

GOD'S WORK OF CREATION

I. God's Work on Day One

And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. ⁴And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. (Gen. 1:3-5)

The appearance of light takes center stage on the first creation day, “*Let there be light.*” The Hebrew word *הָיָה* means “to happen, to come to pass, to appear.” The verbs *בָּרָא*, and *עָשָׂה*, meaning “to create” and “to make,” are not used, and this word choice makes sense. God created physical light, that is, electro-magnetic radiation, “*in the beginning,*” when He brought the cosmos into existence. The matter and energy of the cosmos included light.

Remembering Earth’s initial conditions and that the frame of reference for this passage is Earth’s surface, we can comprehend what happened on Day One: light penetrated Earth’s dark shroud for the first time. God cleared away some of the debris that had previously kept light from coming through to the surface of Planet Earth. Earth’s atmosphere changed from opaque to translucent (i.e.; an atmosphere that allowed some amount of light to pass through it.)¹

II. God's Work on Day Two

And God said, Let there be an expanse between the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. ⁷So God made the expanse, and divided the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. ⁸And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. (Gen. 1:6-8)

One requirement for land life is a stable water cycle, and an atmospheric system in which liquid water, snow, and ice freely evaporate from the Earth’s surface while the water vapor just as freely condenses to fall back on the surface.²

On Day Two God made the expanse, and divided the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. God’s “separation” of the water describes the formation of the troposphere, the atmospheric layer just above the ocean where clouds form and humidity resides, as distinct from the stratosphere, mesosphere, and ionosphere lying above. Psalm 148 (see vs. 4 printed

¹ H. Ross, *The Genesis Question*, pp. 28-30.

² H. Ross, *Genesis One: A Scientific Perspective*; p. 35.

below), a psalm reflecting on Genesis 1, distinguishes the “*highest heavens*” from the “*waters above the skies*.”³

Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the skies. (Psl. 148:4)

III. God’s Work on Day Three

And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. ¹⁰And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathered waters he called Seas; and God saw that it was good. ¹¹And God said, Let the earth produce vegetation, seed-bearing plants, and trees on the earth that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds; and it was so. ¹²So the earth produced vegetation, plants bearing seed according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds; and God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, a third day. (Gen. 1:9-13)

With light coming through the still permanently overcast sky, with day distinguishable from night, and with a gentle water cycle established, the stage is set for the introduction of land life. All Earth needs is a place to put it, and that is what God arranged on Day Three.

“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear” (Gen. 1:9). The Bible here indicates that somehow the crust of the Earth was distorted to create a great indentation, or basin, in which liquid water collected while the opposing “bulge” in the crust became dry land.⁴ The Genesis wording suggests that continental land began as a conglomerate, one mass in one locale, with the ocean surrounding it.

The proportion of Earth’s surface area covered by land compared to oceans plays a crucial role in the development of life. In fact, this ratio determines the amount of biodiversity and bio-complexity possible on a planet. The current rate of 29 percent land surface to 71 percent water surface has been theoretically and observationally demonstrated to provide the maximum possible diversity and complexity of life. Earth’s ratio of continents to oceans and the placement of the continents allow for the greatest possible biomass of advanced species of life.⁵

“And God said, Let the earth produce vegetation, seed-bearing plants, and trees on the earth that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds; and it was so” (Gen. 1:11). The first Hebrew term (עֵשֶׂב) refers to vegetation in general. What follows are two specific types of vegetation, namely, “*the seed-bearing plants*” and

³ H. Ross, *The Genesis Question*; p. 34.

⁴ H. Ross, *Genesis One: A Scientific Perspective*; pp. 7-8.

⁵ H. Ross, *The Genesis Question*; pp. 36-37.

