

Genesis Chapter 1

The Genesis record of creation is by far the most disbelieved and attacked part of the Bible. The reason why men deny the truth of creation is not hard to see. If there were no ordered creation, then there is no God. If the universe around us was just a chance occurrence, then there is no creator God. If there is no God, then there is no accountability for our lives. We can do as we please within the limits only of the laws of the land, and even these limits are constantly widening as the years go by. As men push back the moral limits, we can be as immoral as we like, as long as we stop short of what is currently illegal.

But if creation did come from the hand of God, then we have to ask further questions. What has God hoped to achieve from creation? What kind of God is He? What does He require of us?

Hence, men do not only deny the divine creation of the universe ie the stars and the planets, but they also deny the divine creation of man. Man, they say, has evolved from the simplest form of life into what we see today. Evolution is the greatest lie that the devil has ever told, for it is the denial of God.

So what about the theories of men? Take the "big bang" for example ie that once there was one single huge mass of material that suffered some catastrophic "big bang", sending out the millions of stars that abound in the heavens as we see them today. But one must then ask the question, "Where did this original matter come from?" The most basic law of science says that matter cannot be created or destroyed ie that you cannot make something out of nothing. So, we are faced with a choice. We either believe, if we go along with the "big bang", that matter is itself eternal. In other words, that the matter has always been, was never created but was there from eternity, then exploded to form our universe. The alternative is, we believe in an eternal God who brought the universe into being. God was first, then the universe came into being by His hand. The choice is : eternal matter or an eternal God.

But would not logic itself argue against a "big bang". We see plenty of evidence in our day of the chaos caused by large explosions. Out of order comes chaos. Yet we are expected to believe that the biggest explosion of all involving all creation resulted in the perfect order we see around us. So, if there were a big bang, would the universe not be in chaos still? Instead, we see a universe in perfect order. Our solar system revolves around the Sun in perfect order. We establish our calendars and our clocks by the consistency of the solar system, There are comets which come past us every so many decades, but with such amazing regularity that we can predict exactly when we shall see them again. Everywhere there is order because God is a God of order.

But it is true that the idea of a divine creator demands faith. Yet creation itself is the most basic witness of all to the existence of God. Paul tells us in Romans chapter 1:20 that "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse". The witness of creation calls upon us to believe there is a God, and that is just what the Bible says in Hebrews 11:3. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that things which are seen are not made of things which do appear". The ages were set in order by the spoken word of God. The material things we see all around did not come out of nothing. They came from the word of God. I believe that creation is the bed-rock of faith. The primary purpose of creation is to reveal God to us. In I John 1, the Lord is introduced to us as the Word, the outward expression of all that God is, and the Word first expressed God in creation. "All things were made by Him". The simplest of men should be able to look up and look around and see the handiwork of God.

So how does the Bible begin? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". God does not give us details as to how He did it. It is simply stated as a fact. Apart from a statement about creation, it is also a statement about God Himself. People say that the Trinity is not mentioned in the Bible ie the word "Trinity" in itself. But the Bible in fact begins with an example of the Trinity at work. The word for God in Gen 1:1 is Elohim. Which is plural and could be translated Gods. This suggests that more than one Person was involved in this work. Indeed the word is plural suggesting 2 or more. The singular form of Elohim is "Eloi", the word used by the Lord on the Cross. "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani". So the God who created the heavens etc is a plural God, and as we know from elsewhere, He is a tri-une God. First John 5:7 says, "There are three that bear record in heaven, The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one". But can three persons act together in unity? The verb "created" in Gen 1:1 is in fact singular. The three Persons of the Godhead acted together as one when they created the heavens and the earth.

What was the role of the Lord Jesus in all this? John 1 says, "All things were made by Him, and apart from Him, there was nothing made that was made". In Hebrews 1:2, He is the Son "by whom also He made the worlds". So it is the Lord Jesus who had the prime responsibility for the work of creation. But He is also the great sustainer of the universe. Col 1:17 says, He is before all things and by Him all things consist". Hebrews 1:3 goes even further – "Upholding all things by the word of His power". To uphold here means to bear up and carry along. So, He not only sustains all things but He is carrying them along towards their final conclusion. So why is the Lord so prominent in creation? Because He is the Word, and God's first expression of Himself is through creation.

Where is the Lord carrying creation to? If the book of Genesis is the book of beginnings, then the book of Revelation is the book of conclusions. Revelation is also the book of recovery and many of the things which were lost in Genesis are recovered in Revelation. So, in Rev 21:1 we read, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away". The question is often asked, "Will this be a reconstruction of this present earth and present heaven, or will it be a totally brand new creation. My own feeling is that it will be "brand new". Peter says in II Peter 3:12, "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat". Isaiah 65:17 says, "The former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind".

