

UNIT 2: God's Creating Work

Section 4: Genesis 1:2-13

A Book Review From:
The Battle for the Beginning
John MacArthur

INTRODUCTION:

Q1: How long did it take God to complete His Work of Creation?

Q2: How many times does God declare his work good in Genesis 1?

Q3: What structural elements do we notice in the Creation Account?

We now begin our discussion of the first of the outward operations of the Triune God (creation, providence, preservation). It is important to remember that it is the doctrine of Creation that prevents us from many false ideas not only of world but God as well. Thomas Aquinas explained that an inevitable correlation exists between how one pictures the universe and how one views God. One significantly influences a persons perspective of the other. **Lewis and Demarist**, "The doctrine of creation informs us that the world is neither divine (thus avoiding idolatry) nor illusory (avoiding despair) and that people are neither demi-gods (negating idolatry) nor meaningless accidents (negating nihilism). Our beliefs about man's relationship to God and the rest of the world begins with rightly understanding the Beginning. This doctrine has direct implications on our view of science (astronomy, geology, paleontology) as well...

Before we move any further let's discuss a few theories of creation that have been presented throughout the history of the Church (see Integrative Theology by **Lewis and Demarist**):

1. **Pantheistic Emanationism** – Due to the influence of Neoplatonists (philosophical pantheists) certain Christian mystics held that the world is just an emanation or manifestation of God Himself. John Scotus Erigena (thinker of Middle ages) insisted that all things emanate from or flow out of God, the first principle of being. He held that the universe itself was a "theophany" (manifestation) of God and eventually all things would return to their original unity in God.
2. **Eternal Creationism** – Eternal Creationists who assume that God and the exercise of his perfections are inseparable, postulate that God's eternal existence has always been accompanied by a universe in some stage of being. Origen believed that there were an eternal succession of worlds that God was creating because in order to be omnipotent or loving God had to actively exercise those qualities. He believed the Genesis days were in a literary form to describe instantaneous creation of all things in a logical fashion for human minds. Process theologians assert that God needs the world to be God, and the world needs God to be the world. Some go so far as to say that it is just as true to affirm that the world creates God as to affirm that God creates the world.
3. **Augustine** – He believed that simultaneous with the inception of time the triune God created all things out of nothing. There were two main stages – "the heavens" (the angelic world) and "the earth" (the material universe) in an unformed state. He asserted that the Mosaic record (Gen 1) should not be understood literally but allegorically for there were days before the appearance of the sun. The Genesis days are "beyond the experience and knowledge of earth-bound men" and after the allegory is set aside, can be translated into boundaries of great formative epochs.

4. **Theistic Evolution** – Theistic Evolutionists hold that God supernaturally created the world and the beginnings of life, but ordained organic evolution as the mechanism for producing the myriads of living forms. Those who appeal to this belief handle the Genesis account more figuratively, some denying the historicity of Adam and the Fall. This theory attempts to see Creation and Evolution as friends not foes.
5. **Neorthodox & Theistic Existentialist** – these regard the Genesis account as “myth” and “saga.” Adam is not a historical person, and the book of Genesis should not be regarded as providing any scientific data. Karl Barth is numbered among these. Barth believed that the creation saga should be interpreted typologically in terms of the history of salvation. For example, “the separation of light and darkness, dry land from seas, and day from night uphold the relationship between God’s grace and his wrath.” Rudolph Bultmann claims that the Genesis account is nonhistorical is no loss, for only those theological statements are valid that deal with the existential relation between God and the person. “The real purpose of the creation story is to indicate what God is doing all the time.”
6. **Gap/Reconstructionist Theory** – In the 18th and 19th C evidence from geology, astronomy, and paleontology was utilized to suggest the earth was quite old. The belief is that there is a large gap of time between Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2 where the earth was inhabited by a race of pre-Adamic or Old Stone Age people. Due to the rebellion of Lucifer and the sin of these pre-Adamites, God reduces the original creation to a state of ruin... Around 4000BC God undertook to reconstruct the earth.
7. **Revelation-Day Theory** – These theorists postulate that creation was revealed to Moses, not performed, in six consecutive days. These believe that the purpose of Genesis 1 and 2 is not to teach science but to communicate the great fact that God is Creator of all.
8. **Framework Hypothesis** – These proponents maintain (1) that the “days” are not time periods but literary devices to teach the theological truth that God is Creator of all and (2) that the arrangement is not chronological but topical. Gen 1:2 describes the earth as “formless and empty” and this phrase outlines the literary structure of the rest of Gen 1. Days 1-3 give form to the formless, Days 4-6 gives fullness to the emptiness.
9. **Day-Age Proposals** – These believe that “day” stands for long periods of time, many seeing them as “overlapping” periods of time.
10. **Creation is Six Twenty-Four-Hour Days** – God created *ex nihilo* the primal energy from which he fashioned the present universe and earth in six 24hr days in the recent past. Flood Geology adherents add that God created all things with an appearance of age in 6 solar days, and fossil remains, strata formation, and coal beds are due to a universal Flood. Theophilus, Julius Africanus, Clement of Alexandria, Barnabas and Irenaeus all believed this. Luther and Calvin also upheld a strictly literal interpretation of Genesis Creation account. This is the natural outflow of a literal, historical, grammatical hermeneutic!

