

Key Events In Our History - Creation

Genesis 1.1 – 25

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October 25, 2020

Many mths ago I began considering what message series I would do following the completion of our series on Ephesians. I concluded that I would do a series on Joshua which describes Israel crossing over the River Jordan to take possession of the land promised centuries earlier to Abraham. The book is filled with God's supernatural intervention as the Hebrew people walked by faith. Understandably, it is an exciting book to delve into.

As I began envisioning the series on Joshua I thought I should provide some background to Joshua. That background of course includes the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea after the spies returned from their expedition into the promised land, the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and perhaps how Israel got to Egypt in the first place, as well as the call of Abraham which initiated their relationship to God as His unique people. I was undecided about including a summary on creation, the Fall, and the Flood of Noah. A couple of weeks or so ago I became aware of some current teaching that highlighted importance of beginning at the beginning. That led me to precede our series on Joshua with a short series entitled, **Key Events in Our History**.

Creation, the Fall and the Flood are three cataclysmic events in history warranting an overview of them. Today we will consider the first of those **Key Events in Our History – Creation**.

I. The Creator Is Announced (Gen 1:1)

The Bible begins with the majestic and profound words,

Genesis 1:1, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

In these 10 words we are confronted with the presence of God as He is declared. God steps out of the backdrop of eternity as the spotlight of time focuses on Him. This is a goose-bump verse; a God-moment; a *burning bush* kind of encounter. This first verse also contains a hint of the nature of God; the word used is, *Elohim*, which is plural, hinting at the Trinity – God in three Persons, a truth that is developed as history unfolds.

With these 10 words God makes it clear, "*in the beginning*," He was already there when time and human history began; this is *Ground Zero!* No proof is offered for God's

existence other than the obvious – the unmistakable evidence of creation itself. If a house implies a builder, if a book implies an author, if a song implies a composer, if a painting implies an artist, surely a creation implies a Creator.

Without proof, apology or explanation, God and His creation are declared to all people. No footnote is added for 21st century scientists who proudly dismiss Bible's account, contending that God and theology have nothing to do with science.

In 1 sublime statement God sweeps aside atheism which boldly declares there is no God, agnosticism which you can't know if God exists, skepticism which isn't sure God exists, but concludes He doesn't, humanism which pushes God aside and replaces Him with self, and pantheism which believes God is in everything. Every person since time began is faced with a decision when they look around at the universe; they must decide whether there is sufficient evidence God exists to place their faith in Him. They must decide whether they will bow their knee to the One creation testifies to. We read in

Psalm 19:1 (ESV), *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*

Read through the first six verses of that majestic Psalm. Despite the unmistakable testimony of creation to the existence of God, nevertheless it necessitates faith to believe,

Hebrews 11:6 (ESV), *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

II. The Creation Is Summarized (Gen 1:1 – 2)

Genesis 1:1–2 (ESV) *1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

The creation we are a part of is not some Godless and stark random result of evolution. But rather, it is the intentional and carefully designed act of God. God not only unequivocally declares His existence, but He is Author of *“the heavens and the earth.”* Colossians 1.16 expands,

Colossians 1:16 (ESV) *For 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.*

God began with nothing, not a single breath of air, not even an atom of Hydrogen or Oxygen, or a single cell of most primitive form of life – He brought matter into being,

where nothing before existed. There was almost universal agreement in understanding the Genesis account in a literal straightforward manner until about 150 years ago when Darwinism arrived. With the advent of the claims of Darwinism some Christians felt they needed to harmonize their reading of the Genesis 1 with those unsubstantiated claims.

While it appears clear verse 1 is a summary of verses 3 and following, some question whether verse 2 is also a summary of what follows, or does it describe the initial creation of the mass called *earth* which God would later fashion? Verse 2 describes earth as *formless and void*, or it *lacked definition* and was *yet empty*. In later part of 19th century and beginning of the 20th, it was contended, The earth *was* without form and void, should be translated, The earth *became* without form and void. That view was promoted and popularized by C. I. Scofield in his reference Bible published in 1909 and became known as the Gap Theory. There are variations to it, but it essentially holds that after God created the *heavens and earth* (verse 1), satan rebelled in heaven and that rebellion encompassed the corruption of God's creation. Thus, the earth while once orderly, *became formless and void*, understanding those terms to suggest *chaos* and *disorder*, which also then accounts for the alleged age of the earth and the evidence of death, namely the fossils. After a time, i.e. a *gap*, God decided to start anew, and Genesis 1.3 ff are then understood to be a description of that re-creation, which retained the evidence of age and the fossil evidence from the corrupted first creation. There are unresolved exegetical and theological problems with the Gap Theory view and I don't know of any Bible translating **Genesis 1.2** as *became*.

While 100 years ago Christians were ill prepared to address the claims of evolution, that is no longer the case. A pivotal turning point occurred when Henry Morris and John Whitcomb Jr. published *The Genesis Flood*, in 1960. They addressed the creation evidence from a Biblical perspective, and thus with different presuppositions than evolutionists. The work of Morris and Whitcomb initiated scientific investigation and analysis of geological evidence using Scripture as their guide. It challenged the basic presuppositions with which one approaches the geological evidence. Today there are many well educated and qualified men and women who systematically explain the observable evidence in creation in a manner that upholds the claims of Scripture.

