

# *Truth for Today*

## *The Bible Explained*

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## **Genesis Chapters 1-2**

### **Creation**

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

#### **Introduction**

Today's talk is the first in our series on the Book of Genesis. It's entitled 'Creation', and it covers chapters 1 and 2.

Before I speak on any passage of Scripture, I prefer to read it in full, but today, in view of its length, I'm going to skip several verses. I'm reading from the English Standard Version, and we'll begin at chapter 1 verse 1:

"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."

Verse 14:

"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."

Verse 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.””

Verse 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.”

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

Chapter 2 verse 1:

“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.”

Verse 4:

“These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.  
When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground — then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.  
A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.  
The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'

Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.' Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them."

Now the middle of verse 20:

"But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

### **The seven days of wonders**

Roughly the first half of today's talk is a greatly abridged re-run of four talks, previously broadcast under the title 'Seven days of wonders.' These cover the first 34 verses of the Bible, that is, the whole of chapter 1 and the first three verses of chapter 2, but in far more detail than I have time for today.

After that, we will look at the rest of chapter 2, which returns to what I might call the highlight of chapter 1, the creation of man, but from a very different perspective.

The first 34 verses cover the six days in which God created everything that exists<sup>1</sup>, followed by the one day on which He rested. They are also, I believe, a systematic setting out of the foundations of Biblical truth, which the rest of the Bible is going to be based upon. But in this talk I will deal only with the Creation itself, partly because that's the talk's title, but also because there simply isn't time for both topics.

### **The first three days**

The history of the universe in God's account of it is very different from how it is imagined in the mind of man. For a start, it's not a long-drawn-out process taking billions of years. It's a short series of enormous steps, one enormous step per day. Another really important thing to notice is that every day begins, "And God said." Hebrews 11 verse 3 says:

"By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God."

What Genesis 1 clearly teaches us is that by the very act of speaking, God performed what He intended. And let's just reflect on the fact that the Lord Jesus is called "the Word" in John chapter 1. I think we are meant to understand that when God spoke, it was the Lord Jesus who was, if we might use this expression, the divine Executive who actually performed the creative work.

And so John chapter 1 verse 3, speaking of the Lord Jesus, says:

"All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made"

## The details of each day

In the first three days, God creates the framework which He is later going to build upon. First, He creates light, secondly, this curiously named thing, the expanse, and then finally the dry land. And all through these three days, a key idea is that of separating one thing from another.

On Day 1 God separates the light from the darkness, on Day 2 He separates the waters into two parts, with the Heaven in between, and on Day 3 He separates the waters from the land. This purposeful separation is the opposite of what happens by chance. Left to themselves, things don't sort themselves out like this. They get more and more jumbled and chaotic. But these verses teach us that understanding and purpose were involved in every step of the process.

The world puts its faith in the ideas, the so-called science, of man, and sets aside the revelation of God. When we look at these verses as a historical record, we need to beware that we don't do the same thing and interpret God's account in the light of things we think we know.

We shouldn't, for example, get upset by the creation of light, on Day 1, before the creation of the sun and the other heavenly bodies, on Day 4. I'm not disputing that, in the world as it is now, the light we experience all originates in the sun, apart from the tiny amount that comes from the stars, but it didn't have to be like that to begin with. In other words, we need to come to Genesis 1 with a blank sheet of paper. It's God Who is teaching the lesson. We need to let Him use His lesson plan.

## The second course of bricks

Now let's look at the second set of three days. These are 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. 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. He packages it into the various heavenly bodies. Day 1 is about Light. 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 applies on Day 5. God returns to the theme of Day 2, that is, the Waters and the Heavens, and He does something in those two spheres. What He does is to make each of these spheres to teem with living creatures. And then finally, God returns on Day 6 to the theme of Day 3, which was the dry land. And He makes that sphere also to teem with life.

In these verses we keep coming across the expression "according to their kinds." The animals, birds, and sea creatures were created within distinct categories which the Scripture calls Kinds. 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.

## Let us make Man

Finally, in verse 26, we arrive at the goal, the creation of Man. There are five things which mark this as special and distinct from all that has gone before.

Firstly, Divine Counsel is involved. God says, "Let us make Man in our image, after our likeness." We are listening in to a conversation between the Persons of the Godhead, discussing the goal which has been in view right through the creation week.

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, imagining that God must be like us. But this is not imagination. It is faith – believing that God means what He says. God is like us, because He has created us to be like Him.

Thirdly, we have been given dominion over the rest of the creation. We are not just one element in the overall community of living things. We have been put in charge of it. According to evolution, Man is a little higher than the apes. According to God, he is a little lower than the angels.<sup>2</sup>

Fourthly, the verb to create, not the verb to make, is only used in three places in this chapter. It is used of the creation itself in verse 1, of the creation of the first animate beings (rather than plants) in verse 21, and in verse 27, of the creation of Man.

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. Previously, when God had created the marine life, the birds and the land animals, they also were of course 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.

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 mystery<sup>3</sup>. 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 enter into and to display to the world 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.

## **The end**

The seven-day Creation week culminates in God's rest, which is surely intended to picture for us the final and eternal rest. What God has ever had in view is not only that rest which He will enjoy, but also that which, through the Redemption wrought in Christ, He will have saved sinners like us, entering into and enjoying as well. As Hebrews chapter 4 verse 9 says, "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God."

