

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Seven Days of Wonders

Part 3 of 4 : Days 4 to 6

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
English Standard Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Today we arrive at part 3 of our study of the first 34 verses of the Bible, which I'm calling the "7 days of wonders."

As on each of the previous two occasions, I'll begin by reading the whole passage. I'm reading from the English Standard Version.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And 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, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. And God made

the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

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.” 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. And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

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. 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.

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.”

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

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.” 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. And 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. 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.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 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. 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.”

Introduction

In the previous talk, we looked at God’s great creative acts on the first three days, how He created what we might call the basic elements of which the universe is made. So, on Day 1, He said, “Let there be light” and He divided the light from the darkness.

Then, on Day 2, God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters”, and the great foundational events of Day 2 are the creation of the Expanse, or the Heaven, and the dividing of the Waters into those above and below it.

Finally, on Day 3, the great new thing is the appearance of the Dry Land, and the separation of Land from Sea.

The second course of bricks

Now let’s look at what He does in the second three-day period. The second three days are rather like a second course of bricks laid on top of the first, because there is a striking correspondence between each day in the first three and the corresponding day in the second three.

So as God created Light on Day 1, so on Day 4 He returns to the theme of Light, but now He does something with that light. I like to say that He packages it into the various heavenly bodies. And so Day 1 is about Light, but Day 4 is about Lights. And although the theme of Day 4 is a return to the theme of Day 1, God also uses the results of Days 2 and 3, because He sets the Lights in the expanse of the Heavens to give light upon the Earth, and so we get this sense that every step that God is taking, He is taking in precisely the right and only possible order. We are onlookers watching the work of the One Who knows exactly what He is doing.

The same pattern is seen on Day 5. God returns to the theme of Day 2, that is, the Waters and the Heavens, and again, He does something in those two spheres. What He does on Day 5 is to make each of these spheres to teem with living creatures. He fills the seas with the fish and the other sea creatures, and He fills the skies with the birds.

And then finally, God returns on Day 6 to the theme of Day 3, which was the dry land. And again, He makes that sphere also to teem with life.

According to their Kinds

Now whenever these verses record that God created living creatures, we keep coming across this expression “according to their kinds.” The animals, the birds and the sea creatures were created within distinct categories which the scripture calls Kinds, not necessarily the same as what zoologists call species, but nevertheless distinct groups. God has set limits.

We know from our own experience in human history that through the centuries, by selective breeding, people have bred hundreds of different kinds of dog. And we know how huge are the variations between, say, a Chihuahua and a Great Dane. And it may well be that creatures that we today would distinguish from dogs, such as wolves and foxes, have all descended from the same original created Kind.

Enormous variation is possible within the boundaries of a created Kind. Evolutionists latch onto this and mistakenly suppose that not only variation is possible, but also the appearance, essentially from nowhere, of new features and capabilities.

But no matter how long you might spend selectively breeding fish, you’ll never get one that has legs and lungs and can walk out onto the land, and no matter how long you might spend selectively breeding reptiles, you’ll never get one that grows wings and feathers and develops hollow bones, a different visual system and a different respiratory system, all of which are things it would need to have to be able to take off and fly.

Days 4 to 6 are heading to a conclusion

Now as we move from the first three days into the second three, something else starts to become clear. God is working towards a goal, and that is going to be revealed in the second half of Day 6. In Days 4 to 6, God is preparing the perfect setting in which to place the masterpiece of His

creation. He is setting the stage ready for the appearance of the principal actors in the story which is about to be played out.

And so it is that in Day 4, when God organises the light into specific light bearers, those great lights we are so familiar with, the sun and the moon, one of the things He says about them is that they will be for signs and seasons, and for days and years. God is setting up a system for marking out periods of time. Whose benefit is He doing this for? Well, surely, these things are being set up for the benefit of Man, who is about to be created.

Also on Day 4, God speaks of rule. He is setting up a universe marked by order and stability. There is a settled pattern of day and night, and of the seasons, which are ordained by God, and the sun and moon are said to rule, respectively, over the day and the night. And as we'll come to shortly, Man is to be given rule over the earth, and over all the living creatures that God made on Day 5 and Day 6.

