



Pentateuch 1

In-depth Study on Genesis and Exodus

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I Am Who I Am

PENTATEUCH ALIVE!

**GENESIS, EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS AND DEUTERONOMY, AND
THE PRACTICAL LESSONS THEY TEACH TODAY**

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GENESIS



STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Chapters 1-11 deal primarily with the universe and man. Chapters 12-50 deal primarily with the patriarchs and Joseph.

The account of the creation and the Book of Revelation (interestingly, the beginning and the end of the Bible) have probably been the subject of more controversy than any other Bible Book. However, much of this controversy, or sheer unbelief in some cases, has a lot to do with the way the Western mind approaches the Scriptures. We are educated to demand facts, to provide tangible evidence of one's teaching, to prove our hypotheses, and to present a chronology or diary of events as accurately and as verifiable as possible.

The problem is that this is simply not the way the Bible was written! It has been suggested that the Bible is more "Eastern" in its approach, i.e., major lessons are presented on certain selected events over varying time frames. The Eastern mind, historically, has prioritized events over details, situations over chronological time horizons, the big picture over endless verifiable data, and the like. Hence, we are not going to get some detailed, ordered, fact-packed, chronologically-driven, and scientific expose on the creation, and just because those details are not there does not mean that the creation account has to be discounted.

It is the folly of fools to explain away God's creation of all that there is. To eradicate God so early in the Bible ultimately leads to an undermining of His work and purpose throughout, even to a denial of the virgin birth, the cross and salvation. Already, for instance, we have some internationally known Christian leaders who teach that there are many paths to salvation. Denying Creation is the slippery slope to oblivion!

The Hebrew word "Toledoth" means "generations," a common word used in the Book of Genesis. For instance, we frequently read, "these are the generations of ..." in Genesis, and seems to be Moses' structure for the Book. Hence, this structure will mark the way in which a study of this Bible Book is approached in this text. This structure will commence in Gn.2.4, concerning the generations of the heavens and the earth. In the meantime, some theories of creation, and a description of the six days of creation (1.1-2.3), will be discussed first.

I. PRE-PATRIARCHAL HISTORY (1.1 - 11.26)

A. Various Theories of Creation

There are various theories of how the heavens and the Earth came into being.

1. Atheistic Theories

We need not pay too much attention to Atheistic ("no-God") theories here given that the reader is likely to be already familiar with their agenda to discount God. Most Atheistic theories accommodate theories of evolution, in which man is said to have evolved from higher primates. All such theories (and they are only theories, though unfortunately sold as fact) depreciate and disparage God in His sovereign act of creation, and we can therefore summarily dismiss them.

2. Theories that blend the Biblical Account and Evolutionary ideas

There are also many “compromise” theories that attempt to blend the Biblical account with an evolutionary one, e.g., Theistic Evolution, which essentially says that God conferred His image on some higher primate. Another variant, called Deistic Evolution, claims that God began the evolutionary process and vacated the scene. Both theories attempt to satisfy both Church and certain “scientific” communities, though the attempt has justifiably earned criticism from the majority of believers. Even some atheists deplore the blend because they correctly realize that the primary tenets propounded in one viewpoint simply cannot accommodate the critical tenets propounded in the other.

These compromise theories tend to fall apart at the seams because Genesis Ch.1 Clearly states that each species produced “after its own kind” (e.g., v’s.21,24). Furthermore, according to Christian anthropology (or the doctrine of man and sin), it is inconceivable that death prior to the fall of man in the Garden could occur since death only reigned after that fall (Ro.5.14). As such, there could not have been any death of animals, birds, sea creatures, and the like, which evolutionists could not accept. Students of the Bible are reminded that their thinking, reasoning and application must always be consistent with Bible truth and doctrine. One truth cannot be allowed to contradict another, and this is generally where compromise views, on any topic, inevitably fail.

3. Creation theories that accommodate a long time frame

Other approaches attempt to maintain intact God’s act of creation, free of evolutionary infection, while also factoring in a longer time horizon than the 5000-6000 years or so said to be the age of the Earth. This view thereby aims to account for dinosaurs and geological epochs in their own peculiar way. Some of these age-related theories include:

a. The Pictorial Day Theory.

The theory says that a number of lengthy epochs can be accommodated in the creation account. Adherents argue that the six days mentioned in Genesis Ch.1 describes the “revelation” of the creation of the universe to Moses in six consecutive days. Hence, Moses is said to have merely received the revelation of what happened in creation over a six-day period, even though the actual creation itself was indefinitely longer. The idea sounds plausible at first, however, a reading of the Genesis account seems to best describe a creation over six literal days, e.g., in the continual refrain, “...and there was evening and there was morning.”

b. The Age Day Theory.

