



Part 7 – The Days of Creation (2)

Genesis 1:14-2:3

The opening chapters of Genesis are not meant to be a beginner's introduction to physics or a guide for understanding biology. The creation account is not written in contemporary scientific terminology. It does not seek to answer questions that may be raised about the composition of cells or the average life-span of medium sized stars. Thankfully, the creation account is none of those things. It is written the down-to-earth style

of everyday existence. If the Genesis account of creation had been written as a modern textbook, no one before the 21st century would have been able to understand it. Likewise, to readers in the 22nd century it would seem dated and even laden with no longer accepted scientific paradigms.

Gods purpose in the first chapter of Genesis is to deliver to us His account of creation in such a way that it would be understood and believed as much by a share cropper as an Oxford scientist. It is an account which is meant to be received as a record of actual history; a record of events as they happened. It seems inconceivable that God would begin a book in which the world's only saving knowledge of his Son is to be found with a chapter full of enormous errors. The seeds for the gospel itself are sown in the opening chapters of Genesis. No wonder Jesus and the apostles took seriously the account of creation.

What significance is possessed by the creation account as the opening words of God's holy word! From Genesis chapter 4 onward, the rest of Scripture presumes the significance of the creation account and the mighty God of creation. In many ways, the Bible is anchored in the first three chapters of Genesis. It is in the account of creation that we begin to understand what God is like, where we came from, why we were created, what went wrong, and what God has done to save us. So let us read Genesis in faith. Let us read it to learn. Let us read it worship and rejoice.

1. God replaces chaos with order.

Vv. 1-2

- Far from chaos, the Bible presents the generation of the universe as orderly. God created the universe *ex nihilo* or "out of nothing. He had no need of pre-existing materials. God then shaped the formless raw materials according to his own design.

2. God replaces emptiness with fullness.

Vv.

- "That a creation with form and fullness should be better than formlessness and emptiness structures a whole set of values around being and nonbeing. In the biblical view, death, decay, and dissolution of form are not simply...a reality to be embraced along with order and regeneration in the great circle of life" (Watkin, 63). The philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal wrote that there is an abyss within the human life that "can only be filled by an infinite and immutable object, which is to say only by God himself." (Ps. 107:9; Rom. 15:13; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19; Col. 2:10)

3. God replaces formlessness with beauty.

- The clause, "And it was good," is repeated seven times in the first chapter of Genesis. God is the objective standard for what is good. All goodness in creation is measured in relation to the infinitely good God. And since God is perfect goodness, it follows that all his works are good, including his works of creation. The goodness of the cosmos, the earth, and all that is in it is not an evaluation placed entirely on the utility of those things God made. Indeed, as we observe the creation even its fallen state, we can perceive a

remarkable union between the functional and the beautiful. It pleased God to not only make things that “work,” but to make them beautiful as well (Gen. 2:8-12).

- Humans seem wired to enjoy music, visual arts, and well-crafted words. That humans are lovers of beauty testifies that there is a shared longing in our hearts to see the formless come to reflect the beauty of the Creator. The roots of this longing are found in the creation mandate (Gen. 1:28; 2:15). The creation mandate involved the man and woman (and the entire company of their descendants) extending the boundaries of the garden paradise to the ends of the earth (“dominion”). Like the garden, all the earth was to be the temple of the Lord. And it was God’s image-bearers who were tasked to bring the rest of the earth into conformity to the beauty of the garden temple.
- Given that God made the cosmos and the earth to be beautiful, it follows that he is the standard by which we must measure beauty. It should not be surprising that the early 20th century trends of abstract and modern art and “atonal music” were deeply rooted in the newly popular “Death of God” philosophy and the growing influence of the “Frankfurt School” of atheist philosophers. The vanguards of modern art and music in the early 20th century were open about their belief that all previous standards for beauty must be abolished. In many cases these artists were committed to undermining the very idea of beauty. They believed that since modern man had been freed from the notion of God, he was now able to give expression to his newly found liberation. This liberation included chaotic and formless visual art and music. All of the classical standards for structure and intelligibility were discarded and replaced by the cacophonous, chaotic, and empty. But the heart of man still longs for beauty. We long to live in that land where there is “no chilling wind nor poisonous breath,” where we have only to “gaze upon the beauty and to seek him in his temple” (Ps. 27).



Mark Rothko, “Untitled”



Caravaggio, *John the Baptist*

4. God replaces toil with rest.

Genesis 2:1-3

- Only Genesis explains the 7-day week. The 365-day year is based upon the earth’s revolution around the sun. The 24-hour day is based upon the earth’s rotation. But the 7-day week can be explained only by the creation account of Genesis. It reflects the rhythm God himself established of six days of labor and one day of rest. God declared this seventh day of rest to be holy unto him.
- There are two things we learn about work in the creation account. First, we learn that work is good in and of itself. Mankind was made in part to be productive. Second, we learn that because of sin, work was cursed. Instead of harmonious and fulfilling, work became toilsome; a source of exhaustion and frustration. But even before the curse upon work, God established the Sabbath. This means that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. It is not a temporary arrangement in response to the fall. Not surprisingly therefore, Sabbath observance is part of God’s moral law (Ex. 20:1ff). Honoring the Sabbath properly is vital for the lives and spiritual health of God’s people.

A) Sabbath observance is a protection.

B) Sabbath observance is a blessing.

C) Sabbath observance is a public witness.