

(b) In what way does the creation of man differ from that of the animals?

12. What have you learned about God from this first chapter of Genesis?

13. (a) List the fixed creations of God which man cannot change.

(b) Does man have any part in preserving this part of God's creation? Explain.

FIFTH DAY: The Sabbath Day (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8; Deuteronomy 5:12-14)

14. What proof from Scripture references above could you give in answer to critics who say that the original Sabbath was done away with when Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden?

15. What word do you find in Exodus 20:8 that would indicate that the instituted day of rest or the Sabbath did not originate with the law given by Moses but refers to the day of rest originally instituted by God?

16. According to Isaiah 58:13,14 what instruction is given as to how we should regard the day of rest or the Sabbath day?

17. How would we benefit today both spiritually and physically if we kept one day a week for rest and worship?

Notes

THE HISTORY OF CREATION (GENESIS 1:1-2:3)

The Creation of the Universe (Genesis 1:1)

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This great introductory sentence of the Bible assumes the existence of God. It assumes His eternity, for He was before all things. This creating is the omnipotent act of giving existence to things which before had no existence. This sentence denies **atheism**, for it assumes the being of God. It assumes the existence of God apart from all things and before all things. It denies **polytheism** in all its various forms including the doctrine of two eternal principles, the one good and the other evil, for it acknowledges the one eternal God. It denies **materialism**, for it asserts the creation of matter. It denies **pantheism**, for it assumes the existence of God before all things and apart from all things. It denies **fatalism**, for it involves the freedom of the Eternal Being.

In search of the origin of the human race and of the world we inhabit, we wander until we meet this declaration, *“In the beginning God.”* We can explore the field of philosophy as well as the areas of geology and with weary minds come to the same, *“In the beginning God.”*

At the beginning of Scripture there is no argument as to the existence of God, any more than a human author begins his book by proving he actually lives. There is a God—a living God, a personal God, a present God. The writer to the Hebrews affirms that this doctrine, God the Creator, is accepted by faith upon the credit of God’s own testimony: *“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which are visible”* (Hebrews 11:3).

Reason as well as faith demands that we devoutly confess that God is all in all, in Him by whom they were formed, all things consist, and in Him all live and move and have their being. God is the author and giver of life.

The State of Creation (Genesis 1:2a)

The creation in Genesis 1:2 is described as formless, empty, and dark. Two views are generally taught from the context of the first two verses of the Bible. The first theory is referred to as the reconstruction or gap theory; the second theory is referred to as the progressive creation viewpoint.

1. Reconstruction or Gap Theory: Those who hold to this theory suggest the condition in Genesis 1:2 is the result of a cataclysmic judgment involving the fall of the angels and that there was a **primeval** creation, complete in itself, which by some catastrophe had become desolate and dark. Therefore, the six creative days in the following verses of Chapter 1 of Genesis would be restitution or new creation of the earth which had become desolate. The Genesis narrative does not decide this point, since it does not state why the earth was *“without form, and void”* or by what process it had become such.

2. Progressive Theory: This theory regards the first two verses of Genesis as that of the original creation in its crude and chaotic state as from nothing, while the remaining part of the chapter is an elaboration and distribution of the matter thus created. This creation of things from nothing speaks of an infinite power and divine wisdom. In Genesis 1:1,2, an introductory statement of fact, we have three propositions:

1. Originally God created the heavens and the earth.
2. At a certain time formlessness and darkness prevailed.
3. The Spirit of God or Divine Spirit brought about this chaotic state.

In this manner the way is prepared for the six days’ work. The length of time that may have elapsed between the events recorded in the first verse of Genesis 1 and the condition of our globe when God began to prepare it for the abode of man is absolutely indefinite. How long it was we do not

know and ample space is given to all the requisitions of geology. The first day's work of creation does not begin until the third verse of Genesis 1.

With these two theories in mind, let us remember that there are scholars of equal standing who accept the authority of the Bible, but who differ in their opinions about creation, and we need to be cautious and humble before God in forming our own conclusions. God's word to Job applies also to us and to all, however brilliant in their research: "*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?*" (Job 38:4). Yet it is also true that "*the secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law*" (Deuteronomy 29:29).

The Moving of the Spirit of God (Genesis 1:2b)

Science cannot tell how the change from the chaotic, the desolate, and the empty was accomplished. The Scriptures tell us it was by the action of the Spirit of God. We are taught throughout the Old Testament that the Spirit of God is the quickening principle of the world and that all life is an outgoing from God. The word "*hovering*" denotes motion, from which light, heat, and electricity come. The word conveys the idea of brooding over, cherishing, the act of incubation, and the particular development of powers inherent in matter: "*As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings...*" (Deuteronomy 32:11). The creative movement was made by the will of God. The action was not in but upon the face of the waters.

The drama of creation opens with chaos; then the Holy Spirit brooded over the waters, and chaos became cosmos, order. The Spirit garnished the heavens. All the beauty of the world, physical as well as spiritual, is from the Holy Spirit. He gives wisdom, inspires prophets, works regeneration and sanctification, and kindles love to God. This is not speculation. This is what God reveals in His Word.