Here, the universe is said to have been created in six “days,” which is interpreted to mean geological ages. Hence, each “day” was actually a geological age. This could attribute millions of years to every day/epoch of creation. The theory would, therefore, hold to a very old universe. One wonders whether this theory is merely a “buy-out” so as to appease some geological and scientific theories. Again, it looks dubious in light of the refrain, “...and there was evening and there was a morning,” implying a literal day. Furthermore, there is still the insurmountable problem of death occurring in those geological ages before Adam even came into existence, and sinned (a problem inherent in all these related accommodation theories).

c. The Gap Theory.

Popular in some Christian circles, Gap Theory adherents say that God created the universe the first time in Gn.1.1, but between 1.1 and 1.2 the devil fell to Earth and reduced the world to chaos. They argue that the Earth “became” formless and void rather than “was” formless and void. The theory represents another attempt at maintaining God’s direct hand in creation while also allowing for a long time horizon. Yet, most Hebrew scholars seem to agree that “was” is a more correct rendering of the original language than “became,” and if this is so, millions of years cannot be squeezed between verses 1 and 2. Nowhere else in the Bible is such a “gap” suggested or even alluded to.

d. The Intermittent Day Theory

Supporters of this theory contend that the universe was created in six, 24-hour days, but they were not consecutive. From a burst of creative energy came the outworking of “day one” (which, it is claimed, may have taken millions of years). Then came a second burst of energy on “day two,” and another long outworking of it -- and so on for each of the six days. The theory is another attempt at grabbing millions of years from somewhere, though again, there does not appear to be any Biblical support for it. It may represent a blatant attempt by the desperate to clutch at straws or follow the wind. One needs to keep in mind that the element of faith is indispensable for the believer’s approach to the whole Bible, including God’s sovereign work in creation.

4. Theistic Creation

This holds that the universe was created in six, literal, 24-hour consecutive days. It holds to a very young universe, and totally rejects any evolutionary inroads into the creation account. It also best preserves the integrity of the Bible text noting that:

- “there was an evening and a morning;”
- each species produced “after its own kind;” and
- the death of animals or species could not have occurred prior to the fall of man (Ro.5.12-14). God’s world was perfect until Adam sinned.

Some opponents retort that the word “day” in the creation account does not necessarily indicate a precise period of time. They argue that it can mean 24 hour periods, but that it can also mean far longer, e.g., the “day of salvation” (Is.49.8, 2Cor.6.2) is a term well beyond a 24 hour period, and the “day of the Lord” (Zech.14.1, Acts 2.20) may indicate an extended period of time. Nevertheless, an orderly and unbiased interpretation of the Hebrew text clearly indicates a creation over six literal days. Some of the best orthodox Jewish scholarship suggests the same. It is the view advocated by this writer.

The Bible is not a document requiring “scientific” verification in order to secure its validity. It stands on its own merit. It is, after all, a “Canon,” i.e., a measuring rod or yardstick in which anything and everything else in this created world has to measure itself. The moment we think we need “scientific” evidences to prove the Bible, we run the risk of reducing the Bible to a mere human document! It would no longer be the infallible, inspired work of the

Holy Spirit that we know it to be: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Tim.3.16 KJV).

There is certainly a place for apologetics (justifying the faith to outsiders) and archaeology (discovering ancient artifacts, writings, etc) in Christian literature, but they were never intended to either justify or crucify the Word of God. Finding Noah’s ark may be exciting, and if we have not, does that somehow reduce the truth of the Bible? Do we then refuse to believe that there ever was an ark? Of course not. Westerners sometimes get frustrated with the lack of detail in the creation account (as well as some other Bible teachings), since the modern Western mind demands it, as explained earlier. Ultimately, we are justified by faith (Ro.3.28), and it is His Spirit that bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God (Ro.8.16).

What we truly want to glean from the creation account is God’s creation of all that there is, even if He had no intention of providing all the mind-numbing details. He is still the Lord of all. Further, a creator holds ownership over that which is created, like a patent holder has rights over his invention. To strip the Lord of creatorship is to strip the Lord of ownership. This then gives us the right to be a Lord unto ourselves. No wonder there are so many malicious attempts to strip the Bible of its creation realities! Ultimately, if we say that He did not create us, then we are not responsible to Him.

