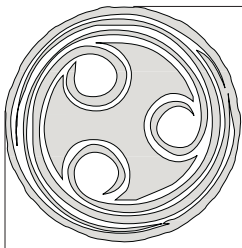


Genesis: Order out of Chaos

Genesis 1:2-31

“The function of setting up goals and passing statements of value transcends the domain of science.”
Albert Einstein



sermonnotes

Introduction

From The Head...

“Earth’s crammed with heaven;
And every common bush afire with God;
But only him who sees takes off his shoes,
The rest sit around and pick blackberries”
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

As we saw last week, God is the author and subject of creation. The God of Genesis is transcendent, yet a God who reveals Himself through His work (see **Romans 1:19-20**). Our text today begins to show us how God is not only author of creation, but also the “perfector” of creation. He is intimately involved in the ongoing details of making planet earth habitable. I am reminded of **Hebrews 12:2** where we find Christ in the same role in re-creation (redemption). Christ is the, “*Author and perfector of faith.*” What God begins He sees to completion (see too **Philippians 1:6**). The story of Genesis is God’s story of redemption.

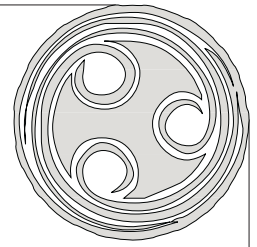
The Beginning of Hope (Genesis 1:1-2)

As we saw last week the word for creation (bara) is exclusively used for God all 48 times in the OT. And although it can mean ex-nihilo (out of nothing), it alone does not demand it. This biblical truth however is confirmed by verses such as **Romans 4:17** and **Hebrews 11:3**. This fact sets this story apart from any other ancient story of creation. This also sets this creator apart from His creation. There is quite a bit of controversy as to how verse one fits with verse two. Is verse one the first creation and verse two a second re-creation? Do these verses indicate a Greek dualism that sees matter as chaotic and eternal, and the gods formed it into something else? These are tough questions, yet the natural flow of the context and other references within scripture seem to indicate that what God created in verse one is complete, yet not quite habitable for human life, which is the center of this creation story. God’s creation is in process and ordered to inhabit life and render that life with purpose. Subsequently it is quite possible that the, “*Formless and void*” aspect of the creation is intended and simply means a, “*Desert and wasteland.*” There is much of creation that may lend to life, but by itself it is uninhabitable. The density of the universe, the suns rays, energy from other stars, etc. all contribute to life on earth, yet would be considered highly uninhabitable in of themselves. There is much here on earth (like water), which is uninhabitable by humans, but needed for life to be sustained. Man cannot live without water, but can also die because of water. Whereas **Genesis 1:1** shows us God’s enormous power and sovereignty, **Genesis 1:2** and beyond shows us that not only is some of creation before the fall intended to be a danger to human life, but God can and does form life in the midst of it (see **Isaiah 45:18-19**; **Jeremiah 4:23-28**). God’s creation is not chaotic in the sense that it is out of God’s control, but it needed to be prepared for human capacity and the life that God breathed into creation. The verses that follow are literal days showing us God’s artistic movement throughout His creation in order to prepare it for life. These are huge parallels to what God does in redemption. He removes His people from a lifeless existence and through the process of the Spirit He prepares our way to inherit eternal life.

Another problem within the second verse is the usage of the word “tehom” (deep). Some see this as a correlation to the Babylonian account of the creation, and the god Tiamat, but once again nowhere in this context indicates that the author of Genesis personifies this kind of theogonic understanding of this word. It is more reasonable to take this phrase as the Spirit of God, “*Hovering over the surface of the deep,*” which indicates the protective nature of the Spirit of God over creation. We see all three members of the godhead in the creation

7 NOV. 2004 PASTOR MIKE GUNN

Harambeechurch



process. God (Elohim) brings the universe into existence, God the Spirit hovers, while God the second person of the Trinity reveals (see **Exodus 3:1-6; Genesis 18; John 1:1-5; Colossians 1:15-17**). There are some scholars that suggest the word “ruach” (translated, spirit or wind in the OT) should be translated “wind,” but the fact remains that the construct “ruach Elohim” is always seen as the spirit of God, and not a “mighty wind” as some have translated it. It is important to realize that the darkness here need not be considered evil (see **Isaiah 45:7**). God is sometime ensconced in darkness (**Psalms 18:11**) most likely highlighting God’s mystery.

The next 29 verses act as a liturgy and in its own right serves as a form expressing its message of purpose and order. The following chart shows how the creation story indicates how God begins to fill and give form and function to His creation.

