people who want to try to disprove God’s existence have any reason to question Day One of Genesis.

God just created light before creating Sun. Clearly, this “day” that Genesis talks about is not a day as we know it.

The Psalmist says “For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night” (Psalm 90:4). Saint Peter adds “With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). These statements contain three yardsticks for computing the relationship of the eternal God to time.

(1) If, according to the Psalmist, 1000 of our years equal one of God’s days, then the first week of creation was 7000 years long.

(2) If 1000 of our years equal only three hours (a watch of the night) or one-eighth of God’s day, then the first week of creation lasted 56,000 years.

(3) If, according to Saint Peter, 1000 of God’s years equals one of our days, then the first week of creation took place in less than a second.

What both of these inspired authors are trying to teach us is that God cannot be made subject to time. God is the creator of time, and not bound within it as we are. We would do well to remember this throughout our reading of the whole Bible, when numbers often have symbolic rather than mathematical value.

**The Second Day** God created Monday and the sky. Ancient pagans worshipped the moon on the second day of the week, from which practice comes the term “Monday” or “moon’s day.” However, the moon doesn’t even exist yet on the first Monday. The biblical author demotes the moon to being nothing more than the moon.

**The Third Day God creates the first living things, the plants**

An Austrian monk, Gregor Mendel (AD 1823–1882) is the father of modern genetics. Gardening is an important part of the monastic tradition. Monks keep decorative gardens to remind them of paradise, and vegetable gardens to feed the community. It is out of 1500 years of monastic experience with tending plants that the contemporary science of genetics has arisen.

**The Fourth Day, in midweek, God creates the greater lights** (the sun and the moon) and the lesser lights (the five visible planets—Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn, and the stars). The Hebrews’ pagan neighbors worshipped these heavenly bodies, but Genesis reduces them to purely natural phenomena. Only now that the markers of time have been placed in the sky does it become possible to consider the day in our normal, human sense of the word. There are no humans to experience it yet, but time has now been shaped into a usable context within which humans can dwell.

When the Bible uses the terms “the first hour” (6 a.m.), “third hour” (9 a.m.), “sixth hour” (noon) and “ninth hour” (3 p.m.), it refers to the Roman practice of considering the day as begun at sunrise. These markings become increasingly important for the Christian who meditates on the passion and suffering of Our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross in the heat of the mid-day sun on Calvary.

**The Fifth Day God populates the sea and sky**. Genesis records the sea as the first place inhabited by animal life, just as science accounts it. The traditional scientific model has seen life progressing from sea to land, with the birds of the air seemingly incidental. Only lately, with the theory of modern birds relating to dinosaurs, have birds come more to the center stage of scientific theory. The Book of Genesis has always maintained, however, that the second zone of animal life was the sky rather than the land.

**The Sixth Day** the eternal God created Friday, the day for which He is often thanked, in the popular expression TGIF, “Thank God it’s Friday!” Now God creates land animals and “man.” The biblical term “man” here refers to both genders. The English language has been redefining “man” to refer only to males, but we cannot impose our definitions upon other cultures. The authors of the Bible reserve the right to define their own terms, and verse 27 makes clear the biblical usage: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27).

The Bible teaches, then, that both men and women participate in the divine image that God imprints on human nature. The Bible begins by treating men and women as inseparably joined in the one human family. Modern gender clashes, setting men and women at odds with each other, distort Biblical teaching. The interaction of human society with its two genders is somehow part of what the Bible means by the “image of God.” God made men and women in His own image, and when He looked at everything He had made, including human society, He found it not just good but very good!

Additional Questions to Reflect on:

1. Write the first sentence of the Bible and underline your favorite words. Genesis 1:1

2. What happened “in the beginning” when God spoke? Genesis 1:6–9

3. Complete this chart on God’s plan and order of creation from Genesis 1.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Day 1 |  | Genesis 1:3 |
| Day 2 |  | Genesis 1:6–8 |
| Day 3 |  | Genesis 1:9–13 |
| Day 4 |  | Genesis 1:14–19 |
| Day 5 |  | Genesis 1:20–23 |
| Day 6 |  | Genesis 1:24–29 |

4. How did creation come about? Psalm 33:6

5. How did God evaluate His creation? Genesis 1:31 What is your opinion of creation?

6. What does God say to someone who thinks he should understand everything? Job 38:4

7. Describe the manner in which you were created? Genesis 1:27

8. What is the first command that God gives in the Bible? Genesis 1:28

9. What did God envision from the beginning? CCC 280

10. List five questions that everyone ponders to find meaning in life. CCC 282

|  |
| --- |
| *Where do we come from?* |
|  |
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|  |
|  |

11. Affirm three things from the first verse of Sacred Scripture. CCC 290

12. Who was present in creative cooperation in the beginning? CCC 292

13. If God could create everything out of nothing, what could the Holy Spirit do for you? Psalm 51:10–12, CCC 298

14. How does Saint Augustine describe our relationship to God? CCC 300

15. In 2 Maccabees what does the mother proclaim to her son about her relationship to him and what God used to create things? 2 Maccabees 7:27–28

16. Filled with a noble spirit, this mother fired her woman’s reasoning with a man’s courage to explain to her son the origins of his life. Write 2 Maccabees 7:22–23.

17. How does the Psalmist describe the relationship of man to God? Psalm 8:6

18. Write down your birthday. What, if anything, do you know about the day on which you were born? Recall other significant beginnings in your life.

19. Describe God’s perspective on your beginning. Psalm 139:1–17

20. Some people might feel like their life is a mistake or a series of failed plans. What does God think? What kind of plans does God have for you? Jeremiah 29:11[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Ponessa, J. L., & Manhardt, L. W. (2009). [*Genesis*](https://ref.ly/logosres/comeseegenesis?ref=Page.p+15&off=0&ctx=th+Him+in+the+next.%0a~1.+Write+the+first+s) (pp. 15–18). Emmaus Road Publishing. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)