

Old Testament Survey - Part 4

by Dick Woodward

The Bible provides answers to questions about origins that science cannot answer, and it is the ultimate authority on the subject of creation.

Duration: 27:56

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Psalm 51:10, John 3:3, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 11:6

Topics: "Creation Theology", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

This sermon delves into the book of Genesis, focusing on the account of creation. It explores the perspectives of scientists and believers on biblical creation, highlighting the parallels and distinctions between scientific theories and the Genesis narrative. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding God's role as the Creator and the need for a spiritual act of creation within individuals' hearts, drawing parallels to the concept of being born again.

Transcript

In this class session, we want to begin our survey of the book of Genesis and I would like for us to begin our survey of the book of Genesis by considering what God has told us in the book of Genesis about creation. The word Genesis, the name of this book means something like genetics or beginnings and as we put this book in perspective in our last class session, we said that this book is written not just to tell it like it was, as if God owed us an explanation, but this book tells it like it was because God wants us to understand it like it is. This is true of all these subjects we will survey in the book of Genesis and it's also true of what God says to us about creation.

In the first chapter of Genesis, you have these words. In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth and the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life and fowl that may fly upon the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

And God created great whales and every living creature that moveth which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind and every winged fowl after his kind and God saw that it was good. And God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image.

In the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. And God saw everything that he had made and behold, it was very good.

Now this question of the creation is what we might call the popular question in the book of Genesis. You would think if you lead a religious discussion in a fraternity or a sorority on a university campus that the Bible doesn't speak to any other subject but creation, you would think this is the only message of the scripture because this is what the students very often want to discuss. Now there are two extremes on the subject of biblical creation.

First of all, there is the position of the scientist who says that the creation account in the book of Genesis is not scientifically reliable and therefore he rejects the word of God as inspired. Now the other position here which is the antithesis of that position is the believer, perhaps the very conservative believer who comes to this subject of creation asking the question, is science biblically reliable? And they will say, the Bible is not on trial, science is. The question here is not, is the Bible scientific but is science biblical? Now as we raise this question and this is really the question here, are the Bible and science compatible when the Bible touches upon a subject like creation? As we come to that question and that's really the issue here, this is why it's such a popular issue, we need to put some things in perspective.

First of all, if you think in terms of science and what a scientist is, if you think about the disciplines of the scientist as he defines them, you come to some conclusions. You come to this question at least, you find yourself asking yourself this question, is it really possible for a scientist to be theistic as a scientist? Now again, based upon the way scientists themselves define the perimeters of the disciplines of science, we have a real problem here. Now certainly a scientist can be theistic, many scientists are devoutly theistic but there's a sense, again based upon the way they define the discipline of science, there's a sense in which when the scientist is theistic, he is not being scientific or he's not being theistic as a scientist.

You see, the scientist deals with data or phenomena that can be observed. They deal with data that can be studied objectively. Now based upon their observations of this objective data, they conduct experiments and then they draw conclusions and make applications and that's what it means to be scientific and to implement the scientific method.

Now there's a sense, again, in which a scientist is not being scientific when he expresses faith. The scripture says to us that without faith, it's impossible to please God. He that would come to God must believe.

Now that scripture in Hebrews chapter 11 does not say that unless you're a scientist, you can't please God and you can't come to him unless you're a scientist. God doesn't have a special plan of salvation for scientists. So scientists have to come to God just like everybody else by faith and the faith that brings us to God and makes it possible for us to live lives that please God is the gift of God.

Now again, based upon the way some scientists describe the perimeters within which the disciplines of science function, when the scientist does receive the gift of faith like everybody else and he does believe in the supernatural and he does come to know God and live a life that pleases God, when he's doing that, he's not really being scientific, strictly speaking. You see, God is a spirit and they that worship him and come to know him, come to know him and come to worship him in the spiritual dimension of life and that's not the discipline of science. I guess I've said all that to say this, when we come to the subject of creation by a direct act of God, when we come to the subject of God, when we come to the subject of the

supernatural and revelation and the miraculous, we're not in the realm of science and the scientist will tell you that himself.

