

## Genesis 1:1-2:3 – The Sovereign God Creates

### I. Literary Introduction (1:1)

- A. This is a summary statement of all God's creative activity
  - 1. This is not a "pre-creation" which precedes the ordering activity of God in this chapter
  - 2. Rather, it is a literary device we will see throughout Genesis
    - a. Moses frequently introduces the major topic before relating the specifics
    - b. These introductions mostly fit into what are called *toledoth* statements ("these are the generations of...")
- B. God's existence is nowhere defended in the creation account...it is assumed
- C. God is the Sole Creator of the Universe
  - 1. Genesis differs from all other Near Eastern Creation stories
    - a. All other creation myths involve some sort of battle or conflict between opposing gods
    - b. The most common claim is that Genesis is taken from a Babylonian creation story called *Enuma Elish*
      - i. Although there is much more to the story, two gods *Tiamat* and *Marduk* battle and *Marduk* makes the earth and sky from *Tiamat's* body.
      - ii. Every near Eastern myth portrays the creation as some sort of conflict
  - 2. Genesis shows a single, sovereign, all powerful God who creates all things perfectly...and from nothing.
- D. God created everything visible and invisible *Ex Nihilo* (out of nothing)
  - 1. The word "created" (*bara*) is used 48 times in the OT and God is always the subject
  - 2. By itself, the word *bara* doesn't necessarily prove that God created everything from nothing, but the totality of Scripture affirms it.
    - a. Colossians 1:16 – "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible..."
    - b. Psalm 90:2 – "Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."
    - c. Hebrews 11:3 – "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible."

### II. Creation Day One (2-5)

- A. God Creates From Emptiness (2-3)
  - 1. The Earth Was Formless and Empty (Void) (2)
    - a. God creates from emptiness. There was no form and all was void.

- i. The primordial reality is depicted as simply chaos and abyss
  - ii. There is nothing with form. Nothing but emptiness
- b. Phenomenological Language
  - i. We will see this over and over in the creation narrative
  - ii. Phenomenological language is language that describes the way something looks rather than attempting to define the scientific reality.
    - Example: What time did the sun rise?
    - Scientifically, the sun does not rise – the earth revolves and orbits the sun.
    - Important: just because something is described phenomenologically doesn't mean it is untrue. We use language this way all the time.
    - "Darkness was over the face of the deep" is a true statement. It is simply described in language the original audience (and we) could understand.
    - This is also true with the Spirit hovered over the waters – We might ask, what are the waters if everything was formless and void. – God is describing the superintending of the formlessness in ways humans can understand and visualize.
- 2. God Creates Light By Fiat (3-4a)
  - a. God creates by speaking "Let there be..."
  - b. Light comes into existence
    - i. The sun and moon are not created until day four, how is there light on day one?
    - ii. Possible Answers
      - The Light emits from God Himself (See Rev. 21:23)
      - God simply created Light in and of itself with no source yet
      - Since this light is named "day" in v. 5, it is seen as the period of time. The day is the basic measurement of time.
    - iii. Remember, the biblical author is not concerned to provide a scientific explanation of light that will only be relevant to modern mankind.
      - This doesn't mean the text is not true or factual in its historical nature

- It simply means that if Moses were to have written a scientific explanation of light, the text would have been useless to the Israelites to whom it was written.
- As it stands, it is useful and profitable as God's Word to all people in all generations. (And it is also factually and historically true)

## B. God Creates Time (4b-5a)

1. God separates the light from the darkness
  - a. God distinguishes between times set for day and night
  - b. It's a hard concept for us to grasp, but before this there was no such thing as time. Time is created and thus, God Himself is outside of time.
2. God names them "day" and "night"
  - a. God demonstrates his authority over the light and the darkness by naming them, day and night.
  - b. The one true God is sovereign over both light and darkness. He is not a good entity battling an equally bad entity. He is sovereign over all.
3. The Debate over "Day" (*Yom*)
  - a. Do the days of creation in Genesis indicate 24 hour days or do the days speak of ages (millions of years) during which creation took place?
  - b. The semantic range of the word *Yom* (day) in the Hebrew Bible. It can mean...
    - i. The Daylight Hours
    - ii. A literal 24 hour day
    - iii. A special day (i.e. the day of his death)
    - iv. Plural use – unspecified number of days
    - v. With the definite article – Today
    - vi. With a preposition – "In that day..." (i.e. unspecified length of time; when)
  - c. What would the first Hebrew audience have understood day to mean?
    - i. Would any Israelite have thought it meant millions of years?
    - ii. Ask yourself the question: Do I think it is millions of years because of the text of Genesis or because modern evolutionary theory demands it?
  - d. If each "day" is millions of years, then you have millions of years of plant and animal death before the fall of Adam and Eve.
    - i. Jesus Himself believed in a literal Adam and Eve (see Matt. 19:4-6)