Definition of the word: “day” [“yom” in Hebrew]

- ***EXCURSUS: See “Yom means Day” Paper...**
- Can be used to speak of long or indeterminate periods of time
- “the day of the Lord” used in Scripture to describe the eschatological era in which God pours out His wrath upon the earth - **Numbers 10:10** “the day of your gladness” (figurative use)
- **2 Peter 3:8** “With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”
- **PROBLEM:** Nothing in the passage itself suggests that the days were long epochs!
- Same expression used v5,8,13,19,23,31 → “the evening and the morning were the [nth] day”
- Whenever the word is modified by a number it is a normal solar day...

- **I Cor 15:4** “He rose again the third day”
- **Nothing in Scripture permits that the days were anything other than literal 24 hr days.**
- Only old-earth creationists hold to this
- Reminder of Augustine who believed God created everything in a single instant (foreshortened the time of creation) due to Greek philosophy that believed a God who transcends time and space could not create in the realm of time! **WRONG!**
- Shows that his views were an accommodation to secular opinion.

The Biblical account stresses the infinite majesty and power of the Almighty One who accomplished so much, so perfectly, in so short a time, w/ nothing more than His Word!

- God created over the length of 6 days, and on the 7th He rested.
- Not because He needed that much time to create, and certainly not because He needed to rest, but He gave a pattern for the cycle of work and rest He deemed right for humanity to live by! His “rest” should be understood as just a “cessation” from His creating work.
- This established the measure of a week!
- **Year:** Revolution around the Sun. **Month:** Revolution of the Moon. **Week:** God’s Creation!

Day 1 THE CREATION OF TIME, MATTER, and LIGHT

1. God’s first creative activity: He caused time to emerge from eternity!

- **Gen 1:1** “In the beginning...”
- **Grudem** says, “God’s **eternity** can be defined as follows: ‘God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.’”
- **2 Peter 3:8** “With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”
- God knows the details of the future w/ as much certainty as He knows the past
- **Hebrews 13:8** “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

2. God then created matter from nothing! **EX NIHILO**

- **Gen 1:1** “... God created the heavens and the earth.”
- a) **The earth existed in a formless, barren state, shrouded in darkness and water or mist...**
 - **Gen 1:2** “The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep...”
 - Tohu- wasteland, desolate place... Bohu- empty
 - **Jeremiah 4:23** “I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form [tohu] and void [bohu]; And the heavens, they had no light.”
- b) **Features of the earth were undifferentiated, unseparated, unorganized, uninhabited...**
 - Like a potter wishing to fashion a beautiful vessel and then fill it to be used, God creates a basic mass of elements that contained everything necessary to make a habitat for the life He would later create.
- c) **The Spirit of God was brooding over the surface of the waters (v2)**
 - **“hovering”** – word indicates superintending, divine care, supervision!
 - God’s hand & direct presence are never lifted from the elements & working of the material order!
 - Direct affront to **Deism** (pictures remote deity unable/unwilling to intervene w/natural realm)
 - **Psalms 8:3-4** “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?”
 - God’s absolute **sovereignty** is stressed in the very act of creation!
 - God is essential for the sustaining of life! He still blankets and nurtures His creation!

