

Theology for Life
Faith Presbyterian Church
Lesson 12: Creation

Last time: *Suffering often tempts Christians to misunderstand God or his actions. Understanding God's providence assures us that there is no meaningless suffering. God's purposes for suffering in the OT and NT can be different and understanding the covenant context of the passage will help interpret God's purpose for the suffering.*

Creation

WCF IV.1: *It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all were very good.*

What are some of the issues that (at least perceived) tension of "Faith vs. Science"?

How does the follow quote encourage us to approach science?

The book of revelation and the book of nature are both from God and will be found when both are adequately interpreted to coincide perfectly.... The one (revelation in the bible) was designed and is admirably adapted to lay the foundation of an intelligent faith in Jehovah as the absolute Creator and the immediate former and providential ruler of all things. But it was not designed either to prevent or to take the place of scientific interpretation of all existing phenomena and of all traces of the past history of the world which God allows men to discover. Apparent discrepancies in established truths can have their ground only in perfect knowledge. God requires us both to believe and to learn. He imposes upon us at present the necessity of humility and patience.

A.A. Hodge

Fundamentalist-Modernist Debate

Rise of theological liberalism (abandonment of the Bible's infallibility), the denial of miracles, and the advancement of Darwinian Evolution led to the Fundamentalist-Modernist Debates within the Presbyterian Church in the 1920s-30s.

This controversy framed the way Christians interpreted scripture. These passages became fodder for this culture war rather than sources of God's revelation of redemption to his people.

The Center of Debate: Genesis 1

Genesis 1:1-2

[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.

v. 1-2 provide **overarching theme** of the chapter: From Chaos to Kingdom Order

What if we let this theme guide our interpretation of the rest of the chapter? In other words, what if we set aside the modernist controversy and present-day culture war when interpreting Genesis?

Clues that the intent of Genesis was teach theology not to give a chronological account of the Creation Event

Clue #1: Dual use of "day" (Heb "yom") within even one verse of this passage

(5) And God called the light "day" and called the darkness "night" and so the evening and morning were the first day.

Clue #2-- We have "light" on the 1st day, but the source of light consisting of the Sun and moon not till the fourth day frame. Yes, could be supernatural "light" - but why no reference to this miraculous work-around?

Clue # 3-- The Same expression closes each "day" indicating a poetic structure that is maintained through this passage.

"and it was so"

"and there was evening and morning on the x day... "

Clue # 4 Peculiar things are commanded of otherwise inanimate and even irrational things... So for instance-- "ruling" language attributed to the inanimate creation of

vs.14-19: Sun and Moon, *"The greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night"* How does the Sun rule?

Clue # 5-- When we get to the creation of humanity-- we discover a repetition of both to "govern" (even over all other creatures who had been ordered to "rule") and orders to "be fruitful and multiply" even within the realms that other creatures were to possess. This is our clue that something "Hierarchical" is going on here... humans take a superior position.

And God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and govern over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on earth.

Clue # 6: the uniqueness of the seventh day

A. Blessed So God blessed the seventh day

B. Sanctified and hallowed it

C. No "evening and morning" A day different from the other days, in that it has no end. It is as everlasting as the One who dwells there.

D. No realm created; no ruler created. A day unlike the other six.

Thematic Framework Interpretation

Genesis 1:1-13, First three "day-frames" describes the origin of three vast spheres/kingdoms over which rule is to be exercised. -- three spheres to be governed

Day-Frame 1: vs.1-5: Day and night

Day-Frame 2: vs. 6-8: Water below and sky above

Day-Frame 3: vs. 9-13: Dry Land and vegetation

Genesis 1:14-31, Day frames 4-6 describes the rulers (governors/kings) placed over each of the created spheres of days 1-3 and in the same exact order

Day-Frame 4: vs.14-19: As over the day and the night-- Sun and Moon, *"The greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night"*

Day-Frame 5: vs.20-23: As over the water below and sky above-- Fish and Birds

given to possess their spheres, *"be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters... and earth.*

Day-Frame 6: vs.24-31: as over the dry land-- Land animals and most especially humanity as "clothed" with the royal investiture of the creator himself! (Gen.1:26-29) Humanity, as such, is established as the highest of all created kings...and yet-- not so as to usurp the Creator king-- this as clearly established by the Sabbath day frame...