- ii. Modern evolutionary theory states that man was not created as man but evolved from lower life forms. Hence, there was no fall into sin and therefore no need for a savior.
    - e. Each “day” of creation concludes with the statement, “there was evening and there was morning” implying that we are talking about literal 24 hour days.
  - C. Day One is Completed (5b)
    - 1. Evening and Morning
- III. Creation Day Two (6-8)
  - A. God Creates the Firmament by Fiat (6)
    - 1. The Firmament (i.e expanse) will be called (*Shamayim*) which means heaven, or sky.
    - 2. More than likely, this is what we would call the atmosphere between space and the land.
  - B. God Separates the Waters With the Firmament (7)
    - 1. The firmament divides the waters from above and the waters which are below it.
    - 2. In v. 14-17, the heavenly bodies are placed in the firmament and in v. 20 the birds are said to fly in the firmament
      - a. Remember the use of phenomenological language. For an Israelite looking up, the stars and the birds seem to be in the expanse of the sky.
      - b. To explain space, the universe, and the scientific composition of the atmosphere would have rendered the text useless to any audience before modern times.
  - C. God Names the Firmament (8a)
    - 1. Once again God demonstrates sovereign control by naming
    - 2. So far we see that God is sovereign over all created things
  - D. Day Two is Completed (8b) – Morning and Evening
- IV. Creation Day Three (9-13)
  - A. God Separates Land and Sea (9-10)
    - 1. God commands land to appear (9)
    - 2. God names the land and seas (10)
    - 3. God pronounces the land and sea “good” (10b)
  - B. God Creates Vegetation (11-12)
    - 1. God creates the plants by fiat (11)
    - 2. Seed Bearing Vegetation is Established
      - a. Ancient Near Eastern culture was agrarian.
      - b. The people depended upon the weather, the rain cycles, and the crops for survival
      - c. Almost every ancient people worshiped gods they thought would bring them a good harvest
      - d. It is the one true God who sovereignly controls and establishes the agricultural patterns
    - 3. God says that the vegetation is good (12)

- a. The Near Eastern cultures struggled with crops and agriculture
- b. Crops could be wiped out by weather patterns, insects, or any number of things
- c. God demonstrates that the original creation was not intended to struggle against man – it was created “good” – the fall (Gen. 3) is the reason man toils in the land.

C. Day Three is completed (13)

#### V. Creation Day Four (14-19)

A. God Creates the Two “Lights” And Stars (16)

- 1. Genesis 1 does not call these the Sun and the Moon although the Hebrew language has words for both Sun and Moon
  - a. The surrounding cultures worshiped the Sun and Moon as gods
  - b. The names of these gods closely resembled the Hebrew words for Sun and Moon
  - c. Genesis 1 demonstrates that they are not divine and they are not even alive
- 2. Genesis 1 shows that God alone created these great lights for His purpose

B. God Decrees the Sun and Moon’s Function (14-15)

- 1. They are to separate day and night (14a)
- 2. They are for signs to discern time (14b)
  - a. Notice that they are simply signs to mark seasons, days, and years
  - b. God created Sun and Moon to delineate the passage of time
  - c. Time is still measured by observing the patterns of the heavenly bodies – days, years, etc.

3. They are to illuminate creation (15)

C. God Places the “Lights” in the Firmament (expanse) (17-18)

D. The Lights are said to be good

E. Day Four is Completed (19)

#### VI. Creation Day Five (20-23)

A. God Decrees the Creation of Fish and Birds (20)

B. The Fish and Birds Come into Being (21)

- 1. God creates the *Tanninim*
  - a. There is debate about the meaning of this word
    - i. Some translate it as sea monsters, whales, or even dragons
    - ii. In Psalm 74:13-14 – Leviathan is a *Tanninim*
  - b. Regardless of how we identify it, ancient pagan cultures worshiped these mysterious sea beasts
    - i. Some believed they were monstrous dragons in rebellion to the natural order, in need of conquering

