

Genesis – Lesson 2

The Creation

Read Genesis 1:1-5.

1. (a) Which *persons* of the triune God were a part of the creation? What does each person *do* in the formation of the world (see also Hebrews 1:3)?

The *immediate* answer to that question (especially from vv. 1-2) would be the *First* and *Third* Persons (i.e. the Father and the Spirit). However, possessing the *full* extent of Scripture, we can state with certainty that the *Second* Person (i.e. the Son) was also involved. This is noted *specifically* in Hebrews 1:3, where the Son is said to be the One “*upholding the universe,*” implying a part in the creative action of the Triune God. The Father is the One to create, while the Spirit assists the Father in that creative work. The Son, also possessing the nature of the Trinity, upholds the universe, making sure that everything in it remains as it was created (i.e. that it has *continuity*).

- (b) List three words which describe the *condition* of the universe before God began creating (v. 2).

The world (i.e. the “*earth*” in this verse) was “*without form,*” “*void,*” and covered with “*darkness.*” These words imply that there was *nothing* physical “*out there*” (except God), and that God brought all things into being *ex nihilo* (i.e. from nothingness; see 2a below).

2. (a) What do you think the word “*light*” is referring to in vv. 3-5 (compare to vv. 14-18)?

God calls this light “*day*” and the darkness “*night,*” which *could* imply that this is simply a way of separating the days to follow. However, light (in this sense) has *physical substance* since God calls “*it*” good. Therefore, it is *possible* that this light is actually the *energy* that comprises all matter at the sub-atomic level, which God then forms (by his word) into the various building-blocks of matter and all things physical. This *does not* negate the idea of creation *ex nihilo* if we understand that this energy did not exist before God spoke it into existence. Because *complex* systems are derived from simpler matter, it would be true to say that, by taking matter and forming into such systems, God is creating *from nothing*. An excellent example is *life*: life is *more* than chemical and electrical interactions of matter, and God creates this life in various forms by speaking matter together into new forms which come to life by his command. Thus, since life *does not* exist prior to God’s word, it would be true to say that it is created *ex nihilo* when he speaks matter into such a pattern.

- (b) What do you think the term “*day*” means as used throughout the narrative? How does this word here *compare* to its usage in Joel 2?

Much debate surrounds the word “*day*” given the fact that its usage *in Hebrew* is not limited to 24-hour periods. The example of Joel 2 and the “*day of the Lord*” means that the term *day* can mean a period of time *longer* than one calendar day. Some hold to a *literal* use of the word, and that God created everything in six 24-hour days, while others allow the word to be more *flexible* and to mean a period of time. Since the *reference point* of the term does not come into existence until the *fourth* day of creation (i.e. the sun), it would be difficult to *force* the term to mean a 24-hour period *prior* to that formation. However, since the earth’s rotation is *not* determined by any outside reference, it is completely reasonable to translate the word to mean “*one rotation of the earth,*” a term which means *day* to us. Since the text does not *define* the term, we are left to speculate. Fortunately, *no theological* reality is destroyed by seeing this either way.

Read Genesis 1:6-25.

3. (a) List the *days* of creation and *what* was formed on each day.

Day 1 (vv. 3-5): light (day and night); Day 2 (vv. 6-8): expanse of water (heaven) separate from earth; Day 3 (vv. 9-13): seas and dry land, vegetation, trees; Day 4 (vv. 14-19): heavenly lights, sun, moon; Day 5 (vv. 20-23): fish, birds (insects?); Day 6 (vv. 24-31): animals, livestock, humans.

- (b) List the five functions of the various “lights” described in vv. 14-18. To *what* is this referring?

The celestial bodies have the following functions: 1) to separate day from night (v. 14a); 2) as signs (v. 14b, i.e. location markers, not astrological signs); 3) to mark out the seasons (v. 14b); 4) to define days and years (v. 14c); and 5) to give light upon the earth (v. 15).

- (c) How does the *order* of the creation of fish, birds, and animals relate to the place of *humanity*, as given in Psalm 8:5-8?

