

The Creative Force of God

Genesis 1:1

“Genesis 1:1 assumes God; it does not debate His existence. If that personal and infinite God is not the starting point of creation, then we are left to explain every area of life according to frail and questionable speculations. Christians believe in one big, bold miracle- God. As a result everything fits into place. The rest of the world denies God, the creator, and needs a miracle to explain everything created.”
Dan DeHaan; “The God You Can Know”

sermonnotes

Introduction

The book of Genesis is the book of “Beginnings.” The first words spoken in our bibles are literally the words “In beginning.” No matter how far we travel away from our beliefs about God and divine agency in our origins, Genesis will demand its place in some of the most important questions mankind has to offer. Where did we come from, why are we here, what is our purpose for being? Genesis takes a look at these types of questions and draws back the curtain of time and reminds us of a past that will hopefully bring us hope for the future. Genesis is truly about origins, but it is more than that. It is clearly about creation and creativity, but if we hung our meditation there alone, we would miss the point. Genesis is a book about God’s story, which opens at the beginning, but culminates with the hope of a glorious hope (**Genesis 12:1-3; 22:17-18; 26:4-5; 27:14-15; 49:10** cf. too **Genesis 11:1-9** with **Acts 2:1-13**).

It is where the three great western religions begin their search for God, and certainly where the Christian story (the gospel) begins. Without understanding Genesis, we will truly fail to understand the heart of the gospel (see **Romans 5; Galatians 3:8**). Whereas most of the world’s population believes in a god or gods, Genesis forces us to take a look at what kind of God creates and reveals Himself while maintaining His own transcendence. In spite of Genesis’ many parallels with Near Eastern ancient literature, it stands alone in antiquity regarding its theological content and lack of mythical folk lore. Genesis becomes the commentary of a culture that has an idea of the truth of the creation, but has filled it with so much tradition that it has lost its meaning. So in this sense, Genesis acts as a reformational corrective to religion swallowed in cultural mire. Before we get into our passage some introductory comments are appropriate.

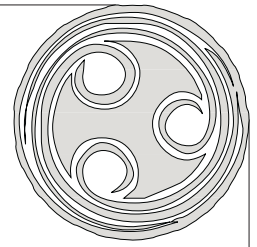
1. Moses is most likely the author of Genesis, dated about 3400 BC
2. Genesis should be read with “real life” drama as the context
3. Genesis should be read supra-historically and covenantally
4. Genesis should be read supra-rationally/scientifically
5. Genesis should be read in tension between the fallen man and the man made in God’s image (Despair and Salvation)
6. Genesis is to be read descriptively
7. Genesis should be read with grace in mind

From The Head...

The construct of **Genesis 1:1** allows for a few different translations. There is a question as to whether or not Genesis 1:1, because of its anarthrous construction (lacking an article), is subordinate to either verse 2 or verse 3, which has led to many other theories including the “Gap Theory,” which allows for a creation (Genesis 1:1), a supposed gap, and then a re-creation (Genesis 1:2-31). Many believe this, too, because Isaiah 45:18 indicates that God did not create anything “Without form and void.” There are a couple of reasons why I believe that the traditional rendering of the verse, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,*” refers to an initial announcement of what He did, and then an explanation of how He did it. First, this has been the unanimous explanation since the 3rd century B.C. Second, the book of Genesis uses introductory sections (called “Toledot”) throughout the book (**1:1-2:3; 2:4-4:26; 5:1-6:8; 6:9-9:29; 10:1-11:9; 11:10-26**). Thirdly, the first section closes a recap of verse 1 in reverse order (see **Genesis 2:1-3**). Therefore, Genesis 1:1 acts as an introduction and title, while the rest gives us the information.

Genesis 1:1 Establishes God as the subject and His creation as a subordinate! The usage of the term “Elohim” over the personal tribal name “Yahweh” reminds us that God is the God of nations, and even though the verb “create” is singular, the name Elohim is plural. **The one God (existing in plurality) is the sovereign creator of all things.** In spite of the many similarities in this text to Babylonian,

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Akkadian, and Egyptian creation stories, there is a stark difference to the nature and dealings of this God. The similarities help prove the reality of the oral tradition and the historical reality of the event, but Genesis is truly a commentary on those stories. God is not part of the creation, nor are there petty gods warring against one another to gain absolute power. Nor is this God merely tribal. He is Elohim, the singular, plural God who is both transcendent and imminent. He is apart from His creation, and thus its grand judge and king, but He is one who reveals Himself through His creation and through His word.

