Genesis is known for the opening verse, “In the Beginning God…” We often think of Genesis as the creation of the universe, earth, and man. Genesis is more. In Genesis we see the beginning of a family, nation, tribes and more. The Book is full of beginnings. If we step back and look at the larger picture, Genesis is the beginning of how God deals with man. It is also the beginning of structure, organization and processes that will continue through the entire Bible.

Beginning in the beginning of the book of beginnings, we find ourselves starting a wonderful cycle all over again. If we follow the Torah portions, we have been here before. If we do a yearly Bible reading program, we’ve been here before. There is a good possibility that anyone reading this has read the creation account before.

So new reader or experienced reader, we find ourselves at one of the best known and one of the most quoted verses in the entire Bible, “In the beginning God created…” It is such a simple verse, yet it carries some very complicated and serious thoughts.

 As we begin with creation, what better words than “God created?” It is the foundation of everything else we will study. Think of all the new creations that come from Genesis. We have, of course, the universe, the earth and then the things that will inhabit the universe on the surface of the earth.

 Think about the other beginnings we find in Genesis. The beginning of God calling man, the beginning of a people and a nation leading to the beginning of teachings and instructions. We have the beginning of man worshipping God and the beginning of evil in the world. Nations, peoples, rules and regulations, birds of the air and man of the field, all begin somewhere. Animal and plant life, moral judgment, knowledge of the Holy, and fish all begin somewhere. And that somewhere is Genesis, Chapter one, verse one.

 Genesis 1:1 gives interpreters some issues. Without getting into all the Hebrew grammar, this opening verse can be read two ways, and each way is correct. It can read, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” It can also be read, “In the beginning of God’s creating he created the heavens and earth.” That phrase is followed by:

Genesis 1:2 “Now the earth was chaos and waste, darkness was on the surface of the deep, and the Ruach (Spirit) Elohim (God) was hovering upon the surface of the water.”

 These two short verses provide room for debate, discussion, challenges, and support for our faith. The wonderful thing about being mankind is our God-given ability to ponder, to think over and struggle with the things of God. The human is the only creation that has the ability to think, and to ponder and to reason. With that gift comes the awesome responsibility to understand, as much as we can understand, God’s revelation to His creation. The ability to ponder also gives created mankind the responsibility to perform on his understanding.

 Regardless of how we read the first verse, we see God in charge of creation. It is His word that causes something to become (be created) out of nothing. The only eternal element in the entire universe is God Himself. Unlike pagan cultures where gods are created by some mystical union of two other mystical beings, or by some other creative act, God is.

 Creation begins with God, so God pre-existed creation. What was here before creation was God. There was not emptiness, or nothingness, there was God. We have no idea what prompted God to create something other, but it was the fulness of God that called into being the things that make our universe.

 What we call here the “fullness” of God can be understood in Geneses 1:16 where it says, “Let us….” We read in Joh 17:24 (TLV)  “Father, I also want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory—the glory You gave Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. In Joh 17:5 there is another testimony to the preexistence of Messiah (TLV)  “Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world came to be.” Genesis 1:2 declares the “Spirit of God” moved over the chaotic waters.

 This is important because we see God active in creation, we see the Spirit of God hovering over creation, and we see that love was shared between the Father, the Son and the Spirit. This is what I call the fullness of God; not a particular issuance of God but God in His supreme fullness. We do not see Messiah on His mission of redemption, or the Spirit enabling and gifting Believers while the Father is in the heavenlies. We see them, the “let us” of creation in one place—in unity.

 In this fullness we see an attribute of God, His ability to decide, to make choices which demonstrates will. Ephesians 1:4-6 is a prime example of a Divine Being with the ability to choose and to make decisions.

Eph 1:4-6 TLV  He chose us in the Messiah before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before Him in love.  (5)  He predestined us for adoption as sons through Messiah Yeshua, in keeping with the good pleasure of His will—  (6)  to the glorious praise of His grace, with which He favored us through the One He loves!

 In the pre-creation period, there was God in fullness, and that fullness made decisions and exercised will. We also see God planning to step into history by calling mankind to repentance. Interesting, this plan was laid out before the first day, the first instant, of creation. Future redemption was not an afterthought, nor was the plan of redemption something added later because it was needed. The plan of redemption was added before creation because God knew it would be needed. In

1Pe 1:20-21 (TLV)  we read,

“He was chosen before the foundation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.  (21)  Through Him you are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your trust and hope are in God.

 Before creation, God is. Before creation, the plan is in force.

 Now, moving to the creation itself, we find a couple of interesting clues. Genesis 1:2 says,

“Now the earth was chaos and waste, darkness was on the surface of the deep, and the Ruach (Spirit) Elohim (God) was hovering upon the surface of the water.”

God calls something into being from nothingness. God existed and nothing else, then God spoke, and creation became alive. It appears that creation was chaotic. We think of chaotic as a negative thing, but here is means unorganized, without form or pattern.

Either God created the chaos and then straightened it out in an eternal single moment, or, if we use the second translation, He made the chaos and then began the process of bringing order to the universe. That may not seem like a major difference, but it is.

 One says that God made a creation in one instant, and matter went from being nothing to being matter, to being organized matter. The other says God made matter and that the matter lived in a chaotic manner, then He molded it into organized matter. One thing that is not at debate is Who did the creating, only a minute differentiation of how the ultimate creation came into existence.

 Just to complicate things a little, “Bereshit” which we usually translate as “beginning” in ancient Hebrew meant “summit.” So, we could translate this verse as, “In the summit….” The second word, “bara” that we translate as “create” originally meant “to form” or “form.” We end then with a verse one saying this, “In the summit (of creating) God formed the skies and earth.

 I recall sitting with several Jewish leaders at lunch one day. They were arguing over this verse. Some wanted the seven days to be seven thousand years, while others held to a literal 24 hour period. Arguments ranged from mild to wild. At a couple of points, I wondered about their sanity and my safety. Just when the argument seemed to reach a zenith, one old fellow that remained silent said, “can we just agree that God did it?” This ended the discussion and lunch began.

 What is important, is that God created, and there is something important about this sequence of creating. God called the universe into chaotic being, then began the process of organizing creation. Some would claim this whole creation took an instant in time. It does not matter how long the chaos existed, but we see the organization taking seven days.

 Look behind the physical creation to the spiritual lessons here. God is setting up a spiritual truth, a God principle behind the other principles. Behind physical events, there are spiritual events. God works by plan, process and by pattern.

 We read that God created, then God formed what He created into something organized and structured; He made sense of the chaos. The mind pictures God seeing a chaotic mess of swirling matter before Him. He speaks and the matter forms into an earth, a moon, and stars. God speaks and the water divides from the dirt. He speaks and life comes from non-life, man comes from dust. Now the chaotic matter has form, organization, and a process. In essence, God has taken the chaotic and structured it into an organized mass.

 Organization and structure out of nothingness, and out of chaos. If you are familiar at all with the remaining Torah, you can begin to see the organization and structure God will bring spiritually. Out of a pagan nation, God called Abram, later called Abraham. Out of Abraham came a line of Patriarchs, out of one, Jacob, there came 12 tribes. Ultimately, that is organization and structure.

 Then God structured the tribes and called out of the 12 the Levites, then further organized the Levites into priests and High Priest. We see the world organized into Jew and Gentile and God claiming Israel as His own. So then, the world is organized into two groups of people, and Israel is further organized and structured. What appears to be a simple linear process is actually a process of organization and structure that sets a pattern for God’s dealing with man.

 Part of the structure and organization of Israel are the rules and regulations that govern religious life and spiritual life. It is not enough to just have a nation, that nation needs structure and organization if it is to exist in fullness. There exists rules and laws for dealing with my fellow man, and how to deal with God. Israel will be known not just because it is a nation, but because Israel has a unique set of rules for organization and structure.

