
The Beginning

Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

Introduction

Into the silence and darkness deep,
“BE” rings forth from the Creator
Leaping out of nothing comes everything
Being with joy and gladness
At the hand of their Maker.

Genesis 1 begins the beginning. It opens with a simple and solemn declaration. God is; God speaks; all comes into existence; God is pleased; God rests.

Development around the Text

Let's begin by zooming out and seeing the development of the larger setting.

- A Creation ending with God at rest
 - B Creation ending with man residing in the garden
 - B Corruption ending with man removed from the garden
- A Corruption ending with man calling on God

Issues in the Text

There are no such things as brute facts. All data is perceived, selected and interpreted through some system of thought. The Bible intends from the very first word, to be the authoritative system of belief through which all experience and reality are to be interpreted. The Bible establishes a bounded physical universe residing in God who is creator and sustainer. The universe is not a self-sustaining engine. It is governed by laws whose properties are describable and predictable. Christian investigation of reality must take into account the non-physical reality behind, surrounding and permeating the physical reality yet, distinct from it. All creatures (humans) doing science have a starting point – the question is, is it the starting point of a Sovereign creating God who has made everything, given everything its meaning and interpreted that meaning for us in the Bible. (Adapted, F. Schaeffer)

As we come to some issues in the text, we will take them up one at a time. I know there is significant controversy over most of these issues. I have neither the time, expertise nor intellect to settle them. The arguments over many of these issues are speculative at best.

Many of the issues we face are not driven by difficulties in the text. These issues did not exist for anyone until the emergence of evolution and its acceptance as fact. Evolution is a pagan system of thought whose design from the beginning was to give an alternative explanation to reality and to remove accountability to God. Thus we have to deal with issues forced onto the text by Christians trying to harmonize the text with a pagan philosophy. It is particularly frustrating when the

Genesis account was *designed from the beginning to counter the pagan myths of the day* all of whom included a evolutionary scheme, over long periods of time, with the power for change and development imbedded in the system represented by the various deities who were themselves an inherit part of the physical order. In other words, Genesis is designed to counter pagan myths, whether they come in the religions of ancient mythologies or in the religion of modern sciences.

Now, do not hear me to be saying that science is wrong, evil, etc. Science as it is modernly defined is the investigation of the natural processes. Christians, as regents and having dominion over this earth, ought to study and investigate that order. But, we must do so in a God-centered, Bible-believing, pride-abasing way.

Approach to the Text

The following principles will govern our exposition:

The text shapes its own structure.

The text gives us a literary structure and a logical structure. The literary structure is on “days”. The logical structure keys on formless and empty moving toward formed and filled with the aim, a place for man to rule and time for God to rest.

The text defines its own meaning.

Moses expects his readers to understand at the level of the language what is being said. While he is not attempting to convey scientific information, the words here mean what they say. Later writers will expand on some of the ideas, but they serve to make what is being said here clearer and richer, not different.

The text yields its own complexity.

This is to say that through Genesis 1, the text is giving more and more detail and complexity. As the account moves closer to the creation of man, more and more detail is given. It is clear that God’s design and creation of Adam and Eve are the high-point in the narrative. Everything is brining us to the emergence of God’s regent and the entrance into God’s rest.

Prologue

(v.1-2)

Genesis opens with a summary of the creation of the cosmos and initial state of the universe.

Summary

(v.1)

The opening words establish three of the most important facts for Christian thinking:

There was a beginning.

There was a time when there was nothing but God. All that is not God had a beginning, a when that it came into existence. The Bible constantly attests to this. This fact then is an open denial of any pagan idea of the un-beginning existence of anything. All the mythologies of the past and present assert the un-beginning existence of some form of matter/energy. This is false. All that is not the God of the Bible, began.

God exists at the beginning.

Only God has always been. God's existence is simply assumed and asserted. There is no argument made to prove His existence. The key texts, particularly in John 1 and Colossians, all state this just as Genesis does. The Bible simply asserts that God is, calling people who deny that fools, insane, or reprobate. In other words, to argue for the existence of God is to grant man a power that the Bible does not. We are to simply accept His existence as fact; all else is folly and rebellion.

God is the source of all that is not God.

All that exists that is not God has come into being by His creating will and power. Again, the Bible attests to not only this fact, but also that all that exists is upheld and sustained by God. God is the ultimate environment for all things and the ultimate sustainer of all things.

The "heavens and the earth" here stands for the entire universe. This summary statement gathers up everything: heaven, the heavenly beings, the universe and all it contains. Many Scriptures point to the presence of angels at the creation of the earth and our local system within the universe. The Genesis account does not specifically mention their creation, but we would place that grand event as a part of this opening summary.

State

(v.2)

Two words characterize the state of the earth when the narrative picks up. It was without form and empty. What this means is illuminated by what is done in the rest of the chapter. These two words form the literary structure for the days of creation. The first 3 days are creative acts of forming and the last 3 days are creative acts of filling.