What else can we say about verse 1 before we pass on? If God is plural and created is singular, then the word for heaven is dual ie there are two heavens. Why would the Bible be so specific? In II Cor 12, Paul speaks about the third heaven ie of being caught up into Paradise. Hence the third heaven is the eternal dwelling place of God, and was never created. It is the eternal dwelling place of the eternal God.

We now come to verse 2. "And the earth was without form and void". Here we come to a point of controversy. Is this the same earth as verse 1, or is it the earth in a subsequent state of being? Those who say that verses 1 and 2 refer to the same condition must believe that the world is the same age as man himself ie just over 6000 years old. They would therefore deny that the world is millions of years old, yea hundreds of millions of years old, as claimed by the scientists. Those who argue the case for a very young earth say that the huge changes which have taken place in this world are put down to the flood, which was upon the earth for less than a year.

The alternative view is that verse 2 describes a subsequent state into which the world was brought by some means, not revealed to us. This view has no problem with the longevity of the universe. It can be as old as men want it to be. Man, however, is a new creature upon the earth, brought into being during the same week of six literal days of 24 hours per day.

So which way are we going to decide? Let's go back to verse 2. "The earth was without form and void". The Hebrew words for "without form" and "void" are TOHU and BOHU. The first word "TOHU" is used by the prophet Isaiah in Chapter 45:18. "Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God Himself that formed the earth and made it: He hath

established it, He created it not in vain (TOHU). He formed it to be inhabited". While Gen 1:2 says that the earth was TOHU and BOHU, Isaiah says He created it not TOHU. The earth of Gen 1:2 is therefore not the earth that God made according to Isaiah 45:18.

Verse 2 also says, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters". We know from the New Testament that the Spirit of God has to do with regeneration. For example, in John 3, we must be born again of water and of the Spirit. Does this not also suggest that in Genesis 1, the Spirit moves here upon the face of the waters, not in creation but in the regeneration of the world that then was.

We can argue too on the basis of reason. Are we to imagine that the God who is perfect made the world a world of darkness – a world without form and void, a world that was uninhabitable, which took God 6 days to put right. What does the New Testament have to say about our God in the Assembly? "God is not the author of confusion. If not in the Assembly, why did God create confusion in creation and then have to rectify it?

Thirdly, we look at two very different words that Paul uses in the New Testament when speaking about the foundation of the world. In Ephesians 1:4, we read – "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world". The word for "foundation" in this phrase is the Greek word KATABOLE. This comes from two Greek words, KATA which means "down" and BOLE which comes from the verb BALLO, "to Throw". So KATABOLE is something which is thrown down. – a strange word to use for a foundation. We were chosen in Him before the throwing down of the world. It is all the more strange because there is another Greek word for foundation used in relation to creation. In Hebrews 1:10, the writer says of the Lord, "And Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth." This is evidently the work of creation, and the word for foundation here is THEMELIOS – a carefully laid foundation, like the foundation of a house. Why two different words? Because, I believe, one refers to creation, the original creation, the other to its fall or its overthrow. We were chosen in Christ before the overthrow of the world. Perhaps this is the catastrophe that scientists of our day are speaking about – a catastrophe that overtook the pre-Adamic earth. It is not for us to speculate, but Eph 1:4 does suggest some overthrow that overcame the earth.

And what about II Peter Chapter 3? Does it refer to the flood, or perhaps to the condition of things in Genesis chapter 1, when the whole earth was engulfed in water. II Peter 3:5 speaks of the "earth standing out of the water and in the water". Could this not correspond with Genesis 1:9, "Let the dry land appear". II Peter 3:6 says that the world perished by being overthrown with water. Is this the flood? Well the flood affected only the earth as we know, But II Peter 3 speaks of "the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water". Verse 7 adds, "But the heavens and the earth which are now". So we have the heavens and the earth which were, and the heavens and the earth which are now. Is Peter not suggesting that this great deluge of water overcame both the heavens and the earth. This would correspond more with Genesis 1, where on the second day, God created a firmament to divide the waters beneath from the waters above.

Day 1

From verse 3 onwards, God begins to work – to make the earth a fit place for the first man to dwell in. I have no doubt at all that the days mentioned here are literal days of 24 hours, and not, as some suggest, long periods or ages in the history of the world. God's work on the first day was the introduction of light. How long does it take to introduce light. It is surely instantaneous. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness (II Cor 4:6). Would it not be strange too for God to create herbs and trees on the third day, yet wait till the fourth day to set the sun and moon etc in their place. Heat and light are essential to plant life. If only 24 hours intervened, this would not be a problem. Much more if some great lengthy age intervened. And what would we say about the seventh day, God's day of rest. Did God rest for a countless age or for 24 hours only after He had made man. I suggest the latter.