- ii. Some believed they were gods of the darkness
    - c. Genesis 1 presents them as creations of the one true God and under His authority
  - 2. God creates fish according to their kind
  - 3. God creates birds according to their kind
    - a. See below regarding the use of the word “kind”
  - C. God commands them to Multiply and Fill the Earth (22)
    - 1. These creatures are not a plague or scourge upon the earth
    - 2. Their multiplying and filling the earth is by direct command of God.
  - D. Day Five is Completed (23)
- VII. Creation Day Six (24-31)
- A. God Creates the Animals (24-25)
    - 1. God Declares the animals to be created (24)
    - 2. The Animals come into being (25)
      - a. Each animal is made after it’s kind
      - b. This doesn’t necessarily mean “species” as in the way we use the term today. For example...
        - i. Canine kind – includes dogs, wolves, coyotes, foxes, etc.
        - ii. Feline kind – includes lions, tigers, bobcats, etc.
        - iii. Bovine kind – includes cows, oxen, buffalo, etc.
        - iv. Notice also that Noah took animals on the ark by their kind (not necessarily every species)
    - c. NOTE: The biblical worldview allows for microevolution (animals genetically adapting to their environment and passing those genes to subsequent generations) which is why we have dogs, wolves, coyotes – etc.
    - d. The biblical worldview does not allow for macroevolution (one “kind” of animal evolves into another “kind.”) Each is created according to its own kind.
  - B. God Creates Man (26-27)
    - 1. God decrees man to be created in His image (26a)
      - a. Let “us” create?
        - i. Some say it a plural of majesty
        - ii. Some say it pictures the Trinity
        - iii. Some say it refers to the Heavenly court
      - b. The Image of God
        - i. Man is God’s Vice-Regent Over Creation
          - In the Ancient Near East, an image carried the essence and authority of who it represented (which is why making idols was so common)
          - In Mesopotamia, kings would set images of themselves in the lands they conquered

to represent their authority over those lands

ii. Man Reflects God's Communicable Attributes

- Notice that humans are in God's image, both male and female
- Humans are created as relational beings just as the Trinity exists in relationship
- Humans have reasoning, morality, conscience, and communion with God – these are possible because of the image we bear

iii. All mankind bears God's Image

- By this we know that all mankind has intrinsic value
- The image of God is the reason murder of a human is wrong – (see Gen. 9:6)
  - In the ancient context of Genesis, women, slaves, and children had much less (if any) value in society
  - This creation account would have flown in the face of the world's society of the day, claiming that every living person is valuable.

2. God decrees man to have dominion over creation (26b)

- a. This is given as a blessing and a responsibility
- b. Man's management of the creation is not for the creation's benefit, nor for our own, but for the glory of God
  - i. This is where so many environmentalists err
  - ii. We are called to be good stewards of creation not for creation's sake – but for God's.
  - iii. Yet we are commanded to subdue and use creation for our needs and not to elevate creation above mankind either.

3. Mankind comes into being in God's image (27)

C. God Commands Man To Multiply and Subdue (28)

1. Man is commanded to fill the earth

- a. As God's image, man is called to fill the earth with the image of God
- b. This will become central to the theme of Genesis and the Bible in that after the fall, man is incapable of perfectly reflecting that image
- c. This is the reason we are told to go and make disciples of every nation – to fulfill the original mandate to fill the earth with the image of God.

2. Man is commanded to subdue the creation

D. God Gives Vegetation For Food (29-30)

1. Although plants are alive, they are given by God for food to the rest of creation

E. God Determines all Creation is Very Good (31a)

1. The original creation was perfect
2. There was no death, destruction, or devastation of any kind
3. No disease, no tragic weather, it was all perfect.

F. Day Six is Completed (31b)

VIII. Creation Day Seven (2:1-3)

A. God Rests From His Work (1-2)

1. God rests not because he is tired or needs rest
2. God rests to show the completion of his work and survey the fact that it is very good

B. God Blesses and Sanctifies the Seventh Day (3)

1. God blesses the seventh day as a day for mankind to rest from his labors – it is not given as yet another rule like the Pharisees made it out to be.
2. God sanctifies the seventh day and makes it holy – which means it is to be set apart for God.
  - a. As we work through Scripture we will see the purpose of the Sabbath change
  - b. In Genesis, the Sabbath commemorates the completion of creation
  - c. In Exodus, the focus of the Sabbath changes to commemorate the fleeing from Egypt
  - d. In Hebrews, we see that Jesus Christ is the true Sabbath who gives us the rest that all the other sabbath's point to.