

Genesis: Explaining Creation

Genesis study

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Bible Text: Genesis 1:1-26

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Avon Park Camp

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Message #6 at 9:15 a.m. With Dr. Les Woodson teaching the Bible.

Several of you came to me last night with questions which my comments yesterday morning seemed to have precipitated in your mind, especially questions about the dinosaurs. And I explained to you that in the first place, I'm not much interested in the dinosaurs, and, in the second place, I haven't really decided who, or what they were, or what happened to them yet, so I can't make any definitive answer to that. I think, when I talk about things like this, of an experience I had some time back with a conversation with Dr. John Weatherhead, who, at that time, was a clinical psychiatrist at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio. He is the distinguished son of Dr. Leslie Weatherhead who for many, many years was pastor of one of the leading British Methodist churches in London. And if you've ever read any of Dr. Weatherhead's work, you know he was a prolific writer, but before he died he got into the area of spiritualism and communication with the dead. And so, when I was talking to his son, Dr. John Weatherhead, I asked him about this. His dad had gone on to be with the Lord. And I said, "What happened to your dad? Explain a little bit of this to me." And he said, "Yes, dad did get to dabbling into the para-psychological aspects of life," and he said, "before he died, he broke a dish in half, and he gave half of the dish to my sister, and he told her that after he was gone he would prove to her that she could communicate with the dead, because he would tell her where to find the other half." He paused, and I said, "Well, what happened?" He said, "Well, we haven't heard from father yet."

Now, when you ask me some questions, I have to say, "I haven't heard from Father yet. I don't know about the dinosaurs. We'll investigate that further." But this morning we're in verse 4 of chapter 1 of the book of Genesis. Someone suggested last night that I'm not going to get through if I go at this pace, and I warned you at the beginning yesterday that these will be selections from Genesis. We'll not be able to do very much of it, but just portions.

Permit me to read the first few verses again, so that we get the tenor of the Scripture. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the

face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." And that's where we stopped yesterday morning. "And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness." Please note that in verse 2, one of the problems with the newly created universe after Satan had got through almost demolishing it, which is my view, one of the problems was it was without form, and it was void, and darkness was upon the face of all of creation, but now God has eliminated that darkness. He has brought light into existence. And having created the light, then God says, as He surveys what He has done, "It is good." In other words, God says, "This is just exactly how I planned it. This is just exactly how I wanted it. It is perfect." Everything God does, did, or does, or will do has the mark of perfection upon it. And whatever isn't perfect or skewed in God's creation today is not the result of God's doing. It is the result of the antagonist hostilities of the devil plus the corrupting influence of man himself.

But it was good. "And God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day." Two things I need to say here. One is we do not know for sure that the account indicates without question that these were twenty-four hour per day days. There is no way to prove that, because the word "day" as it is used in the Scriptures may mean a twenty-four hour day, or it may mean a period or a segment of time. It is used in both ways. And so there are some who argue that the days mentioned in the book of Genesis were not seven days as we know them, but seven long periods of time. It really doesn't make too much difference which might have been the case there, but we at least need to be aware of that possibility. And we also need to be aware that when we discuss matters like this which we do not have any final answer on, we have to understand that we're talking about time as a convenience which God has given to us for the ordering of our lives in this corporeal world, but with God time is absolutely meaningless, because God is timeless. God is eternity. He not was, is and shall be, but God is. Period. God always is. He lives in the present, and there is no such thing as time with God. This is for our convenience and that alone.

The second thing you need to note is it says, "The evening and the morning were the first day." We do not count time that way, but the ancient Hebrews counted time that way, and this is the way that they described what God had done on the first day of creation. In other words, our day begins at midnight. It begins in the night, and it ends in the night. God's day begins in the evening and ends in the morning, so that the idea here is that everything God does is progressing. God doesn't end anything in the darkness. In fact, the intent of God in creation at this point is to eliminate the darkness entirely. And you will see that later on He makes great strides in doing that very thing.

So, God is progressing. He moves from the darkness into the light, not from the light into the darkness. "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters." I call your attention again to the fact, which I mentioned yesterday morning, that again and again when God is in the process of creating and forming the universe that God simply exerts His divine will, and the will of God creates or forms. "Let there be," and the word of God simply creates or causes that to happen.

"Let there be a firmament." The word "firmament" is an unfortunate translation. It comes, of course, from the Septuagint translation, for the translators in the Septuagint used this word, and we have transliterated it into our English version, but actually the word, the original word, doesn't mean a firmament, it means an expanse. And what is being referred to here is the atmospheric expanse which exists between the surface of the earth and the extent of space as we know it and it is usually assumed by most scientists that space, as we know it, extends some forty-five to fifty miles out into the heavens, and then, more or less, mellows away into infinity.

