

His First Day's Work

Genesis 1:2-2:3 (Genesis 1:2-5)

It takes nine months for a child to be formed in the womb of its mother before it is ready to be introduced to the world. Before a child is born, the parents do many things in anticipation of his or her arrival. There must be some sort of crib in which to sleep. A changing table. Diapers. Clothing. Blankets. Car seats. It can be rather complex.

Something very similar is occurring in Genesis 1. God's intent is to create man. And, like a loving parent, He anticipates the needs of man. And he fashions a home in which man can flourish. God does this with much thoughtfulness and care. Genesis 1 describes for us the process of creation. In this process we see God's power. But we are also to see God's wisdom and love. And it is not simply love for Adam and Eve.

Remember that Moses is giving this revelation to God's people Israel, before they enter the Promised Land. The Promised Land is another sort of home that God is preparing for his covenant people. God wants his people to know who they are, and from where they have come. He also wants them to know that they exist as the result of His great love for them.

A baby does not remember much during their first couple of years. But when God brings Adam and Eve into the world in which He had made for them, they must have been filled with wonder and awe. The moment they were created, they could appreciate the world into which they were brought. They could see the beauty and the usefulness of the creation intended for their benefit. That is not to say that they understood the entirety of God's purposes in every detail. Much exploration was still to come. Even thousands of years later we are still discovering details of God's handiwork.

Genesis 1 does not give us all of the details of what God did to make us a home. But it gives enough of those details to reveal his wisdom and love. When God created our home, he used a process. He did not do it instantaneously. He most certainly could have spoken the entirety of the Universe into existence in less than a millisecond. Certainly, God will bring aspects of his creation into being instantaneously.

But God fashions and forms the creation over the course of a week. This process is intentional and full of purpose. God is a good parent who knows how to make a wonderful home for his precious child.

Read Genesis 1:2-2:3.

In verse 1 we were given a summary statement of the entirety of the creation process. In verse 2 we see the beginning of that process.

Today we are only going to get through God's First Day of Work – vv. 2-5.

² 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.

At the very start, we see that it is the “earth” that is being formed as our home. The heavens are only explained to us in a tangential way, as they relate to the earth. The Bible is geocentric, only not astronomically. Galileo has convinced us that the earth revolves around the sun. The earth is not the center of our Solar System. And our Solar System is not the center of our Galaxy.

But the Bible is still very much geocentric. (earth-centered) In what sense then is the Bible “geocentric”? The Bible is geocentric in that it is earth that God has formed to be our home. The fact that this planet is the planet that can support human life is not accidental. Sometimes scientists refer to our planet as “Goldilocks”. Remember how Goldilocks had to find things “just right” for her. Our planet is just right for us.

We often talk about the signs of intelligent design that are throughout the creation. But this does not go far enough. We do not simply see random signs of design. We see a world that is designed to support human life.

The situation of earth's moon stabilizes our climate. The speed of the earth's rotation also prevents extreme temperatures. Our sun is a yellow dwarf and is rare among stars. It is relatively small and very stable. Even the giant gas planet of Jupiter acts as a magnet catching most of the wayward asteroids and comets that could threaten our planet. We could go on and on...

University of Washington astronomer Don Brownlee calls the idea that the earth is a “typical planet” “nonsensical.” And yet, due to sin, we can look at this world and be blinded to its wonder.

“...evolutionist Alan Boss, a Carnegie Institution planet formation theorist, makes this very claim, “

“[E]verything has been pointing in the direction of, ‘Hey, the solar system, which we thought was unique, is not unique at all . . . [c]ertainly there will be other planets that support life . . . I think life is actually quite common. I think we're going to find there are literally billions of [Earth-like planets] in the galaxy.”

It is not so much that it would be wrong for God to make other planets capable of supporting life. He certainly could. It is not even wrong to think that God could create other forms of life. The sheer amount of life forms on our own planet speak to God's wonderful creativity. What is wrong is to think that other planets in other places in the

Galaxy will somehow randomly be better suited to support us as humans. God made our earth to be our home.