When we reach the opening verses of chapter 2, we come to the crux of the whole matter. What is God, in all of His purposes and actions, really driving at? What is His ultimate goal? It is nothing less than a world of unimaginable joy and bliss, bought at the cost of the blood of His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down His life for us all. In that world God will forever dwell in the midst of a vast company of blessed, redeemed creatures, the fruit and harvest of Christ's mighty work on the cross.

## The creation of man revisited

Those first 34 verses of the Bible form a self-contained unit. From verse 4 of chapter 2 we seem to breathe a different atmosphere, and it is here that human history begins. Here we encounter the expression “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth”, the first of 11 occurrences in the Book of Genesis of the expression “these are the generations of”, or of an almost identical expression. Each time we find these words, they seem to function like a zoom lens, opening up a more detailed treatment of some topic that has recently been introduced. The highlight of the seven days is the creation of Man on Day 6, but now, in the remainder of chapter 2, we learn about this key event in much more detail.

Let me mention here two things about names. There is now a change in the name used for God. Up to here, the word rendered God has always been the Hebrew word Elohim, but in the rest of chapter 2 God is referred to as Yahweh Elohim. The name Yahweh, traditionally rendered as Jehovah, is the special personal name by which God made Himself known to His people Israel<sup>4</sup>, and its use in the rest of chapter 2 suggests that God is moving the narrative on, from the technical details of the Creation, to the personal relationship which He desires to establish with His creature Man.

By the way, a further complication here is that ‘Yahweh Elohim’ is actually translated ‘The Lord God’. This is because of an ancient tradition whereby the name ‘Yahweh’ was considered too holy to speak, and so was replaced by another divine name meaning ‘Lord’.

The second thing to say about names concerns the name Adam. This is simply one of the Hebrew words for man. In some Bible translations it is used in the text, but in the ESV, which we read from, apart from in verse 20, he is simply called “the man.” In these verses, then, the simple statement that God created man in His image and after His likeness is elaborated upon in some detail. Now we are told that Man was made from the dust of the earth, that he became a living being because God breathed into him, and that initially it was only the man, Adam, who was created. The beautiful account of how Eve came into being is the crowning glory of the final verses of the chapter.

## The Garden of Eden

In verse 8 the Garden of Eden enters the narrative. The very word “garden” conveys the idea of a pleasant place, but here we are told that God specifically introduced into it every tree that was pleasant to look at and good for food. It was indeed a paradise. We may sometimes speak of some spot on earth as a paradise, but there has never been any to compare with this one. It contained within its boundaries two unique trees, of which more in a moment. Also, it was watered by a river, which then divided into four. In the world as we know it today, multiple rivers often combine into one, but single rivers don’t usually split into many.

These unique features say to me that Eden was a one-of-a-kind place, almost the gate of heaven on earth. It was, as we learn from the next chapter (verse 8) a place where God Himself came walking. And after the unspeakable tragedy which unfolds in chapter 3, when Man is shut out from it and barred from returning, it seems to disappear from history.

Two of the four rivers cannot be identified with any known rivers today, but the other two, the Tigris and the Euphrates, can. These seem to locate Eden somewhere near the sources of these two present day rivers. We need to remember, however, that wherever the spot on earth may have been from which the human race originally spread out, all was, as it were, reset with the global Flood several centuries later.

The garden was home to two very special trees, the 'Tree of Life' and the 'Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil'. Adam was very clearly told by God that he must not eat of the latter, on pain of death, but Scripture does not record that he was given any instruction regarding the 'Tree of Life', except that he was free to eat of any of the trees. It seems clear, though, from what is said at the end of the next chapter (chapter 3 verse 22) that he had never availed himself of this opportunity.

## The creation of Eve

Chapter 2 closes with the account of God's provision for Adam of a helper "fit for him." "Fit for him" can also be translated "his like."<sup>5</sup>

We already knew from chapter 1 that God had created us both male and female, but who could have guessed that that He would do it in such a way? Adam is placed into a deep sleep, and, while he sleeps, God takes a rib and fashions it into the first woman, the woman we know as Eve, although she is not given this name until chapter 3.

It is remarkable that in choosing to use one of Adam's ribs, God selected the one bone in the human body which is known for its ability to regenerate itself<sup>6</sup>, but there is surely a deeper symbolic meaning here too. To conclude this talk, I cannot improve on the following quote from Matthew Henry's Commentary. He remarks that Eve was formed:

“...Of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”<sup>7</sup>

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk, which is the first of our series on the Book of Genesis, entitled 'Creation', talk number T1378. Scriptures were quoted from the English Standard Version.

### Notes

1. Ex 20:11.
2. Psalm 8:5 (NIV).
3. Eph 5:25-32.
4. Exodus 6:3 (KJV).
5. Chapter 2:18 (Darby).
6. Keith L. Moore and Arthur F. Dalley, Clinically Oriented Anatomy, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 1999), p. 64.
7. Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, Volume I (Genesis to Deuteronomy), Notes on Genesis 3:21–25. Found online at: [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc1.i\\_2.iii.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc1.i_2.iii.html).

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