

Genesis

Creation in Poetic Form

Intro: The book of Genesis is beautiful, fascinating, and powerful. In the opening chapter, the reader is confronted by the God who creates, designs, and speaks. Additionally, for the interested Bible reader, the stage is arranged in masterful display, so that all that occurs from here will take place with this amazing backdrop. One of the major elements of this opening scene is the Word of God. His Word is powerful, with no possibility of constraint. His Word is effective, with no conceivable futility or error. Therefore, the sinner can trust God when He speaks life to a dead soul and brings light to the darkness of the sinner's heart.

Genesis 1:1-2:3

Was it Six Literal Days, or Something Else?

The whole point of Genesis 1:1-2:3 is not to provide a scientific defense for any method of God's creation. Additionally, there seems to be no desire on God's part to explain the events from a journalistic reporting perspective. Thus, there is much detail missing from this record of Creation. Based on these two points alone, it would be wise for Christians to speak to the "age of earth" subject with humility and grace.

That said, there is good reason to interpret this prologue as presenting all of God's creation activity as occurring within six twenty-four-hour days. In fact, most of the contemporary interest in interpreting Genesis 1 in some other way comes from a desire to reconcile today's scientific consensus with the biblical record. Yet, good and accurate hermeneutics (the proper method of interpreting Scripture) can never be based on contemporary scientific models. This is not to mention the openly hostile posture that much of the contemporary scientific community has for a biblical worldview. It would be foolish, then, to seek unity with an incredulous antagonist.

Message Outline:

- (1) First, let's just observe some things.
- (2) The Word of God is a (maybe *the*) major point of the Genesis prologue
- (3) The emphasis on *God's Word* is remarkable throughout Scripture
- (4) The same God who spoke His powerful word in creating the universe speaks life into undeserving sinners today

Exposition:

1. First, let's just observe some things.

A. **Observation1:** *Creatio ex Nihilo* (Creation out of Nothing)

- i. One of the distinguishing marks of Christianity, over against the secular and pagan worldviews, is the understanding that God created from 'nothing.'
 1. *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep..."* (Gen. 1:1-2).
 - a. Verse 1 precedes verse 2, and establishes a beginning point for time, space, and matter. Thus, God has not merely shaped creation; He has brought every molecule that is into being.
 - i. *"You created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being"* (Rev. 4:11, NIV).
 - ii. Of Christ, Paul says, *"by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him"* (Col. 1:16).

B. **Observation2:** This opening episode is of a Divine Nature (substance)

- i. *"In the beginning..."* (Gen. 1:1)
 1. Who can know what was 'in the beginning' except the only God who pre-existed it?
- ii. God is supremely and amazingly active throughout!
 1. God is "CREATING" (1:1, 21, 27).
 - a. There are numerous characteristics of God that we might perceive from this single reality.
 - i. God is powerful, intelligent, artistic, expressive, wise, orderly, independent, and masterful.

2. God is “HOVERING” or close/near to creation (1:2).
 - a. “*And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters*” (Gen. 1:2).
 - i. The Hebrew word is that of a bird hovering or brooding over a nest, and it carries a strong sense of ease.
3. God is “SPEAKING” with irresistible authority.
 - a. “*Let there be light,*” and there was light (1:3)
 - b. “*Let there be an expanse [or separation] between the waters,*” forming sky above and oceans beneath (1:6)
 - c. “*Let the waters under the heavens [or beneath] be gathered... and let dry land appear.*” And it was so (1:9)
 - d. “*Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants and trees.*” And it was so (1:11)
 - e. “*Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate day from night...*” And it was so (1:14-15)
 - f. “*Let the waters swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above*” (1:20)
 - g. “*Let the earth bring forth living creatures...*” to fill the land. And it was so (1:24)
 - h. “*Let us make man...*” (1:26)
4. God is AFFIRMING His creative work.
 - a. The **formation** of “*the heavens*” (v1), “*light*” (v3), earth’s oceans and atmosphere (v6), and “*land*” (v9) is all observed and **affirmed** by God as “*good*” (v10).
 - b. The heavens were **filled** by a “*greater*” and a “*lesser*” light, as well as “*the stars*” (v16). The waters beneath were **filled** with “*swarms*” of life, and birds filled the skies (v20). The dry land was **filled** with animals of all kinds (v24), and God “*saw*” and **affirmed** that all of this was “*good*” (v25).
 - c. God created “man,” both “male and female” (v27), and commanded them to **fill** the earth (v28). Then He observed all that He created, and He **affirmed** it all as “very good” (v31).