In verse 15 we see that the Sun and the Moon and the Stars are put in place to give light upon the earth. The earth is the focal point. And the earth is the focal point because it is the home for man. God is making a home for his people. But it was not a nice home at the beginning. At the beginning, earth was not a place in which we could live. It was Tohu vabohu

Tohu means unformed.

Bohu means empty.

It was empty because it was still unformed. It was a wasteland. The Israelites understood Tohu. Moses uses the same word to describe the environment of the desert in which they had been wandering for 40 years. He writes in Deut. 32.

Deuteronomy 32:9-10 ⁹ But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. ¹⁰ "He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

The uninhabitable wasteland of the wilderness compares to the earth at this point. If we were created at this point, we would not have made it. God will first form the earth to be a home. And then he will begin filling the home.

^{ESV} **Isaiah 45:18** For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the LORD, and there is no other.

The Bible is geocentric because it is also androcentric. God is forming the earth to be inhabited by men and women, whom he will make in his image. An unformed earth cannot sustain humans. But a fully formed earth is not made to remain empty. The earth was made to be inhabited, to be lived in, not just by a few people or animals. God has made the earth to support lots of people. It is wrong to think that we have too many people on the planet. It is wrong to think that humans are bad for the planet. Sinful humans may be bad for the planet, but not humans. God made earth to be filled with people, and he expected them to live and enjoy the home that he had made for them.

We are not to think of the earth as a museum to be delicately walked through, but not touched or used. God made the earth to be inhabited. In addition to being

unformed, there were other foundational needs that man would have if he were to live on planet earth. The first is that there was no light in the creation. Darkness was over the surface of the deep waters. At this point, darkness is not associated with evil. After the Fall of Man into sin, darkness will often have the connotation of evil. But not here. Darkness is simply the absence of light. And without light there is no life. Light is necessary for life.

On Day 4 God will create the sources of light. But even before these sources exist, God creates light itself. This is helpful to us. We need light to live. But we are not to worship the current sources of light: the Sun, the Moon, or the Stars. We are to look to the Creator of Light himself – the One True God.

The Sun, moon and stars will help divide day and night for us. But we have to be careful to not attribute the darkness of our current nighttime with the darkness at the very beginning. The darkness of verse 2 is absolute darkness. This is the darkness that you experience if you go spelunking. Crawl a hundred yards into a cave and turn off your flashlight and you will experience complete darkness. There is nothing evil about this sort of darkness. It is quite an experience... for about 10 seconds. But darkness, total darkness is unlivable. God makes entirely clear to us at the beginning the importance of light for our life. But while darkness makes life impossible for us, it is not a hindrance to God.

Genesis 1:2 And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

God is present with his creation. He is not distant. God can dwell in the darkness. It does not bother him. This will become important for us as we experience other types of darkness. Our God is not threatened by the darkness that threatens us.

Listen to how the Psalmist speaks of darkness and God.

ESV Psalm 18:11 He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him, thick clouds dark with water.

ESV Psalm 139:12 even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

Your God is present in the darkness. He broods over the darkness. The hovering of the Spirit of God over his creation is not a minor point. God is present and active in his creation. This is true during this first week of creation, but it is also true throughout our lives. God is present. We may not visibly see his hand, but it is there. God is always hovering over his creation.

And it is the presence of God that is most basic to our life. As human beings we will need many things to live: fresh air, water, food, warmth, light, interaction with other people. But there is nothing that we need more than the presence of God. God is the true source of all life. His presence is fundamental to all life and peace and joy.

The other necessities of life flow out of the presence of God. God is the source. Everything that we find essential to our happiness has its origin in God. O how wrong it is to attach our affections to the creation as if they ever possessed in themselves the source of life. The fountain of life is in God and in his presence.