Now having said all of that, I would like to draw some parallels and I think there are some extremely exciting parallels between what the Genesis account of creation says about the origins of everything and what many scientists hold in terms of their convictions about origins. I believe there are some parallels here and of course there are some very sharp distinctions also. If you come to this creation story in Genesis, like you're supposed to come to all the chapters of the Bible based upon our introduction to the Bible, if you come to this chapter asking the questions, what does it say? What does it mean? And what does it mean to me? As you answer that first question, what does the Bible really say about creation? One of the words that you have to make a study of and observe very closely is the word translated create or created.

This is the Hebrew word *bara*, that's B like in beta, B-A-R-A. And this word *bara* or this word for create is only found three times in this account of creation. In the beginning, God creates and then in the water, he creates and then he creates man.

In the beginning, there's an act of *bara* or creation and as a result of that first act of creation, you have the heavens, meaning the universe and the earth and this earth has the power to produce all plant life. All of that comes as a result of that first act of creation or *bara*. Now, the second act of creation takes place in the water in verse 21 of chapter one of Genesis and the result of this second act of creation is all animal life.

Now, there's a third act of creation in order to get people here. In order to get man here, there has to be a third act of *bara* or creation but make this observation. In between these three acts of *bara* or creation, the Genesis account of creation uses words that could really be described as development and change.

It says, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and when he created the heavens and the earth, they were without form. They were void or empty. They were watery, dark and deep and in the second verse of this creation account, Genesis chapter one, it says the spirit of God began to move upon this creation.

Now, in between verse one and verse two of the first chapter of Genesis, many people inject a theory. It's called the catastrophe theory. They say something happened after verse one that wiped out, completely wiped out that first creation and so God had to do another creation because it couldn't be that something God created would be formless and dark and deep and watery and empty.

Now, again, you have to train yourself as a Bible student to ask these questions. What does it say? Frankly, it doesn't say that. It doesn't say there was a catastrophe.

It doesn't really say that something happened to that creation and it became without form and void. It says it was without form and void. It was a chaos, the theologians call it.

And it says, this is what it really says now, the spirit of God began to move upon this creation and develop it and manipulate it and change it. In Genesis one, between verses one and 21, you have words like divided, gathered together, appeared. For instance, it says the dry land appeared.

Now, the dry land wasn't created when it appeared. It was created in the beginning and apparently it was underwater, but at a certain point, when God divided the waters from the waters, the dry land appeared.

Now, it's interesting that scientists like paleontologists and geologists, they're so sure that this whole earth was underwater.

It's interesting that that does parallel the Genesis account. The Genesis account parallels that conviction, which is held by many scientists. You see, the word bara or create means to make something from nothing.

There's absolutely nothing. And then God does this bara thing and now you've got something. These other words mean something like this, to change the form of that which already exists.

For example, you take a tree and you cut that tree down, you saw it up into rough lumber and then you make the rough lumber, all planed and smoothed out and eventually you end up with a desk like this. Now, that's not creation. That's making something because to make something means to change the form of that which already exists.

Now, these words in Genesis one, after verse one and going up to verse 21 are words that mean that, changing the form of that which was already there. That's not creation according to the Hebrew word bara. But now there is a second act of bara in the water because this first act of creation, even though it produced the universe and the earth and all plant life, it didn't produce animal life.

And so there had to be another act of bara in the water. And again, scientists seem to be very sure that animal life began in the water. I believe that's what the Genesis account says.

Now, there has to be a third act of bara because animal life did not become human life. There had to be a third separate act of creation. And so when we get to verses 26 and 27, we're told for the third time God created.

And the result of this third act of creation was man. Now, as you look at this, as you observe the creation account of Genesis, I believe you should make some observations and come to some conclusions. First of all, notice this, the Genesis account of creation accounts for everything that's here as a result of three major acts of creation on the part of God, and then a whole lot of change and development in between those acts of creation.

After these original acts of creation, the spirit of God continues to manipulate and to change and develop this creation. Now, this again is a parallel with what many scientists believe. Scientists study life forms that are here now, and they see them changing and developing, and they say, this must be, life develops, it evolves, it changes.

And some Christians throw their hands up in horror and say, that just cannot be, that just cannot be. Well, when you come to the Genesis account of creation, what does it say? What does it really say? I believe it says that there were these acts of creation, but in between the acts of creation, there was change and development. So the theory, as we call it, of evolution and the Genesis account share in common the concept of change and development, but now here's where they disagree.