*"the fruit trees bearing fruit"*⁶ The text does not say that all land vegetation appeared at this time, but emphasizes, rather, that God chose this time for dry land to abound with vegetation.⁷

Genesis 1:12 in one sense might be said to provide the underlying foundations of the science of genetics in the phrase, *"bearing seed according to their kinds."* The plants that were created on the third day were capable of reproducing themselves after their likeness by means of the *"seed."* *"Seed"* is clearly the ability to reproduce a form of life "in its own likeness." Genetically, this means precisely what Henry Morris points out:

Implanted in each created organism was a "seed," programmed to enable the continuing replication of that type of organism. The modern understanding of the extreme complexities of the so-called DNA molecule and the genetic code contained in it has reinforced the Biblical teaching of the stability of kinds. Each type of organism has its own unique structure of DNA and can only specify the reproduction of that same kind. There is a tremendous amount of variational potential within each kind, facilitating the generation of distinct individuals and even of many varieties within the kind, but nevertheless precluding the evolution of new kinds ...⁸

The Darwinian faith in constant change within living organisms by means of genetic instability is one of the weakest planks in the entire evolutionary edifice.⁹ *Of Pandas and People* (by P. Davis, D. H. Kenyon, et. al) carefully surveys the empirical evidence against large scale genetic change. They note that "while Darwin was constructing his theory, an Austrian monk named Greg Mendel was conducting experiments [to account for changes or new traits within organisms]." Mendel discovered that traits could be lost in one generation only to reappear in a later generation. For example, when he crossed a pea plant bearing wrinkled seeds, all the offspring in the first generation had round seeds. Was the wrinkled trait lost? Not at all, it reappeared in the next generation of pea plants. Mendel concluded that heredity is governed by particles (later called genes) passed from parent to offspring. A trait might disappear temporarily, but the gene that codes for the trait remains present within the organism and is passed on to its offspring.

The contrast between Mendel's empirical work and Darwin's largely hypothetical work is great. The irony is that Darwin was developing a theory of constant change at the same time Mendel was demonstrating that living things are remarkably stable. Stability is just what evolution doesn't need if change is to be so far-ranging as to produce the whole complex web of life from a single-celled organism.¹⁰

⁶ D. Kelly, p. 187.

⁷ H. Ross, *The Genesis Question*; p. 37.

⁸ D. Kelly, pp. 187-188.

⁹ D. Kelly, p. 195.

¹⁰ D. Kelly, pp. 195-196.

IV. God's Work on Day Four

And God said, Let there appear lights in the expanse of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them serve as signs, to mark seasons, and days and years; ¹⁵and let them be for lights in the expanse of heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so. ¹⁶(And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.) ¹⁷And God appointed them in the expanse of heaven to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. (Gen. 1:14-19)

After light first pierced the dark shroud surrounding Earth, the sky would continue to resemble the heavy overcast of a stormy day. On Creation Day Four the sun, the moon, and the stars became distinctly visible from Earth's surface for the first time.¹¹

Most translations render the opening words of verse 14 as follows: *"And God said, Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky,"* or, *"Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven."* However, the Hebrew verb (אָרָא) usually translated "let there be", has a wide variety of meanings, including the sense, "let there appear." The most pertinent instance of this use of the verb is found in Genesis 9:16. Following the N.I.V. translation of Genesis 9:16, we read: *"Whenever the rainbow appears (אָרָא) in the clouds I (the LORD) will see it and remember the everlasting covenant."*

The focus of Day Four is clearly on the function of the heavenly bodies in their relationship to the earth, rather than on their initial creation. As G. Archer states, "The emphasis on the fourth day was not the original creation of the heavenly bodies as such, but rather, their becoming available for the purpose of regulating time and the cycles of the rotation and revolution of earth and moon."¹² It becomes evident that verse 16 is a parenthetical statement, pointing back to an earlier act of creation, when it is compared with verses 7, 9, 11, and 15. The concluding phrase found in each of those verses, *"and it was so,"* is omitted from verse 16. This omission indicates that verse 16 is not reporting a new creative act of God, but is rather informing us of a previous act of creation.

The Hebrew verb (נָתַן) that occurs in verse 17 and is rendered *"God set them in the expanse of the sky"* by the N.I.V., is another verb that has a wide range of meanings: "to give," "to provide;" "to set," "to place;" "to appoint." From the context of vs. 14-19, with its strong emphasis on purpose, we would suggest that the primary sense of נתן, as it occurs here in vs. 17, is "to appoint;" or, perhaps, a very suitable

¹¹ H. Ross, *The Genesis Question*; pp. 41-43.