Genesis 1:1 delineates between competing worldviews. The real issue is not whether or not human evolution is true, or whether or not the universe is 14 billion years old or 6 thousand years old, but whether or not it is governed by blind chance and naturalistic means, or it is governed by a sovereign, providential king. One allows us to be a god, while the other demands that we be subject to the creator of the universe. Thales, a Greek philosopher in the 6th century B.C., postulated that we humans evolved out of insects. But it was Darwin who came along and gave it a naturalistic mechanism that has become the mantra of a community that does not want to adhere to a king greater than themselves. Oxford Zoologist, and preeminent evolutionary proponent wrote, *“Although atheism might have been logically tenable before Darwin, Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.”* It’s about what god we are going to bow down to, and what religion will suit our own definitions of spirituality. Can I bow down and trust the God, the one who brought everything into existence, or am I going to lean on my own understanding?

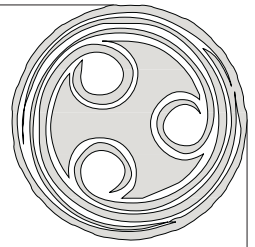
The idea of “beginning” is actually a word (Reshith) which means an indefinite time period. This verse basically tells us that it was created in some past time. Some scientists like Hugh Ross feel that our modern discoveries such as “Singularity” 3 British astrophysicists Stephen Hawking, Roger Penrose, and George Ellis expanded the general theory of relativity to include space and time, thus creating the “Space-time theorem of general relativity.” This forced them to believe that not only matter and energy came as a result of the “Big Bang,” but so did time and space. This prompted Hawking to say, “Time itself must have had a beginning” (John Boslough, “Inside the Mind of a Genius,” Readers Digest, February, 1982, pg. 120). affirm the biblical idea that time had a beginning (see **2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2**).

The concept of the word “Create” (Bara), is often understood as meaning “Ex Nihilo” (out of nothing), and is only used when God creates humans, but this is simply not the case. First, did God create Ex Nihilo? The answer is yes, but our text today isn’t explicit on this. The word “Bara” means to “bring into existence,” and is used for different objects (people groups, **Psalms 102:18; Ezekiel 21:30**, Jerusalem, **Isaiah 65:18**, things like wind, fire, clouds, destruction, calamity, **Exodus 34:10; Numbers 16:30; Isaiah 45:7; Amos 4:13**, sea creatures, **Genesis 1:21**), and many of these things, like man and women are not created ex-nihilo (**1:27; 2:7; 5:2**). It is true that there is a distinction of words used in the creation account including the words “create” (Bara), “make” (Asah), “formed” (Yatsar), but we definitely want to deal with each of them as we come to them, as they are most likely nuances of God’s creative powers, rather than absolute statements. While our word “Bara” doesn’t necessarily mean that Moses was trying to communicate that creation was ex-nihilo, there are other verses in the OT and NT that are (see **Psalm 148:5; Proverbs 8:22-27; Romans 4:17; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 11:3**). We do know, however, that in the 48 uses of the word “Bara” in the OT, the subject is *always* God. This is something that is left up to God and not to anyone else. Also, Moses, unlike modern scientific quest, is not concerned about the creation of matter as much as he is concerned that his readers know that God brings into existence that which is not. It is in this creation story that we see God’s headship over His creation as He assigns functions and roles and calls for obedience. When His creation listens, things are ordered. This is the primary focus of this book, and particularly these first 11 chapters. As one commentator writes, *“The text is a proclamation of God’s decisive dealing with His creation.”* Brueggemann, Walter, Interpretation, A Bible Commentary For Teaching and Preaching: Genesis; (John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1982), pg. 16 This text is more concerned

with function and purpose than it is with structure. There is a God, and He has a purpose for us, and He is in control. What we do see is that God is omnipotent. He is the creator, and then all of a sudden we see tension introduced (chaos), yet God deals with that too!

The heavens and the earth refer to the universe, and God created all of matter, energy, etc. out of His fiat, His mind, and His power. God orders creation and can create out of chaos as well. His creative force is still seen as we look into our own natural surroundings. This one verse gives us so much information about God, and about our place in the universe, and about hope and purpose. God created out of His good intention, and the mystery of His will, not because He had to, but because He freely chose to. And He created His people to be like Him, in His image. How can we have purpose apart from knowing that and acting upon it? God created out of relationship to establish one in covenant with His creation. Until we are securely established in this reality, we will continue to look for what will continue to elude our grasp!

sermonnotes



... To The Heart

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