While many have argued that between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, there must have been some great catastrophe resulting in this state, the Hebrew here simply makes a statement as to its condition. What cannot be inserted here is a long period of time for geological formation and fossils. Romans 5:12 states that death entered

the world through the sin of Adam, so there can be no death on earth until after the fall. The text here is simply describing the state of creation when the account begins and uses words that will give it structure.

Two further words describe its condition. It is a deep in darkness. The deep in Scripture almost always refers to a body of water. While we do not know exactly what was entailed here, Peter assumes and asserts the accuracy of this statement when he says that, “They have deliberately overlooked this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God.” (2 Peter 3:5) Darkness then here is probably not the darkness of evil, but the absence of energy or an animating, uniting Word from God. There is no light.

But this state is not hopeless, for the Spirit of God, the very breath of God in a Person, hovers over the waters in the deep. He is there awaiting the creative Word to speak in order to bring forth what is called out. Before the dawn of light, in the womb of darkness and over the deeps of waters, the Holy Spirit hovers.

Structure – Order and Form

A suitable environment for life is created largely by three acts of division. Each of these creative day periods follows a formula. First, there is the act of God to create, usually His spoken, fiat command. Second, there is the result of His creative command, that which comes into existence. Finally, there is God’s evaluation of what is made through the assignment of its name and character, then a declaration of its being good.

At each creative act, Moses is teaching that God is not only the source and sustainer of all, but He is the meaning-giver, interpreter and judge. Man is not free to assign meaning, create interpretations apart from his accountability to God. Any attempts to do so will constitute rebellion. Thus, when the serpent tempts Eve, he will draw her into independent, rebellious meaning-making and interpreting that results in separation from God.

Day One – Light and Darkness

(v.3-5)

The first act of creation is to bring light into existence. God speaks and it is so. At God’s creative word, energy and illumination floods the deep and God causes a division to exist between light and darkness. God then assigns the name to the lit side of the deep calling it Day and the dark side of the deep, calling it Night.

This launches the theme through the battle of the difference between darkness and light. Notice that darkness and night are not created. They are the absence of light, not something having its own existence. In order for there to be dark anywhere, God must divide the light from the dark so that they are distinguishable. We then find all through the Bible that God is spoken of as light and eventually we will return to a day where a visible, physical object as the source of our light will no longer be needed for God is the light of that new heavens, new earth and eternal age.

Notice as well that this first creative day is marked by the passing from evening into day. Thus, either the waters in the deep are rotating or the act of dividing

light from darkness creates a passing from darkness into light, from evening into morning. Thus passes the first day.

Day Two – Space and Earth (v.6-8)

The second creative day act causes the physical universe to come into being. The waters in the deep, now lit on the day side, are divided so that an expanse is created between the waters below and the waters above. This expanse is the universe. The universe is not infinite. It is bounded. It has a circumference. And, it is stretched out. Job 9:8 and Jeremiah 10:12 confirms this “stretching out” of the expanse that creates the sea of space in which God later places all the heavenly bodies. *“It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.” [ESV]*

The creative act on day two creates space, as we think of it, the universe as a whole. God names this space heaven. The result is a universe at the end of day two that has an outer, bounded edge like a fence and the waters within it that will later be formed into this planet on which we live.

Since the advent of the hypothesis of evolution, people have been scrambling to explain the plain words of Genesis 1 and synthesize them with a pagan philosophy of long, gradual change from simple to complex. There are many points of controversy. Evolution states that there have been billions of years in the cosmos and for the earth. Yet, the text in Genesis 1 uses the Hebrew word for a definite, measurable, marked off time almost always referring to the common idea of a day of light and dark. Further, it reinforces that sense of the passing of a day in its very language: evening and morning.

Some have scoffed at the idea of evening and morning since the sun is not yet in place, at least as the text narrates. I am inclined to take what the Bible says as truth and adjust what I think to fit the text. What is helpful is that a careful reading of verses 14-20 show us that the sun is put in place to divide *what all ready exists*. So there is day and night before the sun. When the sun comes into existence, it functions as the source of day and demarcation for night.

Day Three – Seas and Land (v.9-13)

Day three is marked as the transition from forming to filling. There are two distinct creative acts on this day.

First, the seas are separated from the land. The earth is beginning to take on life-sustainable geographical features. The seas are gathered and the land is exposed or raised up. Any attempt to exposit these verses must go to other passages in the Word for light. A 3 phase cosmology is shown in 2 Peter 3:4-13. This is derived from the three phrases "the world at that time", "the present heavens and earth", and the "new heavens and earth".

The world that existed from the creation to the flood was much different in many respects to that which we see today. We will see some of those different features in Genesis 2. Consider the following chart as an analysis of that text.