¹² Archer, Gleason L. Jr.; *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*; Moody Press, Chicago, 1964 (Sixth Printing, 1970); pp. 177-178.

translation would be “to provide.” Having previously created the luminaries, God now on Day Four appoints them to fulfill their designated purposes.

The reason for the delay in reporting the creation of the heavenly bodies, not mentioning them until the fourth day, is apparently for apologetic purposes. The ancients revered and even worshiped the heavenly bodies. By withholding any mention of them until the fourth day, Scripture is regulating them to an unmistakably subordinate position as objects created by God and in subservience to His purposes.

God’s transformation of Earth’s atmosphere on Day 4 from translucent to potentially transparent provided creatures on Earth’s surface with essential time markers. Before the advent of modern technology, the heavenly bodies served as the only means for tracking and, in the case of humans, recording time. Humans are not the only creatures who need time-keeping capability. Virtually all the animals God introduced on Days 5 and 6 require heavenly markers to regulate their complex biological clocks. Life forms created before the fourth day do not.¹³

While the change in the atmosphere from translucent (light-diffusing) to transparent (light-transmitting) is miraculous in itself, the fact that it was accomplished without exposing life to deadly ultraviolet radiation is an even greater miracle. As the plants created on the third day were consuming carbon dioxide through photosynthesis, they were also expelling oxygen by the same process. After a period of time, enough oxygen floated up into the upper stratosphere to permit a thin and very delicate layer of ozone to form. It is this thin layer of ozone that absorbs the ultraviolet radiation from the Sun that otherwise would be catastrophic to life. The Earth’s ozone shield is the only one known to exist.¹⁴

V. God’s Work on Day Five

And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of heaven. ²¹And God created the great sea creatures, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. ²²And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. ²³And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day. (Gen. 1:20-23)

An entirely new type of being has now come into existence, creatures that breathe and are animated and have power of their own volition to go from place to place, creatures that are characterized by conscious life—נִפְשׁוֹת. To give existence to such creatures is the special prerogative of God and is a monumental, epoch-making

¹³ Hagopian, David G.; Editor, *The Genesis Debate*; Crux Press, Mission Viejo, CA, 2001; p. 273.

¹⁴ H. Ross, *Genesis: A Scientific Perspective*; pp. 10-11.

achievement that deserves to be described by the verb "*he created*" (בָּרָא), the term reserved for new and divinely-conceived creation.¹⁵

The Genesis account specifies that on the fifth day of creation God brought into being the sea creatures and the birds of the air. The sea creatures here mentioned range from the most minute water-dwelling creatures (יָבֵרִים) to "*the great sea creatures,*" or, "*sea monsters.*" Water-dwelling יָבֵרִים are the most primitive creatures that require the visibility of the heavenly bodies to regulate their biological clocks.¹⁶

Commentators have properly found an important theological significance in the statement of verse 21, "*God created the great sea monsters.*" The Hebrew commentator, U. Cassuto, discusses both Israelite and pagan traditions of sea monsters, who were often associated with evil and rebellion. He concludes:

Far be it from anyone to suppose that the sea monsters were mythological beings opposed to God or in revolt against Him; they were as natural as the rest of the creatures, and were formed in their proper time and in their proper place by the word of the Creator, in order that they might fulfill His will like the other created beings¹⁷

VI. God's Work on Day Six

And 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. ²⁵So God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good. (Gen. 1:24-25)

The sixth day begins with God's making of three specific kinds of land mammals: cattle (livestock), creatures that move (or crawl) along the ground, and beasts of the earth (wild animals).¹⁸

Conclusion

Having brought into existence the "raw materials," and having created planet earth (Gen. 1:1-2), God next proceeded to fashion the planet stage by stage so that it might support life, both vegetation and animals (Gen. 1:3-25). Finally, He will bring into being the apex of His creation, a creature made in His own image, one who has been created with the ability to know God, worship God and have fellowship with God,

¹⁵ H.C. Leupold, pp. 80-81.

¹⁶ H. Ross, *The Genesis Question*; p. 47.

¹⁷ D. Kelly, p. 209.

¹⁸ H. Ross, *The Genesis Question*; p. 53.

that creature is man. In the next lesson we will study man as the pinnacle of God's creation, and the creation's destiny, namely, a glorious consummation.