 Even prior to the organization of Israel, God gave general rules for all mankind through the Noahide covenant. This covenant came into being before there was an Israel. It simply laid down basic principles for all mankind.

 While God has granted man freewill, God also granted man established rules. The freewill is not about how we choose to obey or worship. Freewill simply gives man a choice to do it his way or God’s way.

 Choosing God’s way means we do it His way. It is not enough to worship God in any way we choose. There are rules and principles of obedience and worship, structure amid chaos. When man begins his own methods and means of worship he steps into the first stages of apostacy.

 Structure and organization fell into worship via the holidays, festivals, and the Levitical Sacrificial System. Further, we can see structure in God Himself. There is the Father, and from the Father came the issuance of His being in the form of Messiah. From the death of Messiah, the physical presence of God, came the presence of the Spirit of God—which, by the way, moved over the chaotic waters of creation.

 The theme is organization, structure, processes and form. Today, as God calls individuals, He again is separating into two groups, the redeemed and the unredeemed. Within the redeemed will be those who grow spiritually and those who remain children—a product of the free will--another organizational and process event. Some redeemed people will be called to leadership, others called and gifted for other means of service. His people, then and now, live by a structure in organization. We do not need to understand the “why” behind the way God organizes and structures. We only need to accept and follow through.

 Chaos comes when structure is ignored. Driving on a highway is a process and structure and organization. Some lanes travel in one direction while some lanes travel in an opposite direction. Cross the center line and organization becomes chaos. God’s principles and processes are given to make structure out of chaos. When man violates those God-principles, chaos is the result.

Chaos was the original event and chaos occurred again at Noah, and again at Babble, and will show again in the end times. Those alive in the latter days will see extreme chaos. There we see the ultimate decision on how to live. Those alive in the latter days will see extreme chaos and must make extreme decisions. We cannot escape chaos in the world around us, but we can choose to live within God’s organizational plan according to His structure.

The chaos of the latter days come about because man chooses and intentionally violates God’s structure and organization. In place of God worship, man substitutes the worship of not-God. As harmless as liberalism may seem, as minor as toleration may be, both hold a variance of God’s structure and organization.

These first two verses of Genesis tell us more than we often realize.

Gen 1:1-2 TLV  In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.  (2)  Now the earth was chaos and waste, darkness was on the surface of the deep, and the Ruach Elohim was hovering upon the surface of the water.

We understand that God took the chaos of creation, the earlier creation, and began to call it into order. The idea of chaos perhaps is best represented in the JPS translation:

Gen 1:2 JPS  Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.

This is chaos that is not the confused, irrational, and destructive chaos that we often think of. There was some of that frightful concept because things were not in order, but here it is more of an unformed, unorganized situation; parts without meaning. There is no doubt in the Believer’s mind that the author of that pre-organized universe was God. There should also be no doubt in the Believer’s mind that God did not leave it that way.

In today’s world, we look for answers to timeless questions. Perhaps the most puzzling is how did this all begin? This all began with God. This chapter, and the rest of our Bible, would read so differently if it said, “In the beginning, God was created. Then God created the universe.” Mythology often explains how their god or gods came to be. Our Bible simply begins with God because He was in existence before the first atom or speck of dust began the chaos. Later, this fact will become even more important to our understanding of creation.

So, what if we take the opening verse to say, “at the summit of His creation…?” Again we have the eternal God, creating the chaotic universe, then continuing His creation to bring it into form and pattern creating simple organization out of chaos. A recent documentary explored the expansion of the universe. What they discovered was that everything was moving with clock-like organization and precision. It was not chaotic and random, it was intentional, organized precision.

Creation was creation of something out of nothing. Then forming that something into functional, organized matter. We know that matter began somewhere but we are not sure how or when. As Believers, we have an answer. It came to be simply by the Word of God.