

Genesis week 4
Genesis 1:14-2:3

The creation narrative answers two key questions:

Who is God? –
Who are we?

Jean Calvin, the French Reformer noted that those are the two key issues – The knowledge of God and knowledge of Self.

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/knowledge-of-god-and-self>

Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other.

For, in the first place, no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious, that the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves; nay, that our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone.

On the other hand, it is evident that man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look into himself. For (such is our innate pride) we always seem to ourselves just, and upright, and wise, and holy, until we are convinced, by clear evidence, of our injustice, vileness, folly, and impurity.

If we miss one, we'll miss both.

Who is God? – He is the self-existent sovereign creator of heaven and earth, i.e. “the universe”. He is the author of life and is in a place of authority.

Who are we?

We as men and women, male and female, are creatures who are image bearers – made in God's image (more on that in upcoming weeks).

14 Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; 15 and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so. 16 God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. 17 God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. 19 There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

20 Then God said, “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.” 21 God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” 23 There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

24 Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind”; and it was so. 25 God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply,

and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” 29 Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; 30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so. 31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. 2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

(last week we finished early, not so today)

LET’S REVIEW SOMETHING THAT I INTRODUCED LAST WEEK

The Creation narrative of Genesis 1:3-31 unfolds with two Triads of Days.

The first brings order out of three spheres or domains – Heavens, Water, Earth

God’s spoken word brings order out of chaos.

The literary structure shows the breakdown of Days 1-3 and then 4-6. The later group corresponds to the first group, i.e. 1-4, 2-5, 3/6. There are interconnections between the Triads of Days.

Gen 1::2 – formless and void

Days 1-3 deal with formlessness by shaping domains

Days 4-6 deal with the void or emptiness as God creates the inhabitants for those domains.

But those issues are NOT THE FOCUS. Moses is not trying to answer the questions of 21st century readers.

Dr. Pratt – Third Mill



Think about the first three days. **On day one, God separated the domain of day from the night.** Even before there was a sun, God caused light to shine in the darkness of the dark, chaotic world.

On day two, God separated the area of waters below and waters above by stretching a dome, or firmament, above the earth. This divine action caused what we now call the atmosphere of our planet, separating the water on earth from the moisture in the sky above.

On day three, God separated the territory of dry land from the seas. The oceans were gathered into regions of the earth, and the land appeared. Vegetation began to grow on the dry land. So it is that on the first three days, God brought form to a formless world.

According to Moses’ record, once God dealt with the formlessness of the earth by creating domains during the first three days, he then dealt with the emptiness of the earth in the last three days by placing inhabitants in these domains.

On day four God placed the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens to fill up the domains of light and darkness which he had formed on the first day. These heavenly bodies were put in the sky to rule over the day and night and to keep them separate.

On the fifth day, God placed birds in the air and sea creatures in the oceans. These inhabitants filled the domains of waters above and below which had been formed on the second day.

Finally, on the sixth day God placed animals and humanity on the dry land. These inhabitants filled up the domain of the dry land which God had caused to rise out of the sea on the third day.

Moses gathered the whole of creation into these domains and their inhabitants. In a word, God spent six days bringing a splendid order to the dark chaotic world. His work was so wonderful that six times God said:

“It is good” (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25).

And after he made humanity to live on the dry land, he said:

“It is very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Albert Bayliss - From Creation to the Cross

Days 1–3	Days 4–6
Day 1: Creation of light & limitation of darkness (1:4–5)	Day 4: Lights created: sun, moon, stars (1:14–19)
Day 2: Creation of sky (heavens) by separation of the waters (1:6–9)	Day 5: Birds and sea creatures created (1:20–23)
Day 3: Creation of dry land by limiting sea; creation of vegetation (1:10–13)	Day 6: Domesticated animals, insects, wild animals created; man created in image of God (1:24–31)
Day 7	
God rests from his creative work (2:1–3)	

We should note NOT just the parallel structure of the Days, but we must note that the narrative is going somewhere – The Creation of Man – male and female – in God’s image. There is a pause in v. 26-28 for a divine discussion, “Let us make man in our image.” Soon the creative work reaches its peak with the creation of a being distinct from all the other creatures, a creature in God’s image who is given the role of viceregent to have dominion over the lower creation.

HONORING God AS CREATOR was a vital foundation for the people delivered from bondage, even as it is for us today.

JOB 38-41 speaks of the wisdom and order of creation by the mighty hand of God. In the NT, Paul points out that a refusal to recognize the Creator and give Him thanks is a first critical step toward suppressing the truth in unrighteousness and exchanging the glory of God for the glory of some aspect of creation. (Rom 1:18-32)

The author is interested in ultimate issues, causes, and in the God-centered nature of the world and human life. In this narrative Moses shows the superiority of Yahweh over the ‘gods’ of Egypt. It is God Almighty, Yahweh who creates the sun. The Egyptian ‘sun God’ is a non-God. There is no special power in the moon and the stars. They are created by God. There is no ‘god’ or kingdom of the sea. Yahweh is overall.

