

Creation: God Formed and Filled the Heavens and Earth

Scripture: Genesis 1:2 - 2:3

Sermon Series: *Genesis: The Beginning*

Topic: Creation

I. Introduction

Review

Last week we began a new sermon series through Genesis. We introduced the book and considered the first verse. We came to several conclusions.

- The name Genesis means 'beginnings' or 'origin.' This book is a book of beginnings; the beginning of time, the beginning of all things—seen and unseen, the beginning of the universe, of humanity, of sin, of God's covenant relationship with the Jewish people, and of His plans and purposes for the world.
- This first book of Pentateuch was written by Moses some time after the Exodus, which took place around 1446 B.C. God specifically revealed this to Moses, who then wrote it down for us.
- Genesis is a book that moves from the macro to the micro; from global events to particular individuals. The first 11 chapters focus on four key events: creation, fall, flood, and nations, and chapters 12-50 focus on four key individuals: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.
- This book reveals that God created the world, in the Latin phrase, *ex nihilo*, "out of nothing." The universe is not eternal, but temporal. It has a beginning, and therefore it will also have an end. Time began when the creative work of God began. Time is linear, not circular.
- Genesis reveals that God is separate from and independent of all that He created. God is not dependent upon His creation for anything. God existed before the world.

Outline of Genesis

- I. Primeval history (1-11)
 - A. Creation
 - B. Fall
 - C. Flood
 - D. Nations
- II. Patriarchal history (12-50)
 - A. Abraham
 - B. Isaac
 - C. Jacob
 - D. Joseph

existed. God created all things. God is the reason that there is something and not nothing.

- God was not obligated to create. He did not create humanity to fulfill some lack in Himself. God did not create humanity because He was lonely and needed friends. Before the foundation of the world He enjoyed a glorious and loving communion with His own Holy Spirit and His only Holy Son.¹ Their relationship was perfectly glorious and full of love. The love that was enjoyed within the Godhead was so glorious that it had to be shared and so that love overflowed into the gracious act of creation and the glorious creation of humanity.

Preview

Today will look at the six days of creation, during which *God formed and filled the heavens and the earth*, and the seventh day on which God rested.

There is nearly endless controversy over almost every verse in this first chapter. These words raise countless questions. Why did God create? When did He create? How did He create?



What does it mean that humans are created in His image? What does the word 'day' mean? Are these six 24-hour days or are they six 'ages?' Does this take place rapidly in a seven-day week or slowly over a seven billion year process? Is this to be understood as an historical account of actual events or merely a figurative or poetic literary device used to explain origins? Is this intended to be understood as historical fact or mythological fiction?

I'm sure more questions than these will arise. Some we will answer while some we will not, but we pray that the conversation that arises will build faith and trust in the Lord God.

II. Creation: God Formed & Filled the Heavens and Earth

Last week we considered v.1 which tells us that God is the beginning of all things. He "*created the heavens and on earth*." As we keep reading, we are told how God brings order and content the heavens and the earth. He both *forms them and fills* them. The first three days of creation God *forms* the world and then on the last three days He *fills* the world.

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.

Genesis 1:2 (ESV)

¹ John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20.

The earth was without form and void. At this point the earth, having been created, is “formless and empty” (*tōhū wābōhū*).² The land is disordered and vacant. It lacks shape and anything to fill the space. The beginning of God’s work will supply the need for order and filling. Without God’s orderly work, the land is unfruitful and useless.

Darkness was over the face of the deep. The ‘deep’ here refers to deep waters.³ The land is covered with deep water. The dry land will not appear for two more days. The deep waters are covered with darkness. In these beginning moments, there is neither dry land nor light.

And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And yet, the Spirit of God is there in the darkness. He is “hovering.” The ‘hovering’ is a word that is used by Moses in his final address to Israel, in the closing song he wrote, to describe a mother eagle as she “flutters” protectively over her young and prepares the nest (Dt 32:11). This ‘hovering’ is a hint that something is about to happen. God is present and active and He is about to move.

This verse sets up the events that now unfold. That which was formless will be formed and that which was void will be filled. The Spirit of God is present throughout the following creative events. Just as the Spirit of God was present to help in the building of the tabernacle (Ex 31:3), so the Spirit of God is here helping in the building of the world. The Spirit of God is mentioned here, but He will not be mentioned again until the building of the tabernacle begins (Ex. 31).

A. Creation Formed by the Word of God

The first observation to make is that *creation is formed by the word of God*.

