

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

For reply: Email: truthfortoday@aol.com

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Speaker: Mr. David Anderson

Back to the Beginning: Creation Week

I suggested this new series 'Back to the Beginning' for two main reasons:

1. To re-affirm that the entire Bible, including Genesis, is absolutely reliable. *"Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever"* (Psalm 119:160, King James (Authorised) Version).
2. To remind listeners of the true early history of our universe and of the true beginnings of life for us, mankind. But I also thought that a back-to-basics approach would provide a good follow-up to the *Truth for Today* series 'Challenges to the Gospel in the 21st century', broadcast in Spring 2013.

As 'In the Beginning' is the meaning of the original Hebrew title of Genesis, this series consists of four talks on it:

1. Genesis 1:1-2:3: The Creation Week - the true account of creation.
2. Genesis 2:4-25: Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden - the true account of man's creation.
3. Genesis 3:1-24: The entrance of sin into our world - the true account of man's fall.
4. Genesis 4:1-5:32: The dreadful consequences sin reaped.

Today I'll speak on the record God gives of the creation week. To do this, I'll actually read the text about each day (from the English Standard Version) before making any comments on them. I won't comment on scientific views concerning origins because I personally spoke on that topic in the Spring 2013 programme called 'The Challenges of science to the Gospel'.

Day One

I start with Genesis 1:1-5: *"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."*

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" are the very first words of Scripture (Genesis 1:1). These ten English words translate the seven original Hebrew words. They're a complete statement about creation. The remainder of the Genesis account, and all other teaching on creation throughout the Scripture, simply elaborates this emphatic statement. They also answer questions (other than Who? and When?) about it, such as:

- What happened at the creation (or during the creation week)?
- How did God create it? (According to Hebrews 11:3, it's by faith that we understand He created by His word.)
- Why did He create it? (Revelation 4:11 says that it was for God's own pleasure. *"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen"* (Romans 11:36).)

The Hebrew word for "God" in Genesis 1:1 is Elohim, which means the eternal, almighty, majestic, omnipotent, supreme, absolute, self-existing One. We're told that He created the whole universe from no pre-existing matter. The Hebrew text uses a special word for 'to create' to convey the meaning 'creation out of nothing'. As Romans 4:17 states: *"God ... calls into existence the things that do not exist."* But *"In the beginning"* means He also created time. So to paraphrase Genesis 1:1: "When time started, God created." Also, the words *"In the beginning"* occur as the opening words of John's Gospel. John 1:1-3 gives the New Testament revelation - it was the Word (i.e., God the Son) who created all things. The specific activity of the Spirit of God in hovering over the waters is mentioned in Genesis 1:2. Yes, the whole Godhead was involved in creation!

The earth is the focus of Genesis 1:2. Its initial condition is described as being *"without form and void"*, that is, both unformed and uninhabited. The best analogy I can make about the Creator is that He's like a potter, who first of all makes the shapeless clay before moulding it into the shapes He has in mind (He's called the Potter twice, in

Isaiah 64:8 and also in Jeremiah 18:1-11). Most importantly, Isaiah explains that God's design intent wasn't to leave the earth in that condition but to make it suitable for mankind. *"The LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it [void], he formed it to be inhabited!): 'I am the LORD, and there is no other'"* (Isaiah 45:18).

Genesis 1:2 continues: *"and darkness was over the face of the deep."* Then in Genesis 1:3, God created light. Isaiah 45:7 verifies that God created both the darkness and the light. He deliberately worked that way and separated the two thus providing a distinction between them. He's *"the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine"* (2 Corinthians 4:6, JN Darby Translation). The first day is presented in a peculiar, that is, an unusual way to us, - the darkness (evening) came first and the light (morning) followed after.

To summarise. On the first day of creation, God created: time, the universe and energy. Time: "in the beginning" - the clock started to tick. The universe is "the heavens and the earth." The heavens are the skies but include outer space; and the earth is planet earth, which consists of all materials. But, notice the emphasis on water in the following verses. Energy is "the light", a fundamental for life. From these created things, God set about to structure or fashion or form His creation; and to fill the earth to make it habitable by man, His special object in creation. God could have done everything instantaneously on Day One as the recurring words in Genesis 1, *"God said ... And it was so"*, suggest. But He took five more days to do it! (We'll discover why later.)

Day Two

Day Two's record is Genesis 1:6-8: *"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."*

God made an expanse (or, a canopy) to divide or separate the waters around the unformed earth. This canopy is described as a "mist" in Genesis 2:6. It's difficult to know exactly what this was, because 2 Peter 3:5-7 explains that the world as created by God was changed at the Flood (see Genesis 6-9). However, nowadays the sky is usually regarded as what God named as "heaven" in Genesis 1:8. It seems that the expanse of Genesis 1:15 and Genesis 1:17 is the solar system, whilst that of Genesis 1:20 is the earth's atmosphere. But as Genesis 1:16 mentions the stars, the expanse sometimes includes outer space.

Day Three

Day Three's record is Genesis 1:9-13: *"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 [own] kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day."*

God brought all the waters covering the earth together to form "seas" and separated them from the dry land, which He called "earth". He caused all kinds of vegetation, plant life and trees, each with the inherent ability to seed, to come into mature existence on the land. Genesis 1:29-30 say these were provided as food for animals and for mankind. Now there was life! Twice over, in Genesis 1:10 and Genesis 1:12, God saw that what He had done was good.