Can any of us explain in detail the scientific mechanics of speaking in tongues, getting a word of knowledge, prophesying, being born again, or miraculous healing? Do we throw out such truths because some scientists say they can’t happen? In fact, some “scientific” explanations clearly miss the point. For instance, one interesting event was the explosion of Mount St. Helens in S.W. Washington, U.S.A. in 1980, in which several layers of strata were laid down in a matter of days that would have otherwise been explained as taking millions of years. In another case, petrified rock classified to be thousands of years old was once identified by a farmer in S.W. Queensland, Australia, as fence posts put down by his father.

Science, on the whole, is a very worthwhile and profitable discipline, capable of blessing all mankind. We all applaud, for example, medical breakthroughs that ease the human condition following the fall of Adam. It is only when atheists get a hold of science that it becomes twisted, warped, shaped into an alternative “Bible,” genetically engineered into another philosophy of life, and it’s unproven theories “rammed down everyone’s throats.” Science is meant to supplement the Bible, to provide insights into some of the intricate details as to how God’s creation works, not contradict it.

Some brief attention has been given here to these theories of creation given the attention they have received over the years. It is now time to press on with the Genesis scriptures themselves.

B. The Six Days of Creation (1.1 - 2.3)

Some scholars see Gn.1.1 is an introductory statement and verse 2 as beginning to speak on creation specifically (the premise for so-called “Gap Theory” as mentioned earlier). Most scholars see more than an introductory statement in verse 1, preferring instead to call it a general summary of the entire creation account.

“In the beginning God ...” implies that there was a definite beginning of all things. Before there was anything else, there was God! The Hebrew word for “God” in this account is “Elohim” -- a name of God referring to His power and strength. This word is found 35 times in Ch.1 alone, and presents God in all His fullness and strength. This is a story about God, and He is the main character in Ch.1.

The Hebrew word for “create” in v.1 is “bara,” and this word is always linked with God. God created everything, and everything reflects God. All existence is derived from God. “Bara” is a very creative word, meaning to create something out of nothing. Only God can do this.

In v.2 we come across the words “formless” (meaning no form or structure) and “empty/void” (meaning uninhabited). So, in the beginning, the earth was uninhabited with no distinctive form. Yet the Lord would turn “chaos” (or lack of order) into “kosmos” (an orderly world). It is interesting that Jer.4.23 picks up on these words, “formless” and “empty,” revealing, within the context of Jeremiah, that sin leads to chaos, emptiness, formlessness, and lack of order. In the same way that the Earth needed God to turn disorder into order, the individual needs Jesus to turn his/her turbulent world into an ordered and fulfilling one.

In v.2 we also read of the Spirit of God “hovering” or “moving” over the waters. “Hovering,” in this context, means “to brood over,” which is a vibrant and living movement. It was an act from the source of all life, God Himself, to give life and form to everything else. Hence, again, everything about creation has to do with God.

One scholar further emphasizes the teaching contained in the first verse of the Bible as follows:

- “In the beginning God...” denies Atheism with its doctrine of no God;
- “In the beginning God...” denies Polytheism with its doctrine of many gods;
- “In the beginning God created...” denies Fatalism and its doctrine of chance;
- “In the beginning God created...” denies Evolution and its doctrine of infinite becoming;
- “...God created heaven and earth” denies Pantheism and its doctrine that makes God and the universe identical, a New Age concept that sees god in trees, rivers, mountains, etc;
- “...God created heaven and earth” denies materialism which asserts the eternity and sufficiency of matter. (J. Sidlow Baxter, “Explore the Book,” 1966 p.34).

DAY 1: Light from Darkness (1.3-5)

God spoke and said, “Let there be light.” It is little wonder John 1.1 commences with the statement, “In the beginning was the Word,” for without God’s Word nothing could have ever been created. Divinely spoken words are powerful and creative, as Ezekiel discovered when he was told to actually “speak” to the dry bones (Eze.Ch.37). Christians need to also sometimes speak into situations as guided by the Lord.

The first thing we see produced from God's word is light. This light was "good" ("tou" in the Hebrew, i.e., something that is whole or complete). In other words, the light was functioning according to its created purpose.

Then God separated the light from the darkness. "Separate" means to divide and to distinguish -- the light being called "day," and the darkness being called "night." In order to help bring order, God had to distinguish one thing from another, hence, light and darkness.

God is light (Jn.8.12, 9.5). So by creating light, God was actually bringing something of Himself into creation. J.R.R. Tolkien (author of Lord of the Rings) once said that there is a reflection of the creator in every creation. Light is able to give life, on which the creation in the subsequent five days were to rely. Even in a spiritual sense we are exhorted to walk in the light. John Ch.1 makes references to "light" and "life" (e.g., 1.4,8.12). It is true that anyone today who does not walk in the light will walk in darkness. There are no shades of gray here. No wonder we believers are not to hide our light under a bushel, but to let it shine to all mankind (Matt.5.15).

Light cannot help but cause separation. Believers who are in the light have no place in darkness. The following five days of creation further reveal the separations that took place:

- Day 1 - Light from darkness, energy from non-energy;
- Day 2 - Water from the waters, space from matter;
- Day 3 - Sea from land, liquid from solid, vegetation from non-vegetation;
- Day 4 - Day from night, season from season;
- Day 5 - Conscious life from unconscious life, in the water and air;
- Day 6 - Animal life from human life.

As such, God's purpose in creation was separation and differentiation. It is interesting that the root meaning of "holiness" is "separation." Believers today must also separate themselves unto God: "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord" (2Cor.6.17 NIV).

DAY 2: Heavens and the Earth (1.6-8)

On this day God caused a separation between space and matter. Heaven was separated from the earth.

The word "made" in verse 7 is a different word to "made" or "created" in verse 1. In verse 1, the word "made" or "created" ("bara") meant to create out of nothing. Substance came out of nothing. God's word was totally creative. But in verse 7 the word "made" is "asah," meaning to fashion something out of something that already exists. Verses 1, 21 and 27 are in the "bara" form (in God creating the heavens and the earth, the great sea creatures and living creatures that move and winged birds, and then man). But all other references to "made" or "creation" in this chapter are "asah" (e.g., God making the light in v.14, possibly alluding to the seasons).

DAY 3: Dry Land and Vegetable Life (1.9-13)

This is the first time we see the word “gathered,” and it means to bring together. So now, in creation, we have both a separation and a gathering! Once a separation takes place, then the process of binding together may proceed. It is when believers are truly separated unto the Lord that He is able to build more, add more, and gather more into that believer’s life. The Lord will bind him/her close to Himself. We are being gathered together unto Him (2Thess.2.1). Again, day 3 is not the “bara” form of creation.

The dry land now appears, and this happens because the waters were gathered together into one place. God is the one doing the naming, as He does in calling the dry land “Earth.” This naming implies God’s authority over it. There were many ancient kings, who, after naming something, exercised authority over it. Many modern institutions are similarly named after their initially authoritative founders.

In verse 11, we see the creation of life. Vegetation comes on the scene and is able to bear fruit “after its own kind.” Anything that has life in it is able to flow out in reproduction and fruitfulness. We may also say the same about every believer in Christ. Notice that the plants all produced after their own kind, which is a continuing pattern laid down by God. We will see the same later regarding winged birds, cattle, creeping things, beasts, and the like.

Only a lie of the devil could have ever fed the fallacy of evolution to mankind, asserting that some species all of a sudden become something else. Many Christians are inclined to accept “microevolution” (an unfortunate word), i.e., that changes can occur within species such as adaptations of species to cold climates, desert conditions, etc, but few will accept “macroevolution,” i.e., that a species can change into some other form, like fish into amphibians, or land animals into mammals. Adaptions may occur, but evolution does not! Evolution attempts to portray God as a liar, and in so doing, undermines the faith and dependence people are meant to portray. God then becomes dismissed from His own creation, erased out of the picture He painted in the first place.

As believers in Christ, we are also capable of producing after our own kind. This is what true discipleship is all about. This is the reproductive, or fruitful, aspect spoken of earlier. We are fully able to be fruitful, reproductive, and not bogged down in “dead works.”

DAY 4: Sun, Moon and Stars (1.14-19)

God makes two great lights (the sun and the moon) and also the stars. Interestingly enough, no creative act is implied here (i.e., no “bara”). What we do see on the fourth day is more in the way of a functioning of these lights, i.e., their use as signs, seasons, days and years (v.14). The sun, moon and stars are said to rule over the day and the night. This view holds to a sun and great lights initially created on day 1. Some scholars disagree, suggesting that it was God’s light that radiated on day 1, and that the actual sun, moon and stars were created here on day 4. The writer prefers the former view given the references to seasons, etc., in v.14, and the fact that the word “asah” is used in the Hebrew text. Further, the “lights” in v.14 are in verb form, indicating merely a “functioning” of those lights. This is unlike v.3 in which “light” appears in the noun form.