

Question 5

Q. What else did God create?

A. God created all things by his powerful Word, and all his creation was very good; everything flourished under his loving rule.

Unsurprisingly, our study begins again in the first chapters of the Bible.

After creation is completed, we are given God's own perspective and commendation of it:

*And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.
And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31)*

And then,

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. (2:1-2)

I. God created all things

As we have already seen, the phrase "the heavens and the earth" are a merism, which simply is another way of saying "everything."

- Exodus 20:8, 11 – "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day."
- Isaiah 66:1-2 – "Thus says the LORD: 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool...All these things My hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD'."
- Acts 14:15 – "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them."

- Acts 17:24 – “The God who made the world and everything in it, because¹ He is Lord of heaven and earth.”
- Ephesians 3:9 – “...God who created all things.”
- Cf. Psalms 8, 19, 104, 145.

II. By His powerful Word

In the creation account, the refrain “and God said” is repeated ten times,² reminding us that creation – as well as the new creation – is the result of God’s powerful, life-giving, order-producing Word.

- Psalm 33:6, 8-9 – “By the Word of the LORD the heavens were made; and by the breath of His mouth all their host...Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him! For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm.”
- Psalm 148:5 – “Let them praise the name of the LORD! For He commanded and they were created.”
- Hebrews 11:3 – “By faith we understand that the universe was made by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”
- 2 Peter 3:5 – “For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the Word of God.”³

What about texts like Psalm 8:3 or Isaiah 66:2?

- Regarding Psalm 8:3, commentator Allen Ross says that David “sees all of creation as God’s finger work, the work of a divine craftsman.” That is, Reference to YHWH’s “fingers” emphasizes the “hands-on” nature of creation: like an artist⁴ painting or sculpting his masterpiece, God was

¹ The present participle (*ontos*, “being Lord”) can certainly be translated causally (“*because* He is Lord”).

² As commentators like Waltke and Wenham note, Moses is likely using this to point forward to the ten words of the Law (i.e. Decalogue) as found in Exodus 20.

³ In verse 7, Peter notes that the same Word that brought creation also preserves creation (cf. Hebrews 1:3).

⁴ Trapp says David is using a metaphor from embroiderers, or from them that make tapestry. In C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, vol.1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1963), 89.

personally involved when He created the heavens and the earth in the most delicate and intricate way imaginable.

- The Hebrews were very poetic and visual in their language, which was a great way of making the truths of Scripture – especially about God – more memorable and ‘earthy.’⁵
- Regarding Isaiah 66:2⁶, commentator John Oswalt notes, “The Creator God who can make a new and new earth whenever it suits Him is certainly not a sky father or an earth mother who could be housed in some structure *made with human hands*.”⁷
- In other words, the prophet is intentionally contrasting false temples *made with human hands*⁸, with God’s *true* temple – the heavens and the earth – *not* made with human hands.

III. And all His creation was very good

Again, by the use of repetition, God wants His people to really understand the goodness of His creation. In chapter 1, we are told six times that “the LORD saw...and it was good.”

- Often, and especially in Genesis, the verb “to see” means “to make an evaluation.” In other words, the LORD is telling Israel that *He* thinks His creation is good, and that therefore so should they.

The word “good” (טוֹב, *tov*), depending on context, can be translated as follows⁹:

1. Joyous
2. Pleasing, desirable

⁵ For example, did YHWH really “give birth” to wisdom in Proverbs 8:22 or to the mountains in Psalm 90:2? Obviously not. When reading poetic literature in the OT, we must be careful of being more literal than the authors would have ever intended.

⁶ See Acts 7:48-50 for Stephen’s quotation of Isaiah 66:1-2.

⁷ John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, chapters 40-66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 666 (italics mine).

⁸ In the Bible, when something is “made with human hands,” it is almost always linked to idolatry. This is especially interesting when Paul using this language with regards to circumcision in Ephesians 2:11 and Colossians 2:11. See especially G.K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 186-196.

⁹ I am accessing these definitions from *HALOT* (the standard academic Hebrew lexicon) in my Bibleworks program.

3. In order, useable¹⁰
4. Lovely
5. Good (in character and value)
6. Good (morally)

Certainly, the context allows for almost all these nuances.

It almost seems so obvious that it doesn't need mentioning, but it only makes sense that a perfect, loving, creative, and glorious God would create only things that are truly "good."

- The beauty of the original creation only serves to highlight how ugly and destructive our sin, rebellion, and idolatry must truly be!

Finally, it is worth noting that the seventh use of the word "good" with the adjective "very" highlights how mankind is the crowning stone of God's good creation, and makes what is good to be "very good."

And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31)

That God's creation is "very good" is the reason why we are neither to worship the creation nor abuse it. Rather, when all things are functioning as they ought, creation is meant to point beyond itself to the Creator, evoking the worship that is due His name.¹¹

IV. And everything flourished under His loving rule

This is really just unpacking the idea that "very good" carries the idea of "good" as flourishing as God had originally intended.

It is worth noting that flourishing *only* takes place *under* God's loving rule. When we humbly and obediently submit to the triune God as Lord, flourishing is the

¹⁰ When I preached through Genesis 1, I favored this understanding, namely that God's creation – before the fall – functioned as it had originally been created to.

¹¹ See especially Psalms 8 and 19. See also Romans 1:19-21.

inevitable result. To the contrary, when we reject His lordship over us, chaos, confusion, and death are the concomitant fruit.¹²

- This is seen first in Adam, and then in all of humanity afterwards. Thankfully, God gave us a second Adam – the God-man Jesus Christ – not only to die for us, but also to live for us.
 - Not only did Christ purchase us a perfect righteousness through His active obedience, He also showed us how to live as God had always intended His image-bearers to.

When we live as Christ lived, we will truly flourish.¹³

Application

Grudem's words are excellent and need not be improved upon:

Even though sin has entered the world, the material creation is still good in God's sight and should be seen as "good" by us as well. This knowledge will free us from a false asceticism that sees the use and enjoyment of the material creation as wrong (1 Timothy 4:1-3). Indeed, "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer (4:4-5). Though the created order can be used in sinful and selfish ways and can turn our affections away from God, nonetheless we must not let the danger of the abuse of God's creation keep us from a positive, thankful, joyful use of it for our own enjoyment¹⁴ and for the good of His kingdom. Yet in all of this we must remember that material possessions are only temporary, not eternal. We are to set our hopes on God (Psalm 62:10; 1 Timothy 6:17) and on receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Colossians 3:1-4; Hebrews 12:28; 1 Peter 1:4).¹⁵

¹² Cf. Proverbs 8:35-36 (remembering that the foundation and starting point of true wisdom is fear of YHWH).

¹³ Of course, I abominate the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel. Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience and fellowship to the Father, yet suffered throughout the entirety of His ministry, culminating in His unjust crucifixion at the hands of unjust men.

¹⁴ Grudem says this ought to encourage proper industrial and technological development of, as well as use of, the products of the abundant earth God created and gifted us with.

¹⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 349.

Verses for consideration:

All Your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD, and all Your saints shall bless You! (Psalm 145:10)

O Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth, who displays Your splendor above the heavens. (Psalm 8:1, LSB)