Man does not normally have authority over the heavens, over the sun and the moon. Yet there was one, perhaps there were two, points in history when God made an exception, and gave to Man, temporarily, command of the heavenly bodies.

And so it was that in the great battle recorded in Joshua chapter 10, Joshua was able to command the sun and the moon to stand still, for about a full day¹, giving rise to legends all over the world of either an abnormally long day or an abnormally long night, depending on where in the world the legend is found.²

In the time of King Hezekiah, in Second Kings chapter 20, it was not quite the same, in that the prophet Isaiah was not exactly given authority to command the sun to go back 10 degrees, but God answered his prayer and suspended the normal operation of the heavens, simply in order to give a sign to the king³.

Let us make Man

Finally, in verse 26, we arrive at the goal towards which God's creative work has been aiming. This is the great finale of the creation week, the creation of Man. There are 5 things which mark the creation of Man as special and distinct from all that has gone before.

First of all, Divine Counsel is involved, that is, God says, "Let us make Man in our image, after our likeness."

On occasions in the Gospels we are privileged to listen in as God the Son speaks to God the Father⁴, and on at least two occasions that I recall, we hear God the Father speak to God the Son^{5,6}. Here, right back at the beginning, we are made privy to a conversation between the Persons of the Godhead. They are discussing the goal that has been in view right through the creation week, for now the moment has arrived. There's nothing like this in all that has gone before, this anticipation of what they are about to do before they do it.

To me, this suggests the way people talk excitedly about some forthcoming event that really means a lot to them, like a wedding or the birth of a child. If I may, with reverence, use such language about God, I would say that God appears to be looking forward to it! This is the climax that it's all been leading up to!

Secondly, the subject of this divine discussion, is this astonishing proposal, that we should be created in God's image and after His likeness! The thinkers of this world sometimes mock us for being what is called anthropomorphic, taking our thoughts and emotions and projecting them onto God, imagining that God must be like us. But the reality is that this is not a matter of imagination but of faith - a readiness to believe that God means what He says, because God has said explicitly

that He is like us, precisely because He has made us like Him. Let's listen in with wonder to this divine conversation, and try to take in just how much it meant to God, to add this glorious topstone to His creation.

Only Man was the subject of Divine Counsel before he was created, and only Man is said to be in the image of God and after His likeness. As made in God's image, we are to be God's representatives on earth. As made after His likeness, we have been given not only a soul but a spirit, that part of our being which can know God and enter into a relationship with Him.

Thirdly, since we are in God's image, we have been given dominion over the rest of the creation. We are not just highly developed animals, more intelligent but otherwise just one element in the overall community of living things. We are different. We are supposed to rule over the animals, the birds and the sea creatures, and we are answerable to God as to how we do it.

According to evolution, Man is a little higher than the apes. According to God, he is a little lower than the angels.⁷

Fourthly, the creation of Man is marked out by the use of the verb to create as opposed to the word which means to make. This verb create is only used in 3 contexts in this chapter. It's used in verse one (God created the heavens and the earth). It's used in verse 21 of the creation of the sea creatures and the birds and it's used 3 times here in verse 27. In each of these cases it indicates a new departure. In verse 1 it is the creation itself. In verse 21 it is the creation of the first animate beings (as opposed to plants) creatures in which, to quote verse 30, is the breath of life. And now in verse 27 it is the creation of Man in the image of God, something entirely new, distinct from all the rest of the creation.

Finally, the creation of Man is distinct from all that has gone before in that the scripture specifically says that He created us male and female. Why does the Spirit of God see fit to include this apparently minor detail? I believe it has immense significance.

It is beyond question that when, on Day 5 and in the earlier part of Day 6, God created the marine life, the birds and the land animals, they also were created male and female. Yet the Spirit of God only draws attention to it in connection with Man. Our maleness or femaleness is, for some reason, underlined. I would suggest that in the animal creation, the purpose of sex does not go beyond being the means of reproduction. But with us, the awareness of what we call our sexuality seems somehow to be deeply bound up with our sense of who we are, to lie at the centre of what it is to be human.