So, let's go back to verses 3 to 5. And God said, "Let there be light, and there was light". Literally, "Let light be, and light was". This was God's first great act – to bring in light. It was the first thing God did in sending His Son into the world. "The Light shineth in the darkness". The true Light that lighteth every man had come into the world. How can God bring in light in day 1, yet not speak of the sun, moon, and stars until day 4. Light, evidently, was not dependent on those heavenly bodies but came from God Himself.

In Exodus 13, the pillar of cloud gave light to Israel "by day and night". There was light also in the tents of Israel, but darkness in all the houses of the Egyptians. In the book of Revelation, we read of the heavenly city, "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof".

So, the evening and the morning were the first day.

Day 2 Verse 6 to 8

The second thing that God did, having divided the light from the darkness, was that He made a firmament or an expanse in the midst of the waters that covered the earth. This firmament divided the waters into those above it, and those below it. And God called the firmament "Heaven". This, I believe, is the atmosphere immediately surrounding the earth – the very air that we breathe. It shows that there is indeed a vast amount of water both upon and above the earth. It was these waters that returned upon earth during the flood. Genesis 7:11 says, "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened".

Day 3

At the beginning of day 3, the earth was still covered with water, and so God said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear". Notice how all these acts are preceded by the words, "And God said". Psalm 33:6 says, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made". Verse 9 adds, "He spake and it was done: He commanded and it stood fast". Returning again to Hebrews 11:3, "The worlds were framed by the word of God". God only had to speak and it came to pass.

God called the dry land "Earth", and the gathering of the waters, He called "Seas". Having prepared the dry land, God could then bring forth grass, and herbs, and fruit trees. There was no "evolution" of plant life. God made the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit – "after his kind". God made mature plants and mature trees, all ripe with fruit. It is said of every plant and every creature, "after his kind" ie each plant and every creature was unique and able to re-produce itself, "after his kind".

Day 4

On day 4, God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night".

We have said already that light came in on day 1, but the sun, moon, and stars are not mentioned until day 4. These lights are brought in here to introduce the idea of signs and seasons; for days and years. It was the beginning of a calendar. The calendar was possible because we reckon it from the number of days it takes the earth to revolve around the sun. The earth's rotation in relation to the sun gives us seasons, and the earth's daily rotation gives us days. Day by day in Genesis 1, God is bringing in order out of chaos. We now have light, dry land, and vegetation : then sun, moon, and stars. These heavenly bodies are for signs, the most famous of which is surely that star which appeared in the east and led those wise men from the east to Jerusalem to find the child that had been born. The practice of astrology was also well established in Babylon in the days of Daniel.

These lights are also said to rule the day and to rule the night. Joseph in one of his dreams said that, "Behold, the sun and moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to

me". It pre-figured the day when Joseph would reign in Egypt and his father and his brethren would indeed bow down to him. The woman in Revelation 12 with the sun, moon, and stars is surely a picture of Israel, which one day will be the head of all the nations upon the earth.

Day 5

On day 5, God created all the creatures in the sea, and the birds of the air. Here is the first sign of life beyond mere vegetation. God gives these creatures His blessing. Verse 22 says, "And God blessed them saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply'".

Day 6

On day 6, God begins with the creation of all the land animals – the cattle, the creeping thing, and the beast of the earth.

But then in verse 26, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness : and let them have dominion...". Notice that God does not say, "Let him have dominion.". "Them" in this expression is not other men that would follow but Adam and his future bride Eve. Even before Eve came into existence, God had her in mind to rule together with her husband. It is all a type of Christ and His bride the Church, chosen in Himself before the foundation of the world and destined to reign with Him. Also at this point, in day 6, there is a great change taking place. Hitherto, God has simply commanded and it was done. But now when man is about to be introduced, divine persons take counsel together. "Let us make". This was never said of fish, or of birds, or of beasts. Why the difference? Because for the first time, God is going to bring into being a creature like Himself. Scientists say that we were made in the image of great apes. God says, Man was made in our image, after our likeness. "Image" brings with it the idea of representation. Israel in their days of idolatry made graven images and these images represented the gods of the heathen. The great image of Daniel chapter 2 represented the power and the authority of the Gentile King. In Rev 11, the Beast was represented by his great image.