And God Said (v.3). This phrase is repeated 10 times⁴ throughout this first chapter. It is referred to as the “ten words of creation.”⁵ This phrase is found at the beginning of each day of God’s creative activity. It is found twice on day 3 and four times on day 6. Each time God speaks, He calls into being something that did not previously exist. These words manifest the incomprehensible power of God. He simply speaks and creation begins.

The complexity and power of the universe, this world, of human and animal life is effected by the simple speaking of God. Creation was not difficult for Him. We don’t fully understand creation to this day and yet for God, calling all things into existence was as effortless as speaking a command.

² John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelinein, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 24.

³ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 16.

⁴ Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29.

⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 17.

Who would not worship such a God!?

Let there be. This phrase is also found 10 times and is spoken directive of God's creative commands, "**Let there be**..."⁶ This is "a divine word of command that brings into existence what it expresses."⁷ It is an authoritative formal *fiat*, or divine decree.

The first of His commands is perhaps the most famous, "**Let there be light**" (v.3). The first thing God does as He creates is to turn on the lights. This is not out of necessity, as if He needs to see what He is doing, for nothing is hidden from His sight since "*darkness is not dark to Him, and night is as bright as day, for darkness is as light to Him*" (Ps 139:12). Light is good and reveals all that is hidden.

Ten Divine Decrees

1. "Let there be light..." (1:3)
2. "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters... called heaven" (1:6, 8).
3. "Let the waters... be gathered into one place..." (1:9).
4. "Let dry land appear" (1:9).
5. "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants..." (1:11)
6. "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate day from night" (1:14).
7. "Let them be for signs and seasons" (v.14) and "let them give light upon the earth" (v.15).
8. "Let waters swarm with living creature and let birds fly above..." (v.20) and "... let birds multiply on the earth" (v.22).
9. "Let the earth bring forth living creatures..." (v.24).
10. "Let us make man in our image and likeness..." (v.26).

And it was so. This phrase is used 6 times (1:7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30) and reveals that God's commands were obeyed and fulfilled to the uttermost. His words went out and His commands were accomplished.

Summary of God Forming

On **Day 1** God created light and separated it from darkness, which forms the daily rhythm of Day and Night.

On **Day 2** God separated the waters above from the waters below and formed an expanse called sky between the two.

Day	Forming (location)
1	Light and dark
2	Sea and sky
3	Dry ground

⁶ Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14 2xs, 15, 20, 24, 26.

⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 18.

On **Day 3** God separated the waters below the sky from the ground. He calls the waters Seas and then He formed the dry land which He calls earth.

Thus, we see that creation was first formed by the word of God on the first three days.

B. Creation Filled by the Word of God

The final three days are *filled* by word of God.

On **Day 4** (v.14-19), *God fills the heavens* with celestial bodies, here called “lights of the expanse.” What is being referred to here are the sun, moon, and stars. The “*greater light to rule the day*” is the sun and the “*lesser light to rule the night*” is the moon.

While on vacation this summer, my wife and I were in Chamonix, France at the base of Mt. Blanc. At 1am I was awoken with an awareness that a very bright light was shining outside. We were on the 7th floor so before opening my eyes, I was so perplexed as to what this could possibly be.

I opened my eyes and stunned at the brightness of the moon shining intensely into my eyes. I immediately thought of this verse. The “lesser light to rule the night” was still intensely bright. I had to find my sleep mask so I could return to sleep (after taking this photo!).



These lights in the heavens are to separate day from night and govern the seasons. They are to provide light on the earth, as well as, determine days, months, and years.

Stop for a moment and consider all that is entailed here. In one command God created all the planetary bodies. The sun is the nearest star in our galaxy and it is 93 million miles away. Light travels at 186,000 miles per second and even traveling that fast it still takes light 8 minutes for light from the sun to reach the earth.

There are at least 100 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy. And the Milky Way is one of about 100 billion galaxies. All of those stars and planets each were created by the word of God. A single command and the heavens were filled.



And these celestial bodies and their movement through the heavens is the means by which time and seasons on earth are regulated.

Thus, on Day 4 God filled the heavens with stars and planets.

On **Day 5** (vs. 20-23), *God fills the seas and the skies*. He fills the seas with swarms of fish and sea creatures. He fills the skies with swarms of birds and winged creatures. God blesses them both and commands them to fill the waters and the skies. Thus, Day 5 is a day of filling the seas with fish and the skies with birds.

On **Day 6** (vs.24-31), *God fills the earth* with living creatures including both animals and humans. He begins by creating livestock, the beasts of the earth, and creeping things. And then God created *man*, the Hebrew word is *adam* (אָדָם *ādām*), which means mankind, all humans, both male and female.