Dr. Richard Pratt – Original Meaning and Six days of Ordering

Remember that I’ve mentioned several times that we need to keep in mind the purpose of Genesis and the original audience – the people of Israel who just came out of 400 years of slavery in Egypt. The narrative of Gen 1-2 had an original meaning for THEM before it reaches US. This perspective has been eye-opening for me as I’ve approached this series.

The significance of this narrative for Israel is seen more clearly when we see Deuteronomy 32 where Moses gives commentary on the Gen 1:2 language to connect it to God’s work of deliverance in the Exodus account: In this text, “him” is a collective word for Israel, sons of Jacob

In a desert land [the Lord] found him, in a barren and howling waste. He

shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. The Lord alone led him; no foreign god was with him (Deuteronomy 32:10-12).

These verses are important because they are the only other place where Moses used the terms “formless” and “hovering” in all of his writings.

“barren = formless and ‘hovers’ is the same in Gen 1:2 of the Spirit hovering over the deep.

For Israel the ‘barren land’ was Egypt – Deut 32:10

God hovered over Israel in the pillar of smoke and fire as he led them toward the Promised Land.

Deut 32 serves as Moses’ own commentary on Gen 1-2 and gives an insight into his purpose for the first chapter of Genesis. There is a parallel between the creation account and Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.

Both Creation and the deliverance from Egypt involved chaotic uninhabitable worlds. Just as the Spirit of God hovered over the chaotic world, God hovered over Israel to bring them out of Egypt.

Moses is presenting the Genesis narrative as a paradigm or pattern to explain what God was doing with Israel in their own day.

Pharaoh’s hardness of heart against God and the people of Israel brought the Ten Plagues as God cursed Egypt. These plagues reversed the blessings of the created order and Egypt regressed to a state of primordial chaos, i.e. darkness and lifeless.

Water turned to blood and was no longer teeming with life as described in Day 5

Humans lost dominion over living things as God ordained in 1:26 as frogs, gnats, insects, and locusts ruled of the land of Egypt (but NOT where the Hebrews lived, in some instances)

The separation of light and darkness was reversed as darkness covered Egypt

The land no longer brought forth vegetation (1:29 / 6th day) as hail, fire, and locusts destroyed the crops in Egypt.

While the Egyptians suffered it became clear that Egypt was the opposite of God’s ideally ordered world.

God’s act of deliverance from Egypt was a re-ordering or an act of re-creation. The Exodus was not a mistake. It was God’s work to bring order back into the world. Even the parting of the Red Sea recalled the ways of God on Day 2 of creation.

In Creation God started in the Garden with one couple and He ordered an ideal world. With the Exodus, God is starting with One People – the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He takes them out of a disordered world to deliver them to the Land of Promise. The narrative given by Moses was designed to show the Israelites that God’s deliverance corresponded to His work of Creation. God was going to reshape their world.

In the Promised Land they would once again have a creational order and be able to be fruitful and multiply.

Remember this pattern and how it concludes on Day 7

Days 1–3	Days 4–6
Day 1: Creation of light & limitation of darkness (1:4–5)	Day 4: Lights created: sun, moon, stars (1:14–19)
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The 7-day creation narrative ends with God resting – ‘shabbat’ or Sabbath. This term connects the creation story with Israel as well. God was moving Israel from a land of chaos to a place of rest. Sadly, there were those who doubted and grumbled and they missed out on the blessings of rest in the new land.

In the Law God gave Israel the principle of rest or Sabbath. Moses and the Israelites used the term *shabbat* primarily to refer to Sabbath observances which they would enjoy according to the law of Moses. In fact, in the listing of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, Moses explained that Israel was to observe the Sabbath because of what God had done in Genesis 2.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy... For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day (Exodus 20:8-11).

When Israel heard in Genesis that God rested on the seventh day, they could not help but relate the Genesis account to their own Sabbath observances and to the Ten Commandments. They were not consistent with keeping the Sabbath in the Wilderness but a greater measure of rest would be experienced in the Promised Land.

We know that the full and final Rest is ours in Christ. Jesus is the true deliverer who brings us to the final Promised Land, if we know Him by faith.

Deliverance and Rest are SOMEONE WE MEET before they are something we experience.

RESOURCES:

Third Mill ministry – Primeval History

Albert Baylis – From Creation to the Cross

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What issues did the creation account address for the Israelites coming out of Egypt?

What is the importance of 'thankfulness'?

What happens when we fail to recognize God and give Him thanks?

If creation is a paradigm for God's converting and saving work, how does Jesus advance God's program for this Salvation?

How does observing the Sabbath connect us to the creation narrative and why is it important?