HEAVENS & EARTH	FORMED	DESTROYED	FEATURE
THEN WAS	Heavens by the Word of God Earth out of water and by water	Was flooded with wa- ter	water
PRESENT	By natural process out of the flood but whose key feature is fire.	By passing away with a roar, burning up in intense heat, burning up and melting.	fire
NEW	As a result of His promise	Eternal	righteousness

The second creative act is to bring forth vegetation. Here God is creating the first living thing. We know that it is living in that it reproduces. It has its own kind or unique reproductive type and its seed. These included grasses, flowers and trees. It is clear in the text that God designed boundaries for the types of living things. Biblically, each type is unique because it is able to reproduce of its own kind. Packed into the genetic code is both amazing capacity for diversification and unbridgeable natural barriers.

Some would say that the creation of plant life before the sun means they could not have possibly survived. Two answers to that objection. First, they only have to survive through the night or between 8 – 12 hours until the next sunrise. And further, light is already present even though the sun has not yet been created. The planet is warm and lit. Otherwise either God is foolish in His design work or the text is inaccurate and unreliable. Neither is acceptable.

So, we have an environment initially suitable for living things with the establishment of the seas, land masses and their respective systems. And life surges over the face of the planet called forth in glorious array by the Word of God. Now, we have God's evaluation: He sees and announces that it is good. It is good in the perfection of its design and implementation and in its moral rightness in God's order. The original creation was a perfect expression of God's wisdom and in perfect harmony with God's will.

Inhabitants – Fullness and Fruitfulness (v.14-31)

Now that God has brought order and form to the cosmos, He begins to fill each environment with its proper occupants. It is important to note that this whole chapter has a “from the earth” view. It is the forming and filling creative works of God as seen from our vantage point on earth. This is not to say that the earth is the center of the cosmos structurally or physically. However, it is the center of God’s redemptive purposes and history.

Day Four – Dwells in Space and Heavens (v.14-19)

On the fourth day, God fills the cosmos with stars and the near heavens with the sun and moon. While nothing is said about the other heavenly bodies like the planets, it is safe to assume that they come into existence on this day.

God begins by creating the sun and moon. The sun’s primary function is demarcate the day and night. The presence of the sun and moon as well as the rotation of the earth on a tilted axis and revolution of the earth around the sun cause seasons to exist on the earth. The locations of the sun and moon will mark hours, days, months and years. Their location, as well as that of the stars, is determined by God for earth centered reasons. God placed everything where He intended for how it would be seen from earth.

Some object that the text is arguing for a geo-centric universe. Again, this may not be so structurally as though the earth were at the center of physical space. However, clearly the Bible is saying that the sun, moon, stars and heavenly bodies are where they are for earth-centric reasons.

Some also object that it takes millions and millions of years for light to reach the earth from a star. The answer to that is both textual and scientific. First, since God put them there to be seen from earth and Adam would have looked up and seen stars, then the light from the stars would have been created with its path already reaching the earth. Scientifically, there are models of the universe that argue that it is much smaller than assumed and show that light travels faster when not in the presence of gravity. Some of what is just accepted and taught as popular scientific facts are not so factual nor provable after all.

We should simply say, in agreement with the Bible, that God created the sun, moon and stars so that they can be seen from earth on day four and all very good. As the earth turns and the sun sets on day four, it is evening and then it is morning and the done is done.

Day Five – Dwells in the Seas and Sky (v.20-23)

During day five, the seas and skies are filled with their inhabitants. The seas swarm with the creatures that fill them. The skies are filled with the birds. God’s creative word has made the earth lush with vegetation on day four. That creative word brings forth abundance in both number and variety of creatures to swim and creatures to fly.

Now to the next level of living creature and kind, God gives a command to be fruitful and multiply. Plants are engineered for reproduction and are dependent on their environment not their initiative for multiplication. This category of crea-

ture now must take initiative to reproduce and multiply. And they do so. What we tend to think of as animal instinct is really the internal poise of animal creatures to obey the creating and commanding word of God.

Now that we have creatures who can and do obey, we find the first instance of blessing. God blesses all obedient creatures. This grand theme of the Bible is launched right here. Since we are on this side of both the fall and the cross, this has an ominous and a hopeful tone.

So evening comes and dusk settles on the rushing of sleek creatures through the seas and song of birds in the skies. The lushness of seas and earth is filled with the blessed abundance of fish and fowl.

Day Six – Dwells in the Earth and Garden (v.24-31)

The final day of creative activity brings to completion God's marvelous design. The focus is on the creation of human beings as the pinnacle of creation to have dominion over the creation under the beneficent hand of a Sovereign Creator.

The Creation of Animals

Briefly, on day six, God brought into existence those animals over whom man will mostly closely rule and depend. Most of these creatures have a level of self-awareness that allows for some level of interaction and communion. The account here clearly separates the category of beast from the category of human. Animals will reproduce after their kind and humans after their image.