Beginning in verse 3, God expands on verse 1 – *God created the heavens and the earth*.

III. The Creation Is Detailed

Many point out, and correctly so, the most important point in Genesis 1 is the existence of God and that He authored creation. Undoubtedly, the declaration of the existence of God and His role as Creator is paramount. However, it appears apparent God not only wants to declare His presence, but further that He wants to provide some detail about

what He did – otherwise, “*Why did He give us the details He did,*” if He didn’t want us to understand them as pertinent to what He did? Perhaps specifically for people today; thus Genesis isn’t only about *Who*, but also *what*. Some claim Genesis wasn’t written to us, but for us. It seems to me, Genesis was written to all people. And perhaps some aspects of it, for example, the delineation of the *days* of creation, specifically for our generation. There is nothing in Genesis 1 that suggests for a moment that it is symbolic, poetic, allegorical, or mythical and shouldn’t be taken literally ¹

I won’t reread Gen 1.3 -25, but only the account of the first day.

Genesis 1:3–5 (ESV) 3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

It is true the term day, *yom*, in Hebrew doesn’t always refer to a 24 hour period of time, for example. here in verse 5 it is used in two different ways, a 12 hour period and a 24 hour period, hence we need to read any passage of Scripture in its context. In verse 5, God describes the part when there was *light*, as *day*, while He then refers to the composite of **day** and night, also as *day*. There is nothing unusual about the usage. Not only though is each *yom*, or day, described as having *evening and morning*, but further it is modified by a number. Throughout Scripture, whenever the word, *day*, is modified by a number (‘He rose again the third day’ – 1 Cor 15.4), the clear reference is to a normal solar day.” ² You may be puzzled over the order of, *evening* and *day*, when describing each day. To Jews, each day is understood to begin at sunset, hence the reverse of our ordering of *day*, followed by *evening*.

It is only in past 150 years or so, that in an attempt to harmonize understanding Genesis 1 with the unsubstantiated claims of science, people have questioned the *days* as literal, 24 hour, or calendar *days*. Today the concern is to make the *days* long periods of time, but in the past, it was just the reverse.

Many modern readers stumble over the six days of creation. They ask how it could have happened so quickly. It is interesting to note that before the nineteenth century and the work of Charles Darwin the question was just the opposite. For instance, in the sixteenth century John Calvin encountered skepticism concerning the biblical account because it took God so long

¹ MacArthur, John, *The Battle For The Beginning*, 18

² Ibid, 70

to create. The biblical account seemed ridiculous to many readers in the sixteenth century because they knew that God could create instantaneously if he so willed.³

It has been said by many, that how one interprets the first 11 chapters of Genesis will direct how they interpret the balance of the Bible, and understandably so. This is a matter far more comprehensive matter than whether the days were long *days* as some contend, or a literary pattern was utilized that never intended to actually describe specific *days*, or it is Israel's version of creation myths common to other civilizations. Other civilizations had creation myths about the origin of life, and thus it is contended God provided a corresponding myth so Israel would also have an explanation.

The discussion on Genesis 1 advances, as is predictable, beyond the length of the days and a consideration of theistic evolution, to the historicity of Adam and Eve, and the Fall, and the dismissal of a universal flood. It also follows that if a plain reading of the Bible in these 11 chapters isn't accurate, what else shouldn't we believe? For example, did Jesus miraculously feed the 5,000? Or, was He physically resurrected from the dead? Or, should we believe the descriptions of heaven in Revelation 21-22? The bottom line, is our regard for the Scriptures and their trustworthiness.

It is little surprise there is widespread acceptance of evolution and old earth by society in general and that, that belief system is taught in public schools as fact; however, what is disturbing is the widespread and growing acceptance in the Christian community. The clear words of Scripture are being dismissed in favor of the unsubstantiated and preposterous claims of the secular scientific establishment, who for the most part entirely dismiss any role of God in creation and bristle at even the mention of an *Intelligent Designer*. However, casting further doubt on the credibility of the claims of the scientific community is that not only do they dismiss God's role in creation, but they have no interest in the historicity of the Fall which had a catastrophic impact on creation which groans seeking redemption (Romans 8.21). And they dismiss the Bible's clear claim of a universal flood which was cataclysmic. On the one hand it might seem that spending time on a topic like, how to understand Genesis 1 and whether the earth is millions, or perhaps billions of years old, or only a few thousand is not that important. It is like the proverbial, preaching to the choir! Most of you likely already agree with me. However, even if you do, it is generally helpful to be reminded of what the Bible says and not feel we are ill-informed buffoons for believing in 6 day creation and a young earth. It matters not to me if the world considers me to be ignorant because I hold to 6 day creation, but faithfulness to God's Word and what God thinks, does matter to me.