Plants were created on Day 3, fish and birds on Day 5, and land animals on Day 6, with human beings created *after* these other living things. Psalm 8 says that humanity was created “a little *higher*” than animals (although a little lower than angels), and this ordering in Genesis 1 seems to correspond: the order of living beings *rises* from plants to fish and birds (and insects?) to land animals and then to human beings, and that would be a *logically rising* order of significance and importance. In other words, each successive “generation” of creation is becoming more *sophisticated*, and closer to the pinnacle of creation, human beings. Note: since the subject of the creation of angelic beings is never mentioned, it is completely reasonable to keep this “logical” ordering of humanity in the narrative, even though human beings are a little lower than angels. The “*little lower*” in this case is simply a reference to the *power* of human beings, not their *place* in the creation (see Ephesians 3:10 for an example of how God is dealing with angelic beings *in regards* to humanity).

Read Genesis 1:26-31.

4. (a) What *command* is given in vv. 22 and 28? Why is this the *foundational* command of the creation?

God’s first command to the newly formed animal world was to “*be fruitful and multiply*,” a command repeated to Adam and Eve once they are formed. God commanded animals and humanity to *reproduce*, because this is a part of the *natural* function of what he intended in their formation. The initial process of creation *ex nihilo* would not be repeated; animals and humans would increase in number (and continue in existence) by virtue of their natural ability to “recreate” themselves. In essence, God gave life the ability to continue his creative act simply through the natural process of reproduction. For humans, this reproduction would lead to their “*dominion*” over the entire created order; as they expanded in number and location, they would come to dominate every aspect of God’s creation.

- (b) How is the command of v. 28 related to the *place* of the serpent in Genesis 3:1?

The writer describes the serpent in relation to “*any other beast of the field*,” implying that he takes a position *lower* in rank than human beings. Even if this is Satan in visible form, the use of the term “*serpent*” (i.e. an animal term) to describe him implies that he was a part of what Adam (and his race) was commanded to take dominion over in God’s original command. In other words, although Satan was a creature of great power, his “*form*” before Adam was such that God had placed him in a *subordinate* position, and Adam should have taken control over him, even to the point of preventing his wife’s temptation and fall.

5. (a) How does Jesus *reiterate* the command of v. 28 (in a spiritual sense) in John 15:1-16?

Jesus teaches that *“fruit”* is the result that comes out of the life of a believer as a direct consequence of faith in him. Since natural fruit contains the seeds of new life, Jesus uses this metaphor to describe the process of *spiritual reproduction* from believers to non-believers. Just as in the beginning, when God commanded human beings to reproduce themselves, Jesus (here) commands believers to live in such a way that their faith becomes the very seeds of spiritual reproduction.

- (b) What must a person do to *fulfill* this spiritual command (see John 15:5, 7-8, 16)?

It is to live in such a way that one’s faith is visible to others *and* is reproducible in others. In essence, Jesus commands that Christians *reproduce* themselves by commitment to him, and speaking and living in such a way that their faith is sown into the lives of others. A life bearing fruit *assumes* that a person remains committed to Jesus throughout *all* of life and then speaks and acts in such a way as to *reproduce* himself or herself into the lives of others.

- (c) How is this command related to the *gospel* of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 28:18-20)?

The gospel of Jesus Christ, the message of salvation through faith in his completed work of righteousness on behalf of spiritually dead sinners, is a message that must be *replicated* throughout the world in the lives of those elect by God. The gospel must *grow*; it must “expand” outward from him to everyone to whom it belongs. Obviously, the *primary* means by which such growth occurs is through obedience to Christ’s command that we *“make disciples”* of others. This command *assumes* spiritual reproduction by the *explicit* proclamation of the gospel, through baptism as a sign of new life, and through teaching and instruction which equip believers to pass along what they have learned in order that others might be added as disciples. In other words, the Great Commission is *self-replicating*, just as plants, animals, and humans self-replicate by spreading “seeds” which grow and produce more seed.