

THE CREATOR GENESIS 1:1

How are we to read the first chapter of Genesis? It is obvious that we cannot read it as simply history. The events that it reports happened before there was a historian. In order to have history there must be eye witnesses and observers of what happened. Since the creation itself took place before there was a historian to observe or anyone to keep records, it is obvious that we are not dealing with history as we ordinarily think of history.

It is obvious that we are not dealing with science. Genesis 1 is not a scientific statement about the origin of the earth. This is not to say that the chapter is unscientific or that it is in conflict with true science, rather it is to simply to deny that we are to view the first chapter of Genesis as a scientific document. If God had given us the scientific formula by which the universe was created, who would have been able to understand it? Thank God that He did not open the Bible with a scientific statement about the creation of the earth. My attempts to read and understand science have been frustrating because of a lack of scientific background and expertise on my part. But

even the youngest child can read the first chapter of Genesis and come away with its central truth.

I would also deny that Genesis 1 is a religious myth. Some contemporary theologians interpret the first eleven chapters of Genesis as religious myth. They do not use the word myth in the sense of something that is not true. Rather they use the myth in the sense of a religious story that has profound meaning. The story itself does not have to be historically reliable. The central thing is not the story but the truth that is contained in the story. The rest of the Bible treats the first chapter of Genesis as something more than a religious myth. They treat the details found in those first eleven chapters as being historically reliable.

We must also refuse to understand this first chapter as informed speculation on the part of Moses concerning the beginning of human history. While Moses was a brilliant man and stood tall in his generation, he never claimed to have special insight in himself concerning the origins of man and the earth.

How then are we to understand Genesis I? It is best to understand Genesis 1 as revelation. What we have in this chapter is the result of revelation that Moses received from God. This is not .to deny that God may have used things with which Moses was familiar, but it is rather to affirm that God gave to Moses infallible insight into the record that is found in this chapter. Since it is revelation, this means that it is primarily about God. As you read this chapter your heart should be awed by the revelation of God that is found in this chapter. As you see God in the chapter you are able to see the created order in its relationship to God. You are also able to see

man and how he relates to his Creator. It is my interest tonight that we simply look at the Creator first.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This simple statement opens up to us insight into the Creator of everything that is. It offers no proof of His existence. It simply assumes that God, the Creator, exists. It assumes that God, the Creator, has acted, and that everything that exists is the result of His activity.

I. HIS NATURE

While we would not expect to find every thing about the nature of the Creator revealed in one brief statement, we do find some significant insights into His nature. They are found in the simple words and in the name that is given to God in this passage.

1. He is eternal.

When the chapter begins "In the beginning" it brings before us this profound insight into the nature of the Creator. He alone is eternal. In the beginning takes us back to the point origin of all things. The universe and everything in the universe had a beginning. All matter that makes up the universe had a beginning. The massive spaciousness of the universe had a beginning. The only being that did not have a beginning is God, the Creator. He alone was there when the beginning began. He is responsible for the beginning of the beginning. He is the eternal.

2. He is powerful.

The Hebrew name of God in this statement is Elohim. This Hebrew name of God is associated with power and might. El is one of the ancient names of God on which Elohim is built. In the beginning of our record of human history El was seen as the God of power, the God of the mountains. So, the Bible opens with the statement that in the beginning it was "the powerful God" who created the heavens and the earth.

Since the universe and all the systems that make up the universe originated with Him, it is obvious that He is the all-powerful God. So the Creator is powerful in nature.

3. He is complex.

We are confronted with the complexity of this person in this name Elohim. Elohim is actually in the Hebrew a plural noun yet no one is inclined to translate it "In the beginning the Gods created the heavens and the earth." One reason that we are not tempted to translate it "Gods" is that the verb is singular. There is obviously only one God and yet this one God is not a simple one. Some have understood this plurality in the noun as being a reference to "the plural of majesty." There was the practice in the Hebrew of using the plural to convey the richness or the majesty of a person and this is probably the best way to understand the plural here.

While we ought not take this plural noun as a piece of evidence that God is a triune being, it surely does leave room for what is later revealed of God in the Bible. There is room in His name Elohim for God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So, in the very first words of the Bible you are confronted with the majesty and the power of the Creator. The one eternal God who is

full of majesty and power has acted to bring into being all that is.

II. HIS ACT.

The verb translated in this statement "created" is a familiar Hebrew verb. It is the verb bara. The verb is commonly used with reference to God in Scripture. In fact, it is used exclusively with God in the Old Testament. So, creation is something only Elohim can do. There is something that we can learn from the act of creation itself.

1. Creation was a free act. .)

From the text itself it is obvious that God acted freely to create. There was no one or no thing to influence His act to create. The act to create came out of His own nature and out of His own will. Everything that is exists by the will and for the pleasure of God.