Formlessness			Emptiness		
Day	Item Created		Day	Item Created	
1	Light w/ Darkness	4		Lights	
2	Sea and Sky	5		Water and Air	Creatures
3	Fertile Earth	6		Creatures For Earth	

Day 1 Formation of Purpose: Time (Genesis 1:3-5)

Although there is much discussion about the literal nature of these days, the Hebrew construct and usage of the word day (yom) in this context must be indicative of a literal 24-hour period. Although yom can mean an age, or can be used metaphorically, it is always considered a literal day when the number day one, day two, etc. is attached to it. What we don’t know is when this sequence commenced in this creation account. Again, God’s intention is not to create a history or scientific account of His creation, but is describing His own history that reflects his purpose for creation, thus the Genesis creation week could be something that occurred a long time after the initial creation of the universe, or shortly after. As stated above, **Genesis 1:1-2** gives us information that God created the universe out of nothing, and the rest of the time He shaped and ordered the universe to be habitable for human life. Prior to this, the creation was uninhabitable (without form and void), much like the rest of our solar system appears to be. This revelation of formation is ordered much like the creation itself. The metered tempo of “God said,” “let there be,” “It was so,” “it was good,” brings forth the rhythm of creation. Here we have the word of God (see **John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 11:3**) speaking, which brings forth creativity and effectiveness. God’s word never goes out in vain and it always accomplishes what it intends to do (**Isaiah 55:11**).

In our sequence here there is no word suggesting creation, but the ordering of purpose and the giving of time. The question remains here if light was created, or ordered for the purpose of ordering our time, what does that say about God? Time is obviously important to God, who exists outside of time. This passage begins and ends with a time frame (see **Genesis 2:1-3** cf. **Exodus 20:8-11**). It is also interesting to note that the author indicates that day one was good, while he doesn’t indicate that in regards to the second day.

Day 2 Formation of Purpose: Space (Genesis 1:6-8)

God sovereignly divides and expands the living space on earth. The division includes dividing the water on earth (sea) from the water in the air (clouds). Since the word expanse (or firmament) means canopy and is often translated tent curtain (**Psalms 104:2**), veil (**Isaiah 40:22**), or molten glass (**Job 37:18**) there is a theory that before the flood there was a large canopy around the earth creating a sub tropical protective ring that accounts for the astronomical ages in early Genesis, and also for the possibility of large animals (dinosaurs) prior to the flood. Whatever happened, the atmospheric expansion was needed for life to become reasonable. The phrase “God made” is in a construct that could mean “God had made” (asah not bara) but it is not possible to know if God is ordering creation here, or making it as He goes. “It was so,” indicates that it happened and was immutable. The significance of the naming of the heavens shows God’s sovereignty, and is a direct polemic against the mythical

idea that the “heavens” were the home of the gods.

Day 3 Formation of Purpose: Fertile Earth (Genesis 1:9-13)

On day three two things occur: God establishes physical boundaries, then makes the land fertile. This is significant because first it differed greatly from other ancient mythical stories in that once again, God the creator is separate from His creation, and not part of it, like other stories that believe that land and sea were made by splitting a defeated god in half (the Babylonian “Enuma Elish”) or that the sea was a god (like the Canaanites worship of Yam, the sea god). On both instances He commanded and “it was so,” and He pronounced them both “good.”

Day 4 Formation of Purpose: Light Explained (Genesis 1:14-19)

It is often believed that God created the sun, stars, and moon on the fourth day, yet we see light formed on the first day, and vegetation precedes the light made on the third day. Where God could certainly do this, it is best to see this day as the explanation of the function and purpose of light, which is given to His creation to govern and order their lives. The note that “God made” (verse 16) can be understood as, “God had made.” It is important to once again see the corrective purpose for the writing of Genesis. Where the mythical accounts of creation may include the sun, moon, and stars, they are usually used to indicate their divine nature like the sun god Ra. Once again the Genesis account places God as the creator, and therefore the sovereign one over the sun, moon, and stars.

Day 5 Formation of Purpose: Sea + Air Life (Genesis 1:20-23)

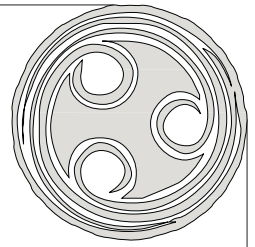
God creates (using the word bara) the sea creatures and birds, which also is often worshipped as local pagan gods.

Day 6 Formation of Purpose: Animal Life on Earth (Genesis 1:24-25)

After that God makes (asah) the beasts of the field who were from the earth much like He does for man (**Genesis 2:7**). The beasts of the field and the birds and sea creatures all have the ability to reproduce “after their kind,” which negates the possibility of interspecies breeding or evolution. Simply, they produce what is within their genes to do so.

God is sovereign and He is continually working His creation to His glory and the purpose of His own will. Sin brings forth lifelessness and death, but God restores our life and begins to transform our lives and conform it to His own image (**Romans 8:29**). The real issue is whether or not we are going to yield to God’s restoring word and be healed, or are we going to be crushed by its piercing sword (see **Hebrews 4:12**). This piece of liturgy forces us to bow down to a creator so powerful it orders the universe by the words of His mouth, then realize that our life has been restored as we yield to the purpose and will of the king of the universe.

God is creative, and His creation reflects its symmetry and beauty. And for that we can worship Him and be glad!



... To The Heart

pastors

mikegunn ::
mike@harambeechurch.com

bradsessler ::
brad@harambeechurch.com

marksteeds ::
mark@harambeechurch.com

deacons

bryannelson :: administrator
bryan@harambeechurch.com

aaronyoungren :: music
aaron@harambeechurch.com

prayerrequests ::
prayer@harambeechurch.com