Now this is the firmament which the Scriptures are talking about. What is there at the end of that forty-five or fifty miles out from earth where it mellows into infinity? If you look up into the heavens, it looks like there is a firmament up there, and that's the way the Hebrews looked at it, and the ancients looked at it. It looks like a bowl inverted over the face of the earth, and it looks like you can see the extreme limits of it, and as the Hebrews would have said, "It has holes in it. The bowl has holes in it through which the light," as we know the stars, "shine down upon the earth, and the sun every morning rises, and goes across the bowl, and settles at the other side of the bowl in the evening. And the bowl is perched upon the top of the mountains which serve as pilasters to hold it up." So you can see why the idea of a firmament is used here, but there isn't any solid bowl up there. It mellows out into infinity. So it is that expanse between infinity and the surface of the earth which is mentioned here in the term "firmament."

"Let the firmament divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so." If you read this verse in connection with verse 2 where we are told that waters covered the face of the earth when God began to reorganize what He had made, the void and the formlessness of the universe, you will discover that everything was water. The whole thing was water. There was no earth exposed whatsoever. Just a chaotic bit of water. Here He is dividing the waters which were above the firmament and those below.

"And God called the firmament heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day." One comment here, which is not of vital interest to you, but it's interesting to me. This seems to be the ordination of human language. This is where it all started. It is God who designs words from the very beginning according to the book of Genesis. You see, so far we have come across the fact that God gives a word to the day. It's called day and we still call it day. God calls it night, we still call it night. God calls it heaven, we still call it heaven. God calls it earth, we still call it earth. So here is the beginning of the ordination of human language.

"God called the firmament heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day." The word "heaven" is actually a Saxon word, and it means "to be heaved up." Now, that's exactly the way it looks. The heavens look like something that has been heaved up over the earth. We call it heaven, this atmospheric area over the earth.

"And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so." This is not an act of creation now, because God has already created the universe. This is an act of rearranging what He had created which was without form and void on the beginning of that first day. And what is happening here, it seems to me, this is the best way that I can describe it, is to say that the new earth, which had been created by God hot, and warm, and covered with tropical mist, now begins to dry out and it dries out as it cracks the earth, and as the earth cracks and buckles, and the waters return to their lower areas on the face of the earth. Then we find the mountains protruding, because portions of the earth which had been submerged under that water are light in weight, and some portions are heavy in weight, and the heavier weighted earth sinks to the bottom, and the waters cover it, and the light earth rises to the top. Now, God didn't tell me all that either, but it just seems to me that that's probably what was happening here from the appearance of the way that the Scripture reads. And notice, it doesn't say God created this at this time. It says, "These things appeared," because God was letting this happen to the ordering of His world.

"God called the dry land earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he seas: and God saw that it was good." Two thirds of the earth's surface is covered with water. This is the way God made it in the beginning, and the way it will remain until the end. "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass," three things, "grass, and herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit." Vegetation was necessary for the continuance of animal and human life which God was about to create. So, He created the vegetation for the animals and for human beings at this point in the story. And all of this was done "after his kind," which means that there is no evolutionary process going on here, so that an herb becomes a fruit tree, or so that a whale becomes a man. There's nothing like that happening here. Everything reproduces after its kind. This was God's intent from the beginning.

"And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was very good." So the picture I draw from this is God says, "Let's have green growing things upon the earth for the sustenance of animal life and human life." And at the very outset we see the green tinge appear upon the rocks, and we see the tiny shoots begin to come forth from the cracked surface of the ground, and all of that was an indication of the expectancy of that which was about to be.

"And the evening and the morning were the third day. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." The word here for "lights" is different than the word in the earlier verse for light where God said, "Let there be light," and there was. This was the phenomenon of light, and here we are talking not about the phenomenon itself, but we are talking about the concentration of the light which was the phenomena of when a transcendent God became imminent in the world which He had created, at the very outset, at the point where He was dispelling the darkness. So this is the concentration of that phenomenon. The sun and the moon which God now allows to appear in the heavens become a measure of time. And as a measure of time, they are still

in use by the human race, and that's what the almanac is all about for the almanac helps us to understand how to observe these seasons which depend on the motions of the heavenly orbits. It's all right here in this verse. And the sun and the moon become, you see, the focus of the light which was diffused in the light which we mentioned at the very outset of the creation of the world.