- **Acts 17:28** “For in Him we live and move and have our being.”
- **Job 12:10** “In [His] hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.”

3. Notice the Organization of God’s Creative Design:

- Days 1-3 Separations → Light and Dark, Waters above and Below, Land and Vegetation
- Days 4-6 Fillings → Sun, Moon, Stars, Fish and Birds, Land Animals and Man

The 1st Separation: God created Light

- The thing that most clearly reveals and most closely approximates His glory is light!
 - **James 1:17** “the Father of lights”
 - **I John 1:5** “and in Him there is no darkness at all”
 - **Daniel 2:22** “Light dwells with Him”
 - **I Tim 6:16** He “[dwells] in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see.”
- The One who is uncreated light brought created light into existence!
- Characteristics of Light
 - Characteristics of both particles and waves
 - Has no volume
 - Is essentially electromagnetic radiation
 - White light is actually a combination of all the colors in the visible spectrum
 - Can travel through a vacuum
 - Light cannot be seen by human eye unless it interacts w/ matter
 - Nothing known to us moves faster than the speed of light in the universe (186,282 miles/sec)
 - Single most important source of energy on earth!

Day 2 The 2nd Separation: God Created the Firmament

- **Proverbs 8:27-28** “When He established the heavens, I was there, When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, When He made firm the skies above, When the springs of the deep became fixed,”
 - Notice, again, God accomplishes His work simply by speaking the word!
 - “firmament” in Hebrew is “raqiya” – something spread out...
 - used in Ex 39:3 to speak of the hammering of gold into thin sheets
 - This is the earth’s breathable atmosphere!
 - A transparent vault or an invisible dome!
 - Question of what the “waters which were above the firmament” refer to:
 - Layer of water molecules on outside of atmosphere prior to the flood?
 - Might describe why no rain before the Flood... also long age of people before flood.
 - Or just normal atmospheric water in clouds and such?
 - SCRIPTURE does NOT explicitly teach one way or the other!
 - Question: Day 2 is the only day in which God does not explicitly say “It was good”
 - Seems to imply that the work of day 2 was an incomplete step toward making the earth inhabitable! Not till Day 3 does God say “It was good.”

Day 3 The 3rd Separation: God Created the Land and Seas

- **Proverbs 8:29** “When He set for the sea its boundary so that the water would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth.”
 - Once again, God accomplishes His work simply by speaking the word!
 - Question: Were the continents one land mass that broke up later by the flood?

- **Job 38:3-11** God reminds Job that the creature is in no position to question the Creator!
- **Psalm 104:5-9** Again, same description of how God formed everything!
- As on Day 1&2, God names what He creates!
- God creates plant life!
 - 3 types: “deshe”- grass, vegetation; “eseb”- herbaceous plants; “ets”- trees.
 - God made fully mature vegetation w/ seed already in it!
 - “according to its kind” – programmed DNA! No amount of cross-pollination can cause a whole new life form to arise from the species that exist!
 - Ex) **Colson p84** “Beginning in 1800, plant breeders started trying to increase the sugar content of the sugar beet, w/ excellent success. Over 75yrs of selective breeding, they increased the sugar content of beets from 6% to 17%. But then they could go no further. Although the same intensive breeding was continued for another half century, the sugar content never rose above 17%. At some point, biological variation always levels off and stops. Why? Once all the genes for a particular trait have been selected, breeding can go no further. Breeding shuffles the gene pool, but does not create new genetic information.”
 - **AMAZING SEED DISPERSAL...** great wonder of God’s intricate design!
 - Anyone who looks @ creation w/o recognizing the infinite intelligence behind it is willfully blind!
 - **WATCH** last half of “The Wonders of God’s Creation... Planet Earth” (Moody Bible Institute of Science)