3 And God said,
 "Let there be light,"
 and there was light.

4 And God saw that the light was good.
 And God separated the light from the darkness.

5 God called the light Day,
 and
 the darkness he called Night.
 And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Each new work of creation begins with God speaking. This is not accidental. The phrase "God said" is used 10 times in the first chapter of Genesis. The number 10 is a number of completion throughout the Bible. It is not by accident that there are 10 Commandments.

Notice also the effectiveness of God's voice: God said... and it was. God's Word has creative power. This is not only important for understanding the Creation around us, or for understanding ourselves, it is also important to our redemption. As God creates originally by the force of his spoken Word, so it is through His word that we are born again by the Holy Spirit for salvation.

The power of the Gospel is in the foolishness of preaching. But preaching is not primarily the creativity of the pastor. Preaching is God speaking through a human agent. God is creating new life as the preacher preaches the truth of Jesus Christ – the true Word of God.

"Let there be light" results in there being light. We have already said that we would not see here darkness as a moral evil, but it is still contrasted with light which is called "good". God sees the light that he has created and he calls it "good". Understanding "good" is very important. For one thing, Genesis 1

establishes that God is the ultimate judge of what it is good. Man does not determine what is good. Goodness is itself a reflection of God's character. What does God see in the light that moves him to call it good? Later on in Scripture, goodness will have a moral dimension, goodness is a moral virtue. But it does not seem to have this meaning here, at least not primarily.

There are two primary ways in which good should be understood here. First, "Good" must mean beautiful. What God has created has intrinsic worth and beauty, for it is a reflection of God's own worth and beauty. And we, as human beings, have the capacity to appreciate beauty because we are made in the image of God. When we see a sunrise or a sunset and have a sense that it is beautiful, we are imitating God's evaluation of light – that it is good.

The other sense of light being good is that it is useful. Light fulfills the purpose for which it was intended. What is that purpose? The support of human life.

The creation of light is God's first step in making a wonderful home for Adam and Eve and their offspring. A world with only darkness could not support man well. But a world full of light is wonderfully suited to support human life.

It is also significant that God does not eliminate darkness altogether. He could have. We could simply live in a world of light.

Instead, God does a work of separation or division.

God creates light distinct from darkness and then works to separate the two.

Man's world on earth will consist of periods in which light dominates and periods in which darkness dominates. The darkness will not be entirely dark. There will be some light during these periods. And the light will not be so blindingly light that it would burn all things up. And these periods would fluctuate back and forth. And God calls the full circuit containing one period of light and one period of darkness = One Day.

At some point in this study, I will discuss the alternative theories to the Days of Creation being literal 24 hour days. All I will say now is that the natural reading of Genesis 1 is that these are the same sort of days that we experience now, and that the Israelites experienced during their time.

I want to take a moment to discuss the idea of "separation." Separation is important in Genesis one. In addition to separating light and darkness, God also separates the waters from waters.

But why does God define creation in terms of separation? I believe it is because it expresses well God's active work of creating something distinct "out of" a larger indistinct mass.

Initially, there is only darkness. And out of this mass of darkness, God creates light and then distinguishes the light from the darkness.

There is only a watery mass. And out of this watery mass, God creates a separation of the waters above from the waters below.

And furthermore, he then separates out dry land from the waters below. There is a pattern developing here. When God wants his people to understand their own distinct existence from the larger mass of peoples around them, he uses the same language of separation.

Leviticus 20:24 ²⁴ But I have said to you, 'You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.' I am the LORD your God, who have separated you from the peoples.

1 Kings 8:53 ⁵³ For you separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your heritage, as you declared through Moses your servant, when you brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD."

Therefore, God's work of redemption is patterned after his work of creation. In fact, redemption is a new creation. And as God's redeemed people, we are called to be holy, which is another word for being separate from the world around us.

Just as the idea of separation helps God's people to understand what he has done to redeem them for himself, so God's creating light out of darkness also points us forward to redemption.

God is able to save you precisely because he is able to create light in the midst of darkness, and then to separate it from the darkness. Due to sin, our hearts are dark. Not literally dark, but morally corrupt and full of spiritual darkness.