The importance of addressing the clear teaching of the Bible on creation was impressed upon me several weeks ago when I learned of an organization, *BioLogos*. I feel

³ Longman, T., III. (2005). *How to read Genesis* (pp. 103–104). Westmont, IL: IVP Academic.

somewhat sheepish about this because it was founded more than a decade ago and I was unaware of it. *BioLogos* was founded by Francis Collins after writing a book, *The Language of God*, in 2006. He launched a website in 2009. *BioLogos*' credibility is enhanced in the Christian community by having some well-known personalities endorsing their views. Among them is former Presbyterian pastor, Tim Keller, who is featured on their home page and whose name is undoubtedly known to some of you. They also have other notable authors and speakers who promote their message to educational institutions, including home schooling organizations.

When it comes to Genesis 1 – 11, *BioLogos* has chosen the claims of science to be the grid through which one should interpret and understand Genesis rather than following the counsel of Albert Mohler, President of *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* in Louisville, KY, who puts out, creation “*can only be correctly interpreted through the lens of Scripture*”⁴ The people at *BioLogos* of course profess a high regard for Scripture. Concerning the role of Scripture and the claims of science, they state, “Traditional interpretations of Scripture should not be lightly dismissed, but neither is it responsible to ignore or dismiss the results of scientific inquiry simply because they conflict with traditional interpretations.”⁵

They add in an article on *Relating science and Scripture*, “When discoveries in God’s world conflict with interpretations of God’s Word, Christians have three options:

1. Abandon our faith in order to accept the results of science,
2. Deny the scientific evidence to maintain our interpretations of Scripture,
3. Reconsider our interpretations of Scripture in light of the evidence from God’s creation⁶

Sadly, it apparently hasn’t dawned on them, that perhaps they should reconsider their *interpretation of science in light of Scripture*; Scripture which is, the voice of God; the only One present at creation and who obviously knows what happened and how long it took. They need to go back and evaluate their presuppositions as one would do in other areas of science. Rather, *BioLogos*, following their stated objective to appear credible to the scientific community, accepts the hypothesis of science as absolute fact. Predictably the situation is far worse than just a disagreement over the length of the *days* in Genesis 1, *BioLogos* has followed the logical conclusion of acceptance of evolution. They propose “*that humans share common ancestry with other life forms on earth*”⁷, i.e. they dismiss the historicity of Adam and Eve as uniquely created by God and bearing His image. Their position is that all people are just products of the

⁴ <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/conferences/tough-questions-christians-face-2010-national/why-does-the-universe-look-so-old/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGETfOQgNI4&ab_channel=SouthernSeminary

⁵ <https://biologos.org/common-questions/were-adam-and-eve-historical-figures/>

⁶ <https://biologos.org/common-questions/how-should-we-interpret-the-genesis-flood-account/>

⁷ <https://biologos.org/common-questions/how-is-biologos-different-from-evolutionism-intelligent-design-and-creationism/>

evolutionary process, descending from other forms of life. They suggest, perhaps “*God entered into a special relationship with a pair of ancient historical representatives of humanity about 200,000 years ago in Africa,*”⁸ or perhaps “*God . . . revealed himself specially to a pair of farmers we know as Adam and Eve.*”⁹

Despite their claim to hold the Bible in high esteem, they view the first 11 chapters of Genesis as little more than a fabricated story to satisfy the religiously minded. Having, rejected a historical Adam and Eve, which is the natural outcome of the theory of evolution, it also follows that they reject a literal Fall of Adam and Eve. Which then throws the doctrine of redemption into question.

It is little wonder that Christians become confused and disillusioned as they read their Bibles and are told they can't believe what it clearly says. Evolutionists and opponents of the Biblical record, including *BioLogos*, would have people believe that anyone who holds to plain reading of Genesis 1, i.e. days were 24 hr periods of times, are uneducated and mindless people who are ignorant of science and geological evidence. To make such a claim they dismiss very well educated and qualified men and women who have carefully considered the geological evidence and have explanations that are both in harmony with Scripture as well as logical and credible assessments of creation.

The issue at hand is the authority of God's Word. If the claims and positions of science are the final arbiter of what to believe in the Bible, which *BioLogos* believes, there are a lot more Bible interpretations at stake than the age of the earth. Scientists do not affirm the virgin birth, the incarnation of Jesus, His miracles, His physical resurrection, the efficacy of His death on the cross, and so on.

Conclusion

Perhaps another time we will go chronologically through the 6 days of creation followed by the seventh day of rest. An observation about the week of creation that you may find interesting is that the 7 days of creation are the sole pattern for our daily week. Whereas the rotation of the earth provides the pattern for 24 hour days, and the rotation of moon around the earth, the pattern for months, and rotation of the earth around the sun, the pattern for years, the pattern of weeks consisting of 7 days is established by God's creation week.

Next Sunday we will consider the pinnacle of God's creation – His creation of Adam and Eve. The Bible provides indispensable and relevant truth into the wellbeing of people today who live in a world where identity and self-worth are under attack.

⁸ <https://biologos.org/common-questions/were-adam-and-eve-historical-figures/>

⁹ <https://biologos.org/common-questions/were-adam-and-eve-historical-figures/>