Now, I think that the moon is the reflection of the sun. No scientist would disagree with that. I also think that the sun is the focus of God. That's where the scientists would depart from me. I do not believe that the sun is God, or that God is the sun. I am not a pantheist. I believe that God is the holy Other, that He is the Creator, and what we see here is the created, and they are two totally different things. But I do believe that God is the source of the sun, like the sun is the source of the light of the moon. And I do believe that while God is not the sun, and the sun is not God, that if it were not for God there would be no sun, and if God withdrew His energy, the sun, would of course, burn out.

"Let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also." At the outset recall that God is seeking to eliminate this overwhelming darkness of the newly created earth, the void and the darkness. Now, He has been successful, because what God has done is He has created a sun for the light of the day and a moon for the light of the night, which means that, while it still gets dark, it's not the darkness which covered the earth at the beginning. It's a semi-darkness, because there's light even in the midst of the night itself.

"God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day." Everything God has done so far as He surveys it, moment by moment, as we count time, God says, "This is very good. This is what I designed from the very first."

"And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heavens." At first blush when you read this, it sounds like it is an authentication of the theory of evolution, doesn't it? It sounds like at this point then everything began to evolve out of the seas, and the animal life begins to evolve out of things which have already been created, but that's not at all what is said here. If you look at verse 21, that will explain that. It says, "God created great whales, and every living creature that moves." And the living creature simply means that which has breath. This is the first time in the creating process that God is creating something that breathes. He has had life before in the herbs, and the trees, and the fruits, and the grasses, but not anything that breathes. Now, He is creating creatures which breathe, living creatures, "which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind." And this is repeated over and over again, everything is after its kinds, species within species. "And every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good."

Verse 21 is the second time when the word "bara" that I mentioned yesterday is used. The word "bara" means "to create." The first time it was used is in the beginning of the book

of Genesis where it says, "God created." He made, bara. He made this universe out of nothing. Now, it says, "God creates the animal life, the whales, and the beasts, and the fish, and the fowl." That means that God created them out of nothing. He did not use what He had already made, but He created them brand new out of nothing which concept totally destroys the idea or the theory of evolution. This is a new creative process which begins in verse 21.

Now move to verse 22. "And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature," that which breathes, "after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so." These are creatures which breathe, and if I had any kind of a partial answer to your question about the dinosaurs, I would at least say this is the point where they appeared. They appear by the direct hand of God at this moment when He creates all breathing things with the exception of man.

"And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creeps upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was very good." Now, we come to verse 26 which is a pivotal verse in the book of Genesis. Verse 26 says, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." You will note that in verse 26 man is referred to in the plural, "Let us make man, and give them." While I do believe that the first created human being was an individual man, I also believe that God created a little later, as we count time, a woman, and I do believe that they were the founders of the human race. And so, this verse applies not just to Adam as a man, but to Adam the race of man. We are to be made in the image of God by God to have His likeness, and we are to be the custodians of the earth. We are to have dominion over every other thing that God has made. This is God's masterpiece. We are to be in charge. That was His plan from the very beginning.

Now, I have a lot of things that I need to say about this verse, so I may stay here the rest of the morning. "Let us make man in our image." Who is "us"? Is that a grammatical sentence? Who is "us"? Who is "us"? Some have suggested that God is talking to the angels, and He is saying to the angels, "Now, let's get together and create something special." Now, there's no evidence for that whatsoever in the Scripture, nor any logic either, because God doesn't take counsel from anyone, not even the angels. The scriptures make it clear that God counsels only with Himself, and that is what the Trinity is about. There is a plurality of Godhead in the Trinity. God doesn't counsel with anybody else. He doesn't take advice from anyone else or anything else, but God does convocate with Himself. Now, there is this decisiveness within the body of the Trinity. Now, this of course kind of stretches your mind a bit, but I think you know where I'm going with that. And then there are others who say, and you don't usually come across this, but they say this. There are others who say, that the "us" here, "Let us make man," is a reference to God and the beasts which He has just created, so that God is speaking to the beasts and He says, "Now, let's make something even better, you and I together." This is where

evolution comes into the picture, you see, if you believe in evolution. This is where theistic evolution comes into the picture for there are evolutionary scientists who still believe in God and in creation, and they try to merge the two together which is a very difficult thing to do. And they are called theistic evolutionists. What the "us" refers to here actually is the Trinity of God. It is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit who are in convention with each other debating and discussing what they will do and how they will create and form this masterpiece of God's creation which we know as man.