It is not by accident that the Prophet Jeremiah, when describing the evil of Israel at the time of the Exile, describes it in language of Genesis 1:2.

Jeremiah 4:23 ²³ I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light.

As God's people languished in Exile, surely they wondered if there was any hope for them. The earth was without form and void, but so were their own hearts. It is God's ability to create light out of darkness that establishes hope. Darkness cannot make itself light. God must do this work. In order for any person to be redeemed from their own personal darkness, God must speak, "Let there be light."

Psalm 18:28 ²⁸ For it is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness.

The incarnation of God into this world, was nothing less than light entering the darkness.

Isaiah 60:1-3 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. ³ And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

The NT Apostles were continually speaking of our redemption in terms of darkness and light.

2 Corinthians 4:6 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.

You are alive because God said, "Let there be light" where there was only the darkness of sin before.

God not only spoke light into existence in you, but he has also separated you from the darkness by calling you out of it.

1 Peter 2:9 ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

God has called you out of darkness. His calling and his word are your new identity in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 ⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

It is God's work of a new creation that lays the foundation for our progressive sanctification.

Romans 13:12-14 ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

We are called to fight against every sort of evil. But we can only do this because of what God has done and what he continues to do by forming us as children of light.

We ought to be encouraged to stay in the fight against sin. The NT does not expect that Christians never sin. But it does provide a wonderful foundation to continue to fight against all sin because of three things:

1. Who God is: God is the One who creates light where darkness only existed.
2. Who we now are: We are now in Christ children of light.
3. To what kingdom we belong: We belong to a kingdom of light.

I want to say a word about the significance of “The first day.” It is not by accident that God created light on the “First Day.” The first day is the beginning of God’s creative working. It was true of the original creation, but it is just as true of the work of the New Creation.

God finished his work of the original creation in 6 Days. God then rested on the 7th Day. Since that time God is no longer doing new works of creation.

But one day, God will form a New Creation. The Old Creation will be no more. He will roll it up like a rug and form something entirely new.

The beginning of this new work of creation is the beginning of a new creation week. And it is not by accident that Jesus, the Light of the World, rose up from the grave on the First Day of the Week. Only Jesus does not belong to the Old Creation. He belongs to the New Creation. He is raised on the “First Day” of the New Creation. And when by the working of the Holy Spirit a person is born again, they too belong to the New Creation.

2 Corinthians 5:17 ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

The Greek reads literally: He is ... New Creation.

In the Old Creation, God does not create man until Day Six. But in the New Creation, God creates man on Day One. God separates his people out of the Old Creation and fashions them for his new creation.

Long before God would send his Son into the world, he began to help his people yearn for the work of the New Creation in their hearts. How does he do this? One way is through the OT sign of circumcision. God established that the OT sign of circumcision was to be performed on the 8th Day.

Leviticus 12:3 ³ And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

It is significant that circumcision was a sign of separation. There was a separation of the flesh. But this separation was a call to the Israelite to be separate from sin.

Deuteronomy 10:16 ¹⁶ Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.

But those who are darkened by the darkness of their own hearts cannot create light in themselves. And so, God uses the Covenant sign as a means to point them to his work of the New Creation.

Deuteronomy 30:6 ⁶ And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Circumcision points God's people to His own redeeming work of creating a new heart. Is it any wonder that God would command that the sign of this work be performed on the 8th Day, the New 1st Day?

In Jesus Christ, you belong to the first day, the 8th day, the New Creation. Of course, your body is still very much connected to this present creation. You are at war within yourself. But never forget that you are now the objects of "His First Day's Work." His New First Day's Work.

As you go out from here today, remember. Remember your God – He is the God who creates light out of darkness. Remember who you are through faith in Jesus Christ – You are children of the light. Remember in what kingdom you belong – You belong to the New Creation, the New First Day has begun in your hearts.

Struggle against sin. Not to earn a place in the New Creation. Struggle against sin because you already belong to that creation.

In Genesis, God was getting the creation ready for man.
But in the New Creation, God first prepares man for the glories of his new home.

Amen.