Application

Let us think of the story of creation as a likeness to God's creative work in us spiritually. God created us in His image and for His glory. Outside of God our life is without purpose—it is empty, it is lonely, and it is waste. God's Holy Spirit begins the work in our hearts; the LIGHT comes in our giving ourselves to Christ, and we are no longer in darkness. In Christ we are new creatures; our talents and time become more meaningful as God begins to do a work in and through our lives. Then we begin to produce foliage and fruit for His glory.

Seven Days

The Bible is able to hold its own in any kind of controversy with human wisdom in any form, and in no part of the Bible is this more true than the first chapter of Genesis. One of our first considerations will be to discuss one of the most perplexing questions raised about this chapter—the time element. One question we are sure to meet in such a study is: "Are the days of Genesis literal days of 24 hours each, or are they periods of time?"

The word "*day*" is one of the mysteries of Scripture. The word used in the Hebrew was *yom*. This appears in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament 1,480 times and is translated into our English Bible by 54 different meanings but all associated in character. Let us list a few of the possible meanings as having to do with the span of time:

- 1,181 times as "*day*"
- 67 times as "*time*"
- 30 times as "*today*"
- 18 times as "*forever*"
- 10 times as "*continually*"
- 6 times as "*age*"
- 4 times as "*perpetually*"

We cannot take any one meaning and be dogmatic as to exactly how it can be translated. We must be governed by the context of Scripture. The word "*day*," even in our English language, has many meanings:

1. It may be a solar day (twenty-four hours).
2. It may be a figure of speech covering considerable time.
3. It may be a collective word covering a definite number of years.

Let us see what we can determine concerning the time element in the first chapter of Genesis. Let us examine some of the usages in Scripture.

Solar Day (As We Understand It)

Ninety million miles from this planet is the sun. It takes approximately twenty-four hours for the planet to make one complete revolution.

In Scripture this twenty-four hour period of time is frequently expressed in the word *yom* or “day.” For example:

In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. (Genesis 7:11,12)

Because the day of the month is being used, there can be no question that this means also a solar day. There are hundreds of verses in the Old Testament used in this solar day sense.

Period of Time

Looking further, we see that the word “day” in Scripture often denotes a period of time. Such is the case when referring to the day of Jehovah as found in Isaiah 2:11: “*And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.*” We discover that the word *yom* is sometimes used as a figure of speech or in a figurative sense a time period being intended.

In other instances the word *yom* means time itself: “*And in the process of time it came to pass...*” (Genesis 4:3). “*Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time...*” (Genesis 26:8). Also read Numbers 20:15.

Yom (day) is also used to denote a comprehensive or inclusive period. In the first chapter of Genesis the story of creation is given in seven *yoms* or days or time periods. Genesis 2:4 presents another meaning of the word day: “*This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.*”

While we may conclude that the days of Genesis do not demand a solar day meaning, we must not lose sight of the fact that these days of creation may very well have been solar days. There are many arguments, and sound ones, which incline many to believe that this is the meaning of the text.

Reasons for Believing in Solar Days

The first day was divided into periods of darkness and light exactly as a day is. Two lengths of time and two periods were collectively called a day: “*And the evening and the morning were the first day*” (Genesis 1:5). This method of recording time was used in the day of Moses and the time of Christ.

On the third day of creation, the world of botany was born. This day is divided as are the other five, evening and morning making one day. The appearance of man was not until the sixth day of this week of God’s work of creation.

In Exodus 20:8-10, we have the account of establishing the seventh day as a day of rest: “*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God.*”

Let us remember that we are dealing in this record with the limitless power of an omnipotent God. He spoke and the thing commanded was accomplished. Do you believe there could have been an instant response to the command, “*Let there be light*”?

There is no reason to demand an extension of time period in the days of creation in Genesis except it be to conform with demands of the theory of

evolution. This theory needs unlimited ages for the unfolding and the gradual development of the creation and calls for millions of years for each small change in the vast chain of evolving creatures. Let us keep in mind the unlimited power and ability of our God, whose only limitation is His own sovereign will and desire.

“Then (And) God said....” This gives the key words to the narrative, ten times repeated. To say is both to think and to will. In this speaking of God there is both the legislative power of His intelligence and the executive power of His will. Everything came into being at God’s Word. *“For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast”* (Psalm 33:9).

We must never limit God. Again, we need to be humble and cautious before God in forming our own conclusions. See 2 Peter 3:8. Whatever our beliefs or conclusion as to how God created or the time frame for the creation, it is an issue which must not be allowed to cause strife within the Christian community. Satan would like nothing better. The only irrefutable conclusion which must be drawn from the story of creation is that God is infinite, without beginning or end, and by Him were all things made—by His power and authority and for His purpose.