Adam was made in the image of God, for he truly was the representation of God upon the earth. God said, "Let them have dominion ...". Every living thing was subject to Adam. This is seen in Gen 2:19,20 when the Lord God brought the beasts and the birds to Adam, and Adam gave them names. Psalm 8, quoted also in Hebrews chapter 2, says that "in that He put all in subjection to him, He left nothing that was not put under him". Adam was Lord of all. He was made in the image of God. He was also made in the likeness of God, I believe both physically and morally. Physically, for God looks like us, and we look like God. The New Testament speaks about the Father's face in Matthew 18. "In heaven, their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven". Moses saw the back of God from the cleft of the rock. John, in Revelation Ch 5 saw the book on the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne. Thus God has a face, a back, and a hand. He has an appearance just like you and me. But Adam was also like God morally. He was not holy but he was born in innocence. He was morally pure. Man, after the Fall, retained the image of God but lost the likeness when he fell into sin. Yet man still reigns supreme over every other creature.

Men today deny God as their Maker, but in verse 26, God said, "Let us make....", then in verse 27, God speaks not once, or twice, but three times over of how He created man. What further emphasise do we need of the work of God in creating man.

In verse 28, man is blessed just like the fish and the birds. In verse 22, God blessed them, saying God spoke about them, but in verse 28, God spoke to them. "God said unto them, 'Be fruitful and multiply'". Now, at last, God had creatures on earth with whom He could commune. He had a man, soon to be joined by a woman, with whom He could confide and convey His mind. He can do that with no other creature on earth.

In verse 29, while Adam had dominion over all creatures, he was to be vegetarian. Every

herb and every fruit of the trees was to be his for food, but nothing is said about him killing and eating animals. The whole creation in fact was to be herbivorous – verse 30 says, “To every beast.... I have given every green herb”. Eden was a paradise, soon to be lost. But God is working to restore Eden conditions again. That is why we read of the millennial kingdom, “The wolf and the lamb shall lie down together. The lion shall eat straw like the bullock. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain”. Creation today is under the curse of the Fall. That is why the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God”.

So, in verse 31, God completed the work of creation. On 4 out of the previous 5 days, God looked at what He had done, and saw that it was good (day 2 being the only exception). But on the day that He made Adam, God looked, and behold, it was very good.

Eventually, another man came into the world who is of course the perfect representation of all that God is. Colossians chapter 1 says of Christ, “Who is the image of the invisible (unseen) God. We have never seen God, but we have the record of His Son, who said, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father”. “I and My Father are one”. Notice that the Lord Jesus is never said to have come in the likeness of God. In Romans 8:31, He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. Externally, He looked just like any other man. In Phil 2:7, he was made in the likeness of men”. That is why Judas had to mark Him out from the rest with a kiss. He looked just like those fisherman from Galilee. But He is never said to be in the likeness of God. That would demean Him. He is not like God – He is God. Phil 2 again says, “Who being in the form of God”.

If the first man Adam failed in the garden, has God lost everything in the fall. Well, Paul says of the brother in the church of God, in I Cor 11, “he is the image and glory of God”. The brother in the assembly is here to represent God. That is why he appears in the assembly without a head covering. There are two reasons for this. I used to wonder why it was that the Priest went into the Tabernacle with his head covered, yet the brethren today are uncovered. It is said of those priests, “Every priest is ordained for men in things pertaining to God”. The priest therefore represented men before God. But the brother today is the image of God ie he represents God before men. He is also the glory of God. Should the glory of God be seen in the Assembly? We would reply, “of course it should”. That is why the brother’s head is uncovered that the glory of God might be seen and expressed. The woman, on the other hand is the glory of the man, therefore man’s glory should be covered and not seen.

As we sum up the chapter, we can understand why unbelieving men would reject the story of Eden as being complete fiction. They reject it because it demands the existence of God, it demands the truth of divine creation, it sets aside every theory of the “big bang” or of evolution. It demands accountability to God our maker.

Even religious me, so called, would belittle the early chapters of our Bible. But surely the whole Bible hangs together. If one part is seen to be unreliable, then is the rest not also called into question. In Psalm 8, David has Adam in mind when he marvels, “What is man that thou art mindful of him”. In the New Testament, the Lord quotes from Genesis chapter 2 when establishing the divine principle of marriage. Paul says that Adam was a type of Christ. Paul quotes Adam as being the originator of sin and death. “By one man, sin entered into the world and death by sin”. Adam is quoted as being the head of a fallen race. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”. If Adam and Eve is a myth then the Psalms are questionable, so too is the Person of Christ who quotes from Genesis 2, so too are Paul’s arguments about the origin of sin and the need for a second Man to redeem us. It all stands together or it all falls together. Christians believe all the word of God, not just the parts that suit them.