Three times, the biblical account of creation says God, and it says Bara, God created. And of course, many scientists will part company with the creation account at that point. Sometimes because it's out of their realm, they just don't deal with that kind of data, because it's supernatural, it's subjective, it's spiritual, and you can't be scientific about supernatural data, according to many scientists.

I do think it's very interesting to consider this in the Genesis account of creation. There are three places where the scientist, so-called, has a difficult time coming up with answers. And these are the three places where the Genesis account says God created.

The scientists have a difficult time answering this question. How did it all begin? If you keep getting down to the beginning, they get hard-pressed to come up with an answer. How did it all begin? I remember attending a seminar once where a famous scientist was lecturing on this from UCLA, and when he got down to this point, I was about to raise my hand, and he had gotten it down to gases.

He said, we were down to gases. And I started to raise my hand, and he looked at me through his thick glasses and said, don't ask me where the gases came from, because that was the very question I was going to ask. You see, they're hard-pressed to come up with that first cause.

How did it all begin? Now, this is where the Bible says God, God created. Now, it's interesting to me how a scientist will say, because of the way he defines the disciplines of science, I can't believe that, that God created. I find it hard to understand how they will say, I can't believe that, and yet they'll say they believe in a Big Bang.

There was a Big Bang in the beginning. It's amazing how many scientists believe in the Big Bang theory. There was just this great Big Bang, and somehow it all started.

Well, the Bible says there wasn't a Big Bang. There was a big God, and this big God created, and that's how it all began. I frankly think my big God is a lot more credible than their Big Bang, but this is where they have a hard time, I think, coming up with an answer.

How did it all begin? A second place where I believe they're hard-pressed for answers is, how did all that plant life in its evolutionary process become animal life? Here again, they're hard-pressed. There is not just one missing link, I believe. There are three, and this is the second one.

How did plant life become animal life? Here again, the Bible says God. There was an act of God. And then, of course, the missing link we all think about is, how did animal life become human? And here for the third time, the Genesis account says God, and it says God created.

Now, I don't know about you, but I find it very interesting to make this observation, that in the three places where they're hard-pressed to come up with answers, Genesis gives us answers. I frankly find it fascinating when you consider primitive theories about origins. I mean, just back 400 years or 500 years, back in the day of Columbus, what did they believe about origins? Well, they believed the earth was rotating on the trunk of an elephant who was standing on four turtles.

And they had these real wild primitive ideas about how it all started. That's only 400 or 500 years ago. Now, this was written 3,300 years before Darwin.

And yet, isn't it amazing? 3,300 years before Darwin, the author of Genesis 1 says life changes and develops. And it gives answers where the questions become difficult. Because three times it says, where we don't have answers, God created.

And because God created, he put in motion something that produced everything that's here. Now, the Bible isn't trying to be scientific. I don't believe the purpose of the Bible, again, is to give us a message about creation.

We covered that in our introduction to the Bible. What are the purposes of the Bible? The Bible is not a textbook on science. The Bible is a textbook on salvation.

The Bible is a textbook on redemption. And the Bible wants to give us the historical context through which salvation and redemption came. That's the purpose of the Bible.

Again, there are 1,189 chapters in the Bible. Only one and a half talk about creation. But even though the Bible touches on it very, very briefly, I believe it's fascinating that the Bible scooped science by about 3,300 years, before science even began to think about life developing and changing.

3,300 years ago, the Bible said life changes and develops. When we had such primitive ideas about creation, the Bible said these things. Now, again, as we consider this question of creation, we need to ask this question, who is really qualified to speak on the subject of creation? God humbled a very great man back in ancient times.

His name was Job. Job was a very brilliant man, and he was discussing things like creation. And God really humbled that man by asking him a simple question.

He said, where were you when I created the heavens and the earth? Tell me all about it, Job. That's a very good question. You see, no scientist was there to make observations and conduct experiments and draw conclusions when God created the heavens and the earth.

Therefore, I believe it's impossible, for a second reason here, for the scientist to really speak with great authority on the origins of things. That's really not the discipline of science to speak on this. This really, this question really belongs to the realm of theology or possibly philosophy.

Now, I don't know if you've ever studied philosