
The Creation: Beginning

Genesis 1:1 - 13

Introduction

Into the silence and darkness deep,
"BE" rings forth from the Creator
Leaping out of nothing comes everything
Being with joy and gladness
At the hand of their Maker.

Genesis 1 begins the beginning. It opens with a simple and solemn declaration. God is; God speaks; all comes into existence; God is pleased; God rests.

Development around the Text

Let's begin by zooming out and seeing the development of the larger setting.

Creation ending with God at rest

Creation ending with man residing in the garden

Corruption ending with man removed from the garden

Corruption ending with man calling on God

Issues in the Text

There are no such things as brute facts. All data is perceived, selected and interpreted through some system of thought. The Bible intends from the very first word, to be the authoritative system of belief through which all experience and reality are to be interpreted. The Bible establishes a bounded physical universe residing in God who is creator and sustainer. The universe is not a self-sustaining engine. It is governed by laws whose properties are describable and predictable. Christian investigation of reality must take into account the non-physical reality behind, surrounding and permeating the physical reality yet, distinct from it. All creatures (humans) doing science have a starting point - the question is, is it the starting point of a Sovereign creating God who has made everything, given everything its meaning and interpreted that meaning for us in the Bible. (Adapted, F. Schaeffer)

As we come to some issues in the text, we will take them up one at a time. I know there is significant controversy over most of these issues. I have neither the time, expertise nor intellect to settle them. The arguments over many of these issues are speculative at best.

Many of the issues we face are not driven by difficulties in the text. These issues did not exist for anyone until the emergence of evolution and its acceptance as fact. Evolution is a pagan system of thought whose design from the beginning was to give an alternative explanation to reality and to remove accountability to God. Thus we have to deal with issues forced onto the text by Christians trying to harmonize the text with a pagan philosophy. It is particularly frustrating when the Genesis account was *designed from*

the beginning to counter the pagan myths of the day all of whom included an evolutionary scheme, over long periods of time, with the power for change and development imbedded in the system represented by the various deities who were themselves an inherit part of the physical order. In other words, Genesis is designed to counter pagan myths, whether they come in the religions of ancient mythologies or in the religion of modern sciences.

Now, do not hear me to be saying that science is wrong, evil, etc. Science as it is modernly defined is the investigation of the natural processes. Christians, as regents and having dominion over this earth, ought to study and investigate that order. But, we must do so in a God-centered, Bible-believing, pride-abasing way.

Approach to the Text

The following principles will govern our exposition:

The text shapes its own structure.

The text gives us a literary structure and a logical structure. The literary structure is on "days". The logical structure keys on formless and empty moving toward formed and filled with the aim, a place for man to rule and time for God to rest.

The text defines its own meaning.

Moses expects his readers to understand at the level of the language what is being said. While he is not attempting to convey scientific information, the words here mean what they say. Later writers will expand on some of the ideas, but they serve to make what is being said here clearer and richer, not different.

The text yields its own complexity.

This is to say that through Genesis 1, the text is giving more and more detail and complexity. As the account moves closer to the creation of man, more and more detail is given. It is clear that God's design and creation of Adam and Eve are the high point in the narrative. Everything is bringing us to the emergence of God's regent and the entrance into God's rest.

Prologue

(v.1-2)

Genesis opens with a summary of the creation of the cosmos and initial state of the universe.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The 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.

Summary

(v.1)

The opening words establish three of the most important facts for Christian thinking:

There was a beginning.

There was a time when there was nothing but God. All that is not God had a beginning, a when that it came into existence. The Bible constantly attests to this. This fact then is an open denial of any pagan idea of the un-beginning existence of anything. All the mythologies of the past and present assert the un-beginning existence of some form of matter/energy. This is false. All that is not the God of the Bible, began.

God exists at the beginning.

Only God has always been. God's existence is simply assumed and asserted. There is no argument made to prove His existence. The key texts, particularly in John 1 and Colossians, all state this just as Genesis does. The Bible simply asserts that God is, calling people who deny that fools, insane, or reprobate. In other words, to argue for the existence of God is to grant man a power that the Bible does not. We are to simply accept His existence as fact; all else is folly and rebellion.

God is the source of all that is not God.

All that exists that is not God has come into being by His creating will and power. Again, the Bible attests to not only this fact, but also that all that exists is upheld and sustained by God. God is the ultimate environment for all things and the ultimate sustainer of all things.

The "heavens and the earth" here stands for the entire universe. This summary statement gathers up everything: heaven, the heavenly beings, the universe and all it contains. Many Scriptures point to the presence of angels at the creation of the earth and our local system within the universe. The Genesis account does not specifically mention their creation, but we would place that grand event as a part of this opening summary.

State**(v.2)**

Two words characterize the state of the earth when the narrative picks up. It was without form and empty. What this means is illuminated by what is done in the rest of the chapter. These two words form the literary structure for the days of creation. The first 3 days are creative acts of forming and the last 3 days are creative acts of filling.

While many have argued that between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, there must have been some great catastrophe resulting in this state, the Hebrew here simply makes a statement as to its condition. What cannot be inserted here is a long period of time for geological formation and fossils. Romans 5:12 states that death entered the world through the sin of Adam, so there can be no death on earth until after the fall. The text here is simply describing the state of creation when the account begins and uses words that will give it structure.

Two further words describe its condition. It is a deep in darkness. The deep in Scripture almost always refers to a body of water. While we do not know exactly what was entailed here, Peter assumes and asserts the accuracy of this statement when he says that, "They have deliberately overlooked this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God." (2 Peter 3:5) Darkness then here is probably not the darkness of evil, but the absence of energy or an animating, uniting Word from God. There is no light.

But this state is not hopeless, for the Spirit of God, the very breath of God in a Person, hovers over the waters in the deep. He is there awaiting the creative Word to speak in order to bring forth what is called out. Before the dawn of light, in the womb of darkness and over the deeps of waters, the Holy Spirit hovers.

Structure – Order and Form

A suitable environment for life is created largely by three acts of division. Each of these creative day periods follows a formula. First, there is the act of God to create, usually His spoken, fiat command. Second, there is the result of His creative command, that which comes into existence. Finally, there is God's evaluation of what is made through the assignment of its name and character, then a declaration of its being good.

At each creative act, Moses is teaching that God is not only the source and sustainer of all, but He is the meaning-giver, interpreter and judge. Man is not free to assign meaning, create interpretations apart from his accountability to God. Any attempts to do so will constitute rebellion. Thus, when the serpent tempts Eve, he will draw her into independent, rebellious meaning-making and interpreting that results in separation from God.

Day One – Light and Darkness

(v.3-5)

The first act of creation is to bring light into existence.

³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

God speaks and it is so. At God's creative word, energy and illumination floods the deep and God causes a division to exist between light and darkness. God then assigns the name to the lit side of the deep calling it Day and the dark side of the deep, calling it Night.

This launches the theme through the battle of the difference between darkness and light. Notice that darkness and night are not created. They are the absence of light, not something having its own existence. In order for there to be dark anywhere, God must divide the light from the dark so that they are distinguishable. We then find all through the Bible that God is spoken of as light and eventually we will return to a day where a visible, physical object as the source of our light will not longer be needed for God is the light of that new heavens, new earth and eternal age.

Notice as well that this first creative day is marked by the passing from evening into day. Thus, either the waters in the deep are rotating or the act of dividing light from darkness creates a passing from darkness into light, from evening into morning. Thus passes the first day.

Day Two – Space and Earth

(v.6-8)

The second creative day act causes the physical universe to come into being.

⁶And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷And 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. ⁸And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

The waters in the deep, now lit on the day side, are divided so that an expanse is created between the waters below and the waters above. This expanse is the universe. The universe is not infinite. It is bounded. It has a circumference. And, it is stretched out. Job 9:8 and Jeremiah 10:12 confirms this "stretching out" of the expanse that creates the sea

of space in which God later places all the heavenly bodies. *"It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens."* [ESV]

The creative act on day two creates space, as we think of it, the universe as a whole. God names this space heaven. The result is a universe at the end of day two that has an outer, bounded edge like a fence and the waters within it that will later be formed into this planet on which we live.

Since the advent of the hypothesis of evolution, people have been scrambling to explain the plain words of Genesis 1 and synthesize them with a pagan philosophy of long, gradual change from simple to complex. There are many points of controversy. Evolution states that there have been billions of years in the cosmos and for the earth. Yet, the text in Genesis 1 uses the Hebrew word for a definite, measurable, marked off time almost always referring to the common idea of a day of light and dark. Further, it reinforces that sense of the passing of a day in its very language: evening and morning.

Some have scoffed at the idea of evening and morning since the sun is not yet in place, at least as the text narrates. I am inclined to take what the Bible says as truth and adjust what I think to fit the text. What is helpful is that a careful reading of verses 14-20 show us that the sun is put in place to divide *what all ready exists*. So there is day and night before the sun. When the sun comes into existence, it functions as the source of day and demarcation for night.

Day Three – Seas and Land

(v.9-13)

Day three is marked as the transition from forming to filling. There are two distinct creative acts on this day.

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

First, the seas are separated from the land. The earth is beginning to take on life-sustainable geographical features. The seas are gathered and the land is exposed or raised up. Any attempt to exposit these verses must go to other passages in the Word for light. A 3 phase cosmology is shown in 2 Peter 3:4-13. This is derived from the three phrases "the world at that time", "the present heavens and earth", and the "new heavens and earth".

The world that existed from the creation to the flood was much different in many respects to that which we see today. We will see some of those different features in Genesis 2. Consider the following chart as an analysis of that text.

| HEAVENS & EARTH | FORMED | DESTROYED | FEATURE |
|-----------------|---|--|---------------|
| THEN WAS | Heavens by the Word of God Earth out of water and by water | Was flooded with water | water |
| PRESENT | By natural process out of the flood but whose key feature is fire. | By passing away with a roar, burning up in intense heat, burning up and melting. | fire |
| NEW | As a result of His promise | Eternal | righteousness |

The second creative act is to bring forth vegetation. Here God is creating the first living thing. We know that it is living in that it reproduces. It has its own kind or unique reproductive type and its seed. These included grasses, flowers and trees. It is clear in the text that God designed boundaries for the types of living things. Biblically, each type is unique because it is able to reproduce of its own kind. Packed into the genetic code is both amazing capacity for diversification and unbridgeable natural barriers.

Some would say that the creation of plant life before the sun means they could not have possibly survived. Two answers to that objection. First, they only have to survive through the night or between 8 - 12 hours until the next sunrise. And further, light is already present even though the sun has not yet been created. The planet is warm and lit. Otherwise either God is foolish in His design work or the text is inaccurate and unreliable. Neither is acceptable.

Reflect and Respond

So, we have an environment initially suitable for living things with the establishment of the seas, land masses and their respective systems. And life surges over the face of the planet called forth in glorious array by the Word of God. Now, we have God's evaluation: He sees and announces that it is good. It is good in the perfection of its design and implementation and in its moral rightness in God's order. The original creation was a perfect expression of God's wisdom and in perfect harmony with God's will.