"Let us then make man," adam is the word, man, "in our image, after our likeness." What does it mean to be made in the image and the likeness of God? Obviously, it has nothing to do with our physical characteristics. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." God has no body. God is incorporeal. God has no flesh. God is pure Spirit, and it is Spirit which creates matter in all of these instances which we have recorded here in the Scriptures. Never matter creates spirit, but spirit creates matter. God is pure Spirit. So, if He made us in His image, it doesn't have anything to do with our body. It only has to do with our eternal spirit which is like unto His nature itself. We are made eternally spiritually significant like unto God Himself. Now, that doesn't make us God, but it means that we share in the spiritual nature of God and that there is something very distinctively different about man as He is compared to the rest of the animal creation. Man is a part of the animal world, just like a cow, and a horse, and a dog, but he is the masterpiece. There is something different. And what is different about man, about adam, is that man has been created in the image and the likeness of God.

Alright, now let's proceed with that. Please keep in your mind that it has nothing to do with our bodies. We do not look like God. Well, I may, but you don't. We don't look like God, because no one has seen God at any time. If God looks like anything, nobody knows what it is. We look like the animals. We don't look like God. That's not what the image and the likeness is all about. The image and the likeness of God here has to do with the fact that man, in utter distinction to the animals, man is able to think. He is able to feel. He is able to will. He has the ability to supervise and also the ability to serve. He has the ability to love and forgive, but also the ability to chastise, and to discipline, and to punish. He has the ability to build up. He has the ability to destroy or tear down. He has a choice in everything. He does not do anything by instinct. All the animals, except man, which God has created do what they do by instinct. Man does what he does by choice, like God. You do not ask a puppy dog what he is going to be when he gets big, because he doesn't have any choice. He's going to be a dog. But you do ask a boy what he's going to be when he gets big. He has a choice in what he becomes. This is the likeness and the image of God. And I will have a lot more to say about that in chapter 2. So, I don't want to steal my thunder here. We'll move on.

We're made in His image and in His likeness, and we're told that we have dominion over the fish, fowl, cattle, the earth, everything that creeps upon the earth, that is our role. That's why we're here. God put us here with a custodial role. We are to take care of what God has created. We are to be His managers, and what a mess we have made. You see, I

think, though there's no specific evidence by which I can prove this, I think, as I pointed out to you yesterday, that in that eon of time which existed between verse 1 and verse 2 of chapter 1, if there was such a thing, I think maybe there was, in that gap of time, I think that Satan was responsible, because he was already here, being cast out of heaven, I think he was responsible for messing up the universe. Then God came into the picture and rearranged things and put them back in order, and He said to the devil, "You're out. I have a new custodian."

So He sent man down here to take care of the earth. And the first thing man did, and I'll talk about this more in chapter 3, the first thing man did was to side with the old devil who had just been kicked out and give him the scepter, so that then the devil took over again. And that's why the devil is called the prince of the power of the air and the god of this world. and that's why we're in the mess we're in. We were never supposed to give the scepter back to the devil. God had taken it away from him, given it to us. We gave it back to the devil, and now it will remain that way until the end of time when Christ returns to put the devil in a box for a thousand years, as the book of Revelation says.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female." The word "bara" is used here for the third time. God created man which means God created the universe, then He rearranged all this mess that the devil had caused and then, the second act of creation was when He created the animals out of nothing. And then, when He created man, He created Him out of nothing, which means that we are not descendants of apes. We do not come from the same ancestral background. We're two totally different creations. Man and the other animal kingdom, we are totally and completely different.

Now, if being created in the image and likeness of God means that God did not create us with a body to look like Him because that's beside the point, it means that God created us as pure spirit. If that is true, and I am sure that that is true, then it means here that the body of man is something which remains. As we count time, it is something that remains for God to form in which to house the spirit that He has created. Man is a trilogy. Man, like the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is also a trilogy, for man is body, soul, and spirit. And I want to talk about that right now, and yet I shouldn't, because it fits better later on, but let me just say one word about it. I can't refrain. The old Greeks had the idea that man is a duality, man is a body and a soul and that the reason he has so much trouble is because of his body. So, when he dies, he gets rid of his body forever, and the soul, which is immortal, floats around in the Elysian fields, which is their heaven, forever. That is not Christianity. Christianity says, "Man is a body and a soul, and when man dies, the body and the soul both die. But man is also a spirit, and the spirit is eternal. The spirit will live somewhere in eternity either with God or separated totally from God, but still alive forever."

So it's the spirit of man which is the eternal distinctive quality that distinguishes us from the animals. When Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I say unto thee, you must be born again. You must be born of the water and of the spirit." He was talking about the natural birth and the spiritual birth, and the spiritual birth is the birth of the spirit. It has

nothing to do with the soul and the body, but it has to do with the spirit which has been defaced by the fall in the garden. And God now wishes to bring rebirth to that spirit which is, as it were, dead in trespasses and sins, so that it may come to life and, once again, rule the body and the soul, so that man in his total essence can be the custodian of the earth which he was meant to be.