Humans are unique. Man is the pinnacle of God's creation. Only man, created male and female (v.27), is said to have been created "*in the image and likeness of God*" (v.26). What does it mean to be created in the image of God? There are at least three ways.

Man in the Image of God

Being created in the image of God means at least three things.

1. **To share God's reign.** Immediately after mentioning creating man in his image, God mentions dominion. God is the sovereign ruler over all the earth. He alone possess all rights over this world. As Creator of all, He has all rights, power, and authority over all. And yet, He chose to share His dominion over earth with humanity (v.26, 28). That dominion extends over both the earth itself and all the animals. Mankind is invited by God to rule on His behalf over all the earth. What an incredible invitation!
2. **To share God's relationship.** God is a communal God. He enjoys communion within His own nature. God said, "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*" (v.26). The use of the plural pronouns here hint at the trinitarian nature of God. We saw the first hint of this plurality back in v.1 when we learned that the word for God, *ʾēlōhîm* (אֱלֹהִים), is a plural noun. We've already seen the presence of the Holy Spirit, God is clearly visible throughout the creative process, and in a few minutes we will see where Jesus has been present. Just as God is a relational God, so He created humans to be relational people.
3. **To share God's rationality.** The mind of man shares many of the rational qualities of God. The ability to reason and think, know right from wrong, know how to use language and communicate, to build and create, and to delight in beauty, justice, and truth. Mankind stands alone among all creatures in ability and achievements in these areas.

Thus, these three days of filling have filled the heavens with celestial bodies, filled the seas and skies with fish and birds, and have filled the earth with animals and people.

Summary

The first 3 days were days of forming and the last 3 days were days of filling.

God formed light on day 1 and then filled the heavens with celestial bodies on day 4.

God formed the sea and sky on day 2 and then filled them both with fish and birds on day 5.

God formed dry ground on day 3 and then filled it with animals and humans on day 6.

Day	Forming (location)	Day	Filling (inhabitants)
1	Light and dark	4	Sun, moon, stars
2	Sea and sky	5	Fish and birds
3	Dry ground	6	Animals and mankind
7 Sabbath Rest			

And God saw that it was good. God fills His creation with *goodness*. After completing every stage of creation, God looks with pleasure upon what He has created and declares its goodness. Six times we are told that after creating something, “*God saw that it was good*” (Gn 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Then, after creating man—the apex of His Creation, we are told, “*God saw everything that He had created, and behold it was very good*” (1:31). All that God created was good. There was nothing bad in all that God created. “Everything was very good.”

Furthermore, God repeatedly gave His *blessing* upon His creation. First, He *blessed* the fish and the birds by saying to them, “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill*” the seas and the skies (v.22). Then, he gave the same blessing to mankind saying, “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...*” (v.28). Finally, after finishing His work of creation, on the seventh day he rested and He blessed the seventh day because on it God rested from his work (2:2-3). The sense is that God looked over all He had done and He delighted in His work and that delight overflowed with a blessing of rest and reflection upon the great goodness of all He had done.

Reflection

This is an amazing truth to be known. The universe exists because God created it. This world exists because God willed it to exist. Day and night exist because God created them. The sun and moon and stars exist because God created them. The mountains and deserts and seas and fish and birds and animals exist because God commanded them to be and they were.

Humanity exists because we were formed and fashioned by the hand of God. This world does not exist for no reason. It does not exist without purpose. You and I do not exist by chance. Complicated things do not happen accidentally. God created this world with purpose and

When He came to the fourth commandment reading keeping the sabbath, He said,

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
Exodus 20:8-11 (ESV)

These are the very words of God Himself. The six day work-week, followed by the seventh day being a day of rest, was to be obeyed weekly by the people of Israel because it mirrored the six days of God's work of Creation followed by His rest on the seventh day. The very rhythm of Jewish life was a weekly reminder of the fact that Yahweh was the God who created the world. This truth was built into God's covenant relationship with Israel.

The second specific instance comes at the conclusion of Moses' 40 days with God during which he received instructions on carrying out the sacrificial law and on how to construct the tabernacle. Just before giving Moses the 10 Commandments written on stone by the finger of God, He said to Moses,

¹³ "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD... ¹⁵ Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. ¹⁷ It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.'"
Exodus 31:13-17 (ESV)

The importance of the command to keep the sabbath is evident. God commands that commandment to be kept "above all" others. The rhythm of working six days and resting on the seventh is sign that Israel belongs to God and that sign points to the fact that in six days God created the heavens and the earth and then rested on the seventh.

Summary

There is no doubt that God has revealed to us that He created the world in 6 days which are defined as periods of time that begin with an evening and end with a morning. This is fact that He does not want to be forgotten because the very rhythm of our lives involves a 7-day week. *Every Sunday God intends for us to remember that He created this world.* He wants us to know this to give us hope, confidence, and faith in Him. If He created the world in six days, then He is in control of every day. He is sovereign over every day.

And He is great and generous Giver for He commands us to rest one day out of seven. *God is the Giver of rest.* True rest is found only in Him. This is a message we all need to hear, for nearly all of us are working ourselves to death. Work six days and rest on the seventh. Rest in Him who created all things.

If you ask me How it can be that God created the whole world in six days or how that fact fits with all that we have observed about this world. I can only answer what the author of Hebrew has answered.

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.
Hebrews 11:3 (ESV)

This is of course a reference to the account of Creation written in Genesis 1. I accept it by faith. I trust that God—who cannot lie¹²—has told us the truth in telling us how He spoke this world into existence and created every thing out of no thing that previously existed. He spoke and it came to be. I accept this by faith.

And when God spoke, He was speaking through His own Holy Son. Jesus is the one through whom God created this world.

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.
John 1:1-3 (ESV)

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.
Colossians 1:16 (ESV)

The Father spoke, the Son executed the command, and the Holy Spirit breathed life into every living thing. Jesus was there with God “in the beginning.” He was the one carrying out the commands of God the Father.

Jesus existed before He was born in Bethlehem. He was there with God and He is God. Jesus is the Word of God who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). Jesus is also the one who says to us, “*Come to me all who are weary and heavily burdened and I will give you rest for your souls*” (Mt 11:28-29). Jesus is the rest of God. Only in Jesus do we find true rest for our souls.

¹² Hebrews 6:18.

Conclusion

God is infinitely powerful. He simply speaks and nonexistent things come into existence. God speaks light into a dark world. He speaks order into disordered darkness. He created the heavens and the earth. He created everything and all that He created is good. He created celestial bodies, fish and bird bodies, animal bodies, and human bodies. His creation is very good. He created mankind to manifest his image and likeness throughout the world. God formed the world and He filled the world by the word of His mouth and by the authority of His command. He did this rapidly in one week. And every week He intends for us to remember Him and all that He has done.

As you go to work this week, remember the work of God, the Word of God, and rest of God.

Worship this wonderful, great, and mighty God we serve!

Discussion Questions

1. What do we learn about God's character and power from the fact that He created the heavens and the earth simply by speaking? How should this affect the way we worship and trust Him?
2. Genesis 1:2 describes the earth as "formless and empty," while the rest of the chapter describes God bringing order and fullness. What does this teach us about God's ability to bring order out of disorder and purpose out of emptiness?
3. The sermon emphasizes that God created the world intentionally and that we do not exist by chance. How should knowing that you were intentionally created by God affect the way you understand your identity and purpose?
4. What does it mean that mankind was created "in the image and likeness of God"? Discuss the three aspects presented in the sermon: sharing God's reign, relationship, and rationality.

5. If God has given humanity dominion over His creation, what responsibilities come with that authority? How should Christians think differently about their responsibility toward other people, animals, and the created world?
6. Six times God declares His creation “good,” and after creating humanity He declares everything “very good.” What does this tell us about God's attitude toward His creation? How should this shape our view of the physical world and our own bodies?
7. The sermon argues that the “days” of Genesis 1 are ordinary days consisting of “evening and morning,” and connects them with the Sabbath command in Exodus 20. What difference does it make to you personally if Genesis 1 is understood as describing six actual days of God's creative work?
8. God rested on the seventh day, not because He was exhausted, but because His work was complete, and He blessed the seventh day. What does God's pattern of six days of work and one day of rest teach us about our own relationship with work, productivity, and rest?
9. Hebrews 11:3 says, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God.” Are there areas of God's Word that you find difficult to understand or reconcile with what you observe? What does it mean to trust God when you do not have every answer?
10. The sermon concludes by connecting creation directly to Jesus Christ: “All things were made through him” (John 1:3), and Jesus is also the One who offers rest to the weary. What does the fact that Jesus is both Creator and the One who gives rest for our souls teach us about who He is and why we should trust Him?
11. If you had to identify one truth from this sermon that you most need to remember and apply this week, what would it be—and what difference should it make in your life?