Genesis 2:1-3, Seventh day frame describes the supreme rule of Him who is Lord of the Sabbath.

Days of Creation

Formless

Day Realm Created

1 Light with Darkness
2 Sea and sky
3 Fertile earth

Void

Day Ruler Created

4 Sun/Moon for the day and night
5 Fish/Birds for the water and air
6 Land Animals/Humans for the fertile earth

Sabbath Consummation/Celebration

The Sabbath is marked as a celebration of the finishing of God's Creation palace...

Through the creation, there is a succession of judgment expressing the builder's pleasure in the work of each day-- (Six "it was good's")--in the sabbath this "celebration" reaches its climatic level as the the final verdict of delighted satisfaction, for God say everything that he had made and behold it was VERY good." (1:31)

Did God create in the span of Six 24-hour days?

- If it is true that the intent of word "day" in Genesis 1 is theological rather than chronological then we can legitimately conclude that Genesis 1 is not helpful in answering the question about the timing of creation.
- God certainly could have created within six 24hr days, just as he could have created in the span of one day or one hour or over the course of billions of years.
- Faithful Christians have also asserted that these days are 24hr days. They base this on the most common use of the word "day."
- Because of the number of interpretative approaches to Genesis 1, we should be cautious in using it as a test of orthodoxy or an indication of liberalism.

What about the age of the earth? Does Scripture demand a young earth?

Bishop James Ussher (1600s) proposed the date 4004 B.C. [taking Abraham's birth date and working backward through ages]

- Genealogies in other parts of scripture omit names (Matt. 1:8; Ex. 6:20)
- It is possible that names in genealogies refer to dynasties rather than individuals
- Total ages are not given to some patriarchs.

Non-Negotiables

A. God Created All Things:

- Law- Genesis 1; Psalms- 90:2;
- Prophets- Isaiah 40:26ff, Jeremiah 10:12ff, Amos 4:13ff, etc.;

- Gospels- Matthew 19:4, John 1:3;
- Epistles- Romans 1:25, 1 Cor 11:9, Col. 1:16;
- Revelation- 4:11, 10:6

B. Ex Nihilo (from nothing)

Psalm 33:6-9, By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap. He lays up the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. for He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast.

John 1:3-4, All things came into being by Him and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life and the life was the light of people.

Romans 4:17, even God, who give life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist...

Acts 17:24-25, The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is he served by human hands as though he needed anything since he himself give to all life and breath and all things.

Hebrews 11:3, By faith we understand that the worlds (ages) were prepared by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

C. The Historicity of Adam and Eve within the unique, covenantal role of federal headship. Romans 5:12-19

Paul argues that Adam was not just the first father of humanity but our federal head. His actions represented us all. Paul explains how this is good news because our salvation is based on the same principle: Christ represented all those in him.

Darwinian Evolution

What is at issue with Darwinian Evolution?

Does the scientific theory of evolution include, not merely the idea that the living world has been produced by a process in which natural selection is the chief mechanism, but the vastly more ambitious idea that this process has been unsupervised, unplanned, unintended by God or any other intelligent agent? That hardly seems to be an appropriate part of an empirical scientific theory. It looks instead like a metaphysical or theological add-on.

Alvin Plantinga

Plantinga exposes the truth that the creation-evolution debates are not really an example faith vs. science but of faith vs. faith.

Connecting the Dots: Where Theology meets Life

Summary: Our understanding of creation has been shaped by the Fundamentalist-Modernist debates. Scripture is clear on the non-negotiables: God created all things out of nothing, God is the Lord of creation, and Adam functioned as our representative.