Day Four

Day Four's record is Genesis 1:14-19: *"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."*

God designed and appointed these light-bearers to regulate life upon earth for man. Whilst in some translations, *"and the stars"* at the end Genesis 1:16 could be taken as an add-on or passing comment, the English Standard Version (just quoted) and others, show the stars to be as significant as the sun and the moon. The clause *"the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night"* (Genesis 1:16) is the explanation of "the two great lights". Other Scriptures show the magnitude of God's creatorial actions here on Day Four, when He took the cosmos He'd made on Day One and stretched it out as we would do with curtains. For example: *"It is he who sits above the circle of the*

earth...who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in" (Isaiah 40:22). God set the solar system and the galaxies in position to give adequate light to the earth. God carefully and accurately placed them out there in space as a skilled constructor would use his fingers for the more intricate positionings of his model. The result is that the sun is in exactly the correct position to sustain life on earth. When David says in Psalm 8:3 that *"the stars were the work of God's fingers"*, he's indicating that the stretching out of the heavens was a controlled event.

Day Five

Day Five's record is Genesis 1:20-23: *"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."*

God completely filled the seas and the skies with all kinds of creatures, both great and small. The special word "create" is used again in Genesis 1:21 to describe the making of the first living things with conscious life; or "every living soul", as the JN Darby Translation renders it. God gave abundant life to them all. He blessed them and commanded them to populate the seas and the skies.

Day Six

The first part of Day Six is in Genesis 1:24-25: *"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."*

God now filled the earth with all kinds of land animals and creatures, great and small, including those which are now extinct, for example, dinosaurs. His created world was now ready for mankind.

The second part of Day Six is in Genesis 1:26-31: *"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."*

God achieved His objective when He created Adam and Eve. In Genesis 1:25 God reviewed all His work and *"saw that it was good"*. But in Genesis 1:31, after Adam and Eve had been created, He saw everything as *"very good"* - literally, *"exceedingly good"*. The special word "created" is used again in Genesis 1:27 to distinguish them from the rest of the animal creation.

Genesis 1:26 reveals mankind's specialness as being the subject of divine counsel: *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over [all creatures]."* Genesis 2:4-7 states that God adopted a special procedure when He formed Adam. God moulded him from the dust of the earth and intimately breathed life into him. The animal creation was different. God had spoken life into them. So Adam became a unique living being. Then Genesis 2:21-23 describes the special way Eve, his counterpart, was built out of him.

Human beings are unique because their first parents were made in God's image and after God's likeness. Our transcendental nature manifests itself in:

1. Rationality: We've minds which are capable of abstract thoughts, reason, originality, design and genius.
2. Volition: We've the capacity to make decisions and choices.
3. Conscience: We make moral choices. Everyone basically knows good from evil.
4. Aestheticism: We appreciate truth and goodness. We possess a sense of beauty and emotion.

But points 1-4 are cumulative - meaning we clearly understand creation to be God's handiwork - see Romans 1:19-20. All conscious life has an inherent sense of their Creator! But we humans also deliberately choose whether to believe this or not!

5. Our spiritual dimension: We're not only body and soul, but also spirit. Therefore anyone can get to know God and worship Him. Adam and Eve's spiritual experiences were of direct communion with God.
6. Representation: In Genesis 1:28, God charges them to represent and express Him, the invisible God, to a visible creation. Adam primarily had this dignity and was given dominion over everything in the seas, in the air, and on the earth. When Genesis 2:15 states: "*The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it*", it shows that stewardship/duty is implicit in the idea of human authority over God's creation.

The Sabbath Day

The Sabbath is introduced in Genesis 2:1-3: "*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.*" These verses more properly belong to the narrative of Genesis 1 and provide a summary statement of creation. They bring to a fitting conclusion the events of the creation week.

The formula, "*And there was evening and there was morning*" is used to conclude the record for each day of this first week. This means each day is a literal 24-hour day. For example, the marginal reading of the last sentence of Genesis 1:5 given in Vine's Expository Reference Edition of the New King James Version comments: 'Lit. "And evening was, and morning was, a day, one"'. The repeated use of the conjunction "and" to start most sentences of the chapter shows that each day was chronological; and that the creation activities were sequential.

The sixth day was the culminating day of creation, because man was created in it, after which God's announced His entire creation as "very good". Genesis 2:3 presents His satisfaction in that He rested from all His work on the Seventh Day. He made it a distinct day in the cycle of days that make up a week. He blessed it and sanctified it. From the beginning He established this pattern of life for mankind. We should work for six days and hold (set apart) a seventh day for God. It's very significant that, unlike other time measures such as days, months and years, there's no other reason for the measurement that seven days equal one week! Neither in Scripture itself; nor in any of mankind's history and experience; nor in Science! Its importance is stressed in the Ten Commandments given in Exodus 20:8-11 and reiterated in Deuteronomy 5:12-15: "*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD [God] blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*"

In Exodus 31:12-17, the LORD assigned the Sabbath as a distinct covenant sign between Himself and the nation of Israel. And in Mark 2:27, the Lord Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man's benefit.

Conclusion

I finish with this doxology to the Creator: "*[the LORD] Elohim is truth; he is the living God, and the king of eternity ... He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his understanding*" (Jeremiah 10:10, 12, JN Darby Translation).

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