Days of Creation

The work of the six creative days can be divided into two categories:

1. Work of Divisions
 first day - light
 second day - air and sea
 third day - land and plants
2. Work of Quickening and Adorning
 fourth day - sun, moon, and stars
 fifth day - birds and fish
 sixth day - animals and man

First Day: Light (Genesis 1:3-5)

“God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light” (verse 3). The light dispelled the darkness which enshrouded the deep. Without light the world could not exist.

In the New Testament, in the gospel of John, are these words: *“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it”* (John 1:4,5). Jesus said in John 8:12, *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”* If we belong to Christ, we are the light container and are of value to God and our fellowmen. (See 2 Corinthians 4:6.)

Second Day: Air and Sea (Genesis 1:6-8)

The term *“firmament”* in verses 6-8 may be understood as expanse. God spoke and *“made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament”* (verse 7).

Third Day: Land and Plants (Genesis 1:9-13)

The water was confined and dry land appeared; then God infused it with plant life. The plants now created are divided into three classes: grass, herb, and tree. In the first, the seed is not noticed as obvious to the eye; in the second, the seed is the striking characteristic; in the third, the fruit, *“whose seed is in itself,”* has the seed enclosed. In the first the green leaf or blade is prominent, in the second the stalk, in the third the woody texture. In the first, the seed is not conspicuous; in the second, it is; in the third it is enclosed in a fruit which is conspicuous. It appears from the text that the full plants, and not the seeds, germs, or roots, were created.

Fourth Day: Sun, Moon, and Stars (Genesis 1:14-19)

We note from our text that stress is laid on these heavenly bodies ruling as well as lighting the day and night. God said, *“Let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years”* (verse 14). They were designed, as they have been used ever since, to mark out the periods of human life and to inculcate, that is to impress through repetition, the great lesson that *“to everything there is a season, a time to every purpose under heaven”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Fifth Day: Birds and Fish (Genesis 1:20-23)

The Hebrew word *bara* or “*created*” is used for the second time—Genesis 1:1 and now in Genesis 1:21. On the first day a new admission of light into a darkened region is expressed by the word “*be*.” On the second day a new disposition of the air and the water is described by the verbs “*be*” and “*made*.” These indicate a modification of that which already existed. On the third day no verb is applied directly to the act of divine power. The natural changes following are implicit. In the fourth day the words “*be*,” “*give*,” and “*made*” occur, where the event is the manifestation of the heavenly bodies and their adaptation to the use of man. In these cases it is evident that the word “*created*” or *bara* would have been improperly or only indirectly applicable to the action of the Eternal Being. Here it is used rightly, as the animal world is something new and a distinct being is summoned into existence.

Sixth Day: Animals and Man (Genesis 1:24-31)

God made the beasts of the earth and all living creatures “*according to its kind*.” In Genesis 1:26,27 God crowned all of His creation with man, for whom He had fully prepared the creation for his abode. Only where the true idea of God is known is the true idea of man and history understood.

Man’s creation differs from that of the animals in that he is made in the image and likeness of God. This points to the dignity of man. After God’s likeness, man is an intelligent being, endowed with a will and a moral nature, and is to exercise dominion over the rest of creation. The subsequent entrance of sin blurred this likeness and rendered him impotent

to fully carry out the purpose God intended for him. It is only through Jesus Christ, the second Adam, that God’s purposes are realized. Read Hebrews 2:5-9 with Psalm 8.

After reading six times that God saw what He had created “*was good*,” we read: “*Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good*” (verse 31). This leaves us with no doubt as to the perfection of His creation as it came into being by His Word.

Seventh Day: The Sabbath (Genesis 2:1-3)

The Sabbath marks the completion of God’s creative work. The six days of creation are followed by a day of rest. The word “*sanctified*” means set apart for God’s special use. When God blessed the seventh day and set it apart, He intended that man’s week should also be divided into six days of work and one of rest. Read Exodus 20:8-11, Leviticus 23:3, and Mark 2:27,28.

The seventh day is distinguished from all the preceding days by being itself the subject of the narrative. In the absence of any work on this day, God is occupied with the day itself and does four things in reference to this day: (1) He ended His work. (2) He rested. This indicated that His undertaking was accomplished. (3) He blessed the seventh day. To bless a day was to set it apart to be a blessing. (4) He sanctified it or set it apart to a holy rest.

This sacred day is God’s day which man should devote to Him in some special or uncommon way, turning aside from the common occupations of life. The Sabbath was God’s first ordinance to man.

VOCABULARY

1. **atheism:** the belief that there is no God; denial of the existence of a supreme being
2. **fatalism:** the belief that events are determined by powers beyond man's control
3. **materialism:** philosophical theory which regards matter and its motions as constituting the universe and all phenomena, including those of mind, as due to material agencies; devotion to material rather than spiritual objects, needs, and considerations
4. **pantheism:** the doctrine that God is the transcendent reality of which the material universe and man are only manifestations. It involves a denial of God's personality and expresses a tendency to identify God and nature.
5. **polytheism:** belief in many gods
6. **primeval:** belonging to the first ages

Notes