C. **Observation3:** From the formlessness, emptiness and darkness – God creates form, fills it, and gives His light.

*“The earth was **without form and void**, and **darkness** was over the face of the deep”* (Gen. 1:2)

1. [Form & Light]: God illuminated the “heavens and the earth” and separated “light” from “darkness,” calling one “day” and the other “night” on “Day 1” (1:4-5); and then [Fill]: He made the sun and the moon to govern each domain on “Day 4” (1:14-19).
2. [Form]: God separated the waters from the waters, creating earth’s atmosphere and oceans on “Day 2” (1:6-8); and then [Fill]: He made creatures to fill each one – fish for the sea and birds for the sky – and commissioned them to be fruitful in each domain on “Day 5” (1:20-23).
3. [Form]: God made “land” and plants of all kinds on “Day 3” (1:9-13); and then [Fill]: He made animals and people to enjoy such provision, along with the commissioning of people to be fruitful and take dominion, on “Day 6” (1:24-31).

D. **Observation4:** There is a dramatic emphasis on God’s Word

- i. The overwhelming refrain of the Genesis prologue is “God said...”
 1. The phrase is repeated 11 times in 34 verses (1:1-2:3)
 - a. *Speaking* is a distinguishing mark of the one true God
 - i. Isaiah 44:6-7 – “6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. 7 Who is like me? **Let him proclaim it. Let him declare** and set it before me...”
- ii. The Word of God is authoritative, sure, and trustworthy.
 1. Throughout the Genesis prologue the simple and certain repetition is unambiguous.

“God said” – and *“it was/is so...”*

 - a. No matter what God says, though He even commands those things that are not, what He says is sure and effective! Look and see that God’s Word is effective. He speaks to non-existent light and it obeys without

delay! Who can speak to light at all?! What language does it hear? With what ears does it receive communication? More humbling and awe-inspiring still is the fact that light has no reason to obey just any voice – even if light could indeed hear it. Why should light heed that voice which it hears? Oh, when light hears – uninhibited and easily – the voice of God, even though it had not yet known its own existence, it joyfully and quickly obeys His Word!

2. The Word of God is a (maybe *the*) major point of the Genesis prologue.

- A. There is no doubt that it is at least *ONE* of the major points.
 - i. As we have already established, the God's speaking is *THE* activity He is doing all through Genesis 1.
 - ii. Let's not forget that the reader is hearing the voice of God, not only as He is quoted on the page, but from *ALL* the words on the page. The Genesis prologue is itself the Word of God!
- B. I believe that the Word of God is *THE* major point of the Genesis prologue for the following reasons:
 - i. God's Word, God's blessing, and God's breath are incredible points of contact with all created things in Genesis 1 & 2.
 - ii. After these foundational chapters (1&2) the first thing that comes into view as the antagonists target is the Word of God. (*Did God actually say... Gen. 3:1*)
 - iii. The Word of God establishes the trustworthy conditions for the rest of the Bible in God's curse and His promise (Gen. 3:14-19).
 - iv. Genesis 4 and 5 fit the same pattern we see in Genesis 1 (*God said... and it was/is so*).
 - 1. Cain kills Abel and immediately demonstrates the effects of God's curse, and the genealogy of ch5 repeats the phrase, "*and he died,*" no less than 8 times.
 - v. The same kind of pattern we see on display here is repeated throughout the Scriptures, and especially in Genesis.

3. The emphasis on God's Word is remarkable throughout Scripture.

- A. The longest chapter and psalm in the Bible prodigiously praises the Word of God (Ps. 119).
 - i. It guards and preserves (v9)
 - ii. It is a delight and good counsel (v24)
 - iii. It gives life, understanding, and strength (v25, 27, 28)
 - iv. It gives hope, sure footing, and courage (v43, 45, 46)
 - v. It is the true way (104)
- B. The Word of God is flawless, and a shield for those who take refuge in God (Prov. 30:5)
- C. The Word of God brings blessing to those who hear and obey (Luke 11:28).
- D. The Word of God is alive, active, and powerful (Heb. 4:12).
- E. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Peter says, "The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord remains forever" (1 Pet. 1:24-25).
- F. The Word of God is that which bring life to the dead sinner's heart (1 Pet. 1:23), and faith to those who hear it.
- G. Jesus Himself is called the "Word" of God and the "Truth" of God on a number of occasions (John 1:1; John 14:6; Rev. 19:13).

4. The same God who spoke His powerful word in creating the universe speaks life into undeserving sinners today.

- A. The author of Hebrews opens his message by saying, "*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...*" (Hebrews 1:1-3).
 - i. Jesus is the One who has made "purification" for your sin, and this is the Word of God to you today!

Application

- What is God commanding us to BELIEVE here?
 - God is the creator and sustainer of all creation
 - God is wise, powerful, intentional, artistic, and good
 - God speaks, and His Word is sure, trustworthy, and effective

- What is God commanding us to DO here?
 - Worship God for His power
 - Praise Him for His wise goodness
 - Thank Him for His trustworthy grace
 - Believe His Word – no matter what

My Prayers

- May God make us to be an awe-filled people
- May God give us a heart to praise and thank Him
- May God cause us to believe and trust His Word above all else