
Filling – the Conclusion of the Creation

Genesis 1:14-2:3

Russ Kennedy

Thinking about the book...

An Important Purpose...

Genesis was designed from the beginning to counter the pagan myths of Moses' day. It has a similar function today to counter the powerful mythologies that rule our world and cultures.

Our Interpretive Parameters...

The text shapes its own structure.

The text defines its own meaning.

The text yields its own complexity.

The Big Picture (revised)...

Creation ending with God at rest

Creation ending with man residing in the garden

Corruption beginning with man removed from the garden

Corruption ending with man calling on God

In the beginning God...

The God who is...

The God who speaks...

The God who creates...

The text in Genesis 1 is moving from unformed and unfilled to formed and filled...

Three days forming structure and order preparing for occupancy.

Day One – Light and Darkness (v.3-5)

Day Two – Space and Earth (v.6-8)

Day Three – Seas and Land (v.9-13)

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.

¹⁴And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

God begins by creating the sun and moon. The sun’s primary function is to 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, and even more, for human-related 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 day 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.

²⁰ And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” ²¹ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

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 creature 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.

²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then 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 birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹ And

God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

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 descendants 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 to 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.

Seventh – 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.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

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 rest after the work of creating. 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 Israel 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. For Gentiles, the rest that God will require of the Israelites reminds them that they have no rest unless they become a part of the people of God. The true rest will be that which is entered by faith and repentance regeneration takes place. Yet, 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.

Reflect and Respond

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])