Why might this be? There may be many reasons, but to me it suggests that it was ever God's purpose, in creating Man after His likeness, that, because there are what we might call family relationships within the Godhead itself, so He has planted within us the capacity to appreciate, and to enter into, those same relationships. There are two relationships which stand out. One is the father-son relationship. Those of us who are men are each someone's son, and may also be privileged to be someone's father. And all of us, whether we are men or women, can appreciate and rejoice in that relationship as we observe it in human society. The human relationship of father and son is modelled on, we might say copied from, that divine and eternal one which has ever existed within the Godhead. How amazing is that?

The second of these special relationships is that of marriage. Scripture says it is a profound mystery⁸. Wonder of wonders! – Christ loved His bride, the Church, and gave Himself for her; and here and now in our natural lives in this world, those of us who are married are privileged to display and to give expression to a relationship which is modelled on, or made in the likeness of, that unfathomable relationship which is the fullest expression of God's eternal purposes of love.

Now I said a moment ago that our sexuality lies at the centre of what it is to be human. It should therefore come as no surprise that when sin came into the world, it was our sexual nature which was the first casualty, the first part of us to be damaged, impoverished, and distorted as it has been. God had warned Adam and Eve that in the day they ate of the fruit He had forbidden, they would die⁹. Death, I believe, is always viewed in Scripture as the severing of a link, the breaking of a bond. Physical death is not the end of anything, but it is the breaking of the link between the three parts of which a living person consists, the spirit, the soul and the body.

On that dark day in Eden, the first link to be broken was that between Man and God, but the book of Genesis goes on to record in sequence the breaking of several further links. The link between Man and the plant kingdom was broken just after the Fall, when Adam was told that the ground was now cursed on his account, that it would now yield thorns and thistles, and that he would eat of it in pain¹⁰. The link between Man and the animal kingdom, which had allowed Noah to exercise full control over the animals and round them up to take them into the ark, was broken just after the flood¹¹. Prior to that, I understand from verses 29 and 30 of chapter 1, which we read earlier, neither Man nor any of the animals was carnivorous, but after the Flood Man became a hunter and many animals became carnivorous. And the link between the races and peoples of the earth was broken at Babel, fragmenting human society into a multiplicity of warring tribes and nations¹².

But before any of these comes the breaking of the link between man and woman¹³. The battle of the sexes began on that day in the garden. That cocktail of powerful emotions which marks human relationships of a sexual nature, the tension between desire and disdain, between longing and mistrust, between admiration and contempt, came into being on that day. And so we live today in a world where those family relationships of which we have spoken have become so corrupted as to be hardly recognisable.

I was greatly saddened many years ago by something I heard on Thought for the day on the Today programme on Radio 4. The speaker was the then Chief Rabbi, but he was recounting a conversation he had had with the Bishop of Newcastle. The Bishop had said to him, "I used to go into schools telling the children about God the Father, but I've had to stop, because the children don't understand. And it's not the word 'God' that they don't understand; it's the word 'father'."

And when we come to that most precious of all relationships, that of marriage, we would hardly know where to start in seeking to comment on all the ways in which it has been devalued, degraded and corrupted in our world.

But God is able! God has sent His Son to set all to rights, to take upon His own shoulders the massive burden of human guilt and carry it to the Cross, there to lay down His life that we might be set free from sin and all its consequences.

In today's talk we have concluded our study of the 6 days of creation, ending with God's wonderful pronouncement in verse 31 that it was very good. The first 3 verses of chapter 2 remain for the final talk.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk on Genesis chapter 1 verses 14 to 31 in our series entitled Seven Days of Wonders - talk number T1359.

¹Josh 10:12-14 ²https://www.geocentricity.com/astronomy_of_bible/jld ³2 Kings 20:8-11 ⁴Matt 11:25-26 ⁵John 12:28 ⁶Mark 1:11 ⁷Psalms 8:5(NIV) ⁸Eph 5:25-32 ⁹Gen 2:17 ¹⁰Gen 3:17-19 ¹¹Gen 9:2-3 ¹²Gen 11:6-8 ¹³Gen 3:16

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