One important word: all the kinds of living creatures that have been fossilized, were created on days five and six and were descendents from them. All of the great dinosaurs that roamed the earth did so in the long years between the creation and Noah's great flood.

Making of Humans

Now we come to the point of the creation narrative. God has been forming and filling so as to bring onto the scene, humanity. These two paragraphs and the verse of lyrics between them are dense with truth which we will need to hover over for a moment.

GOD IS A PLURALITY OF ONE (v.26). Our word for this is Trinity. Here is God speaking to Himself and among His persons. It is one God who speaks as "Let us make man in our image." It is a single God, a single image but a plurality of persons. Thus God Himself is a community of holy love and glorious communion in the interaction among the Persons of the Godhead.

MAN IS A CREATED REPLICA OF GOD (v.26). This is simply what it means to be in God's image. Quite simply, if God were to become created, man is the result. This begins to point us to a day when God will become man in the Incarnation. This image is what makes man unique from the animals. We are not creatures – we are humans because we are the stamp, the replica of God. And, because we are made, we are not deity. We cannot and do not bear the transcendent attributes of God. Yet it includes such elements as righteousness, lost in the fall and restored in Christ (Colossians 3:10).

GOD HAS PLACED THE EARTH UNDER MAN'S DOMINION (v.26). The sovereign rule of God over all was to be reflected in the regency of man over the world. He would rule, not as a god, but as God's representative and regent. The trajectory of this grand human regency, according to Psalms and Hebrews, reaches its fulfillment and culmination in Christ.

MALE AND FEMALE ARE EQUALLY IMAGE-BEARERS (v.27). Contra so many false and pagan religions and the functional theology of some Christians, not just males (or in some cases, females) are God's image bearers. This is not to say that God is some sort of transgender male-female. In fact, just the opposite is true. God is normally represented in the bible in masculine terms. Jesus Christ Himself is male. This is here to be sure that women are honored as image-bearers in their natural equality with men. The roles in which headship and submission function, emerge in Genesis 2.

MAN NEEDS GOD'S COUNSEL AND COMMAND ALWAYS (v.28-30). God here defines and declares to man his relationships, his roles, his responsibilities and his restraints. Man does not have to investigate to discover truth to live. He receives from God sufficient and authoritative revelation by which he is interpret his world, his existence and life. Perfect humans in a perfect world still need God's word, His counsel, command and wisdom, to live rightly.

MAN LIVES IN AND IS BLESSED BY THE BOUNTY OF GOD (v.28-31). God abundantly provides for man's work and food. He is blessed by God both in his dependence on God and in God's delight in him.

Verse 31 shows us God admiring the work of His hand and announcing now that it is all not only good, but very good. When man is in right relationship to God, to others and to the world he is responsible for, then all is very good. Hearing this text in the midst of fallenness points Israel and every eye of faith forward to the day when the Lord Jesus Christ, in perfect holy righteous relationship with His Father, His people and a restored created order, in that day all will be oh so very, very good.

Sabbath – Completion and Rest

(2:1-3)

Just briefly, verses 1-3 of chapter two are the end of the first narrative. Here we are brought to God entering the rest of a finished work.

Form and Fill Completed

(v.1)

In this way, God formed and filled and finished all that He has made, all the host of them. Creation stood complete from the heaven's throne to the earth's first man and woman. The evening of the sixth day was passed and the dawning of the seventh arose on a holy, harmonious cosmos singing and showing the stunning greatness of God.

Rest and Reward Enjoyed

(v.2-3)

On the seventh day God rests or ceases from all His work. He rests, not because He is tired or weary. He rests because His work, His labor is completed. Rest will result when *it is finished*. The seventh day itself is blessed by God and made

holy. Here is the first instance of that word. A day of rest is approved of and delighted in by God through being set aside and made distinct. Here is the Sabbath rest of creation. What will follow in chapter three will destroy that rest and set God back to work until on a dark day on Golgotha, the Redeemer will finish the work of salvation.

For a people laboring under the weight of sin and the wilderness wanderings of chastening and correction, there is a weekly reminder that all is not well, but it will not remain so. There will come a day, when all the redeemed will enter the rest of a restored creation. And the glories of that day will be greater than the glories of these verses for then, the mighty mercies and grace of God will be on display in the community of the redeemed gathered at the feet of their Redeemer and Ruler.

Conclusion

What can I say then in conclusion? O, as I will oft through this series, to point you to Jesus.

All the cosmos is from, by, and for Christ. - Colossians 1:16-17

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. [ESV]

The cosmos was made by Christ - John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. [ESV]

The cosmos is upheld by Christ - Hebrews 1:3

...but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. [ESV]

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 [ESV]