Very few of our acts as human being are free. They are often influenced by some outside person or power or by some internal impulse. Our will rarely ever acts without being under some kind of compulsion, but when we come to our statement we see a sovereign eternal God acting freely and voluntarily. He creates because it pleases Him to create.

2. The act of creation is purposeful.

While the statement itself does not necessarily affirm the purposefulness of God and creation, the larger context will surely affirm it. God did not create capriciously or haphazardly. From the study of creation itself it becomes obvious that the Creator designed what He made with purpose.

It is true that as the scientist dig into the realities of the creation around us that they have found things that seem to be without purpose or design. However, we need to keep in mind two things as we consider what they have found it seems to be without design or purpose. First, we need to keep in mind no scientist or group of scientists have complete knowledge about anything. That is the reason scientist purpose theories and set forth their thesis always in a context that is something less than absolute. There is always the possibility that later information will provide insight into the design or the purpose that is not now available to us. Second, we must always be mindful that we are not dealing with the creation as the creator designed it in our day. We are dealing with the creation now after it has existed under the judgment of a holy God for millenniums. What we have today is the result of a long history of frustration on the part of creation. It ought not surprise us that there are many things in the created order today that seem to be out of sync, whose purpose is not clear.

3. The act of creation is one of wisdom.

Under the truths celebrated about God in the book of Proverbs is His wisdom. Specific reference is made to the manifestation of His wisdom in the created order. The eternal God is the all wise God. A portion of His wisdom was revealed in his act of creation. When you begin to comprehend what was involved in God's act of creation, you will be compelled to bow before Him in wonder.

4. The act of creation is a powerful act.

This statement in Genesis I indicates that when God willed to create He acted in power. The

supreme evidence of the power of that creation act is the fact that God created everything that is out of nothing. The theologians have a term for this from the Latin "ex-nihilo." The significance of that term is that it means that God created everything that is out of nothing. There was no pre-existing material for God to use in creation. God started with nothing except His own will and power and wisdom. By His own will out of His own power and wisdom God called into existence everything that is. Everything that is owes its existence to this act of the creator.

Oh, can you not begin to see the wonder and the glory of the creator!

III. HIS WORKMANSHIP.

"The heavens and the earth are to be understood comprehensively. By these words Moses means for us to understand the whole universe. At this point He is referencing nature as we know it and the human family as we know it. He is also referencing all that is being explored today in space. It includes the sun, moon, stars, the planets all of those vast riches of space that we are just now discovering. God created the heavens and the earth.

1. The massiveness of His workmanship.

Hardly a week goes by without another statement from the scientific community concerning the massiveness of the universe. Just this past week I heard a news report about discoveries by scientists by the use of telescopes that has brought them in touch with what they believe are whole galaxies just coming into formation. As they have looked deeper and deeper into space they have been all awed by what they see. When Moses says, "The heavens and the earth" ancient man was

limited to what he could see with just His eyes. He had no way of knowing just how massive this workmanship of God was. We are dealing with a mighty, massive workmanship on the part of God.

2. The minuteness of His workmanship.

At the same time as we have been discovering the massiveness of the universe we have also been discovering the minuteness of his workmanship. Man has been looking deeper and deeper into the reality that is all around him and as he has looked deeper and deeper into matter and reality itself he has been amazed at the complexity of the systems that are not even visible to the natural eye. The whole created order is built upon minute detail on the part of the Creator. As we consider His workmanship there are two things we need to learn. First, we need to see His workmanship as a witness to His existence. The apostle Paul sited the creation as a evidence of the existence of God to first century man. The gods before which the citizens of the Roman Empire were bowing in an empty worship were not adequate to explain the existence of creation.

3. The universe requires the Creator.

Something as complex and as vast as the universe in which we live did not just happen. There is a universe maker and His name is Elohim, the God of Israel.

The workmanship is also a witness to the power and might of our God.

One of the problems that some of us have is that our God is too small. Some of our students go away to the university with a God that is too small. When they begin to be confronted with the

realities of the creation order in which we live through their studies of science, their God is not big enough to have created everything that is. If your God is not big enough to be the explanation for the existence of everything that is, then He is too small.

Genesis 1 does not leave me with an inclination to go enter into a debate with trained scientists of our generation concerning the origins of the universe. Rather, it leaves me with an inclination to fall on my knees and to say, "Great is the Lord of all the earth. He is my Maker and my Creator. I owe everything to him. I trust Him with my life." In other words the chapter moves me to worship and prepares me for life. It prepares me to walk across this earth confidently knowing that it is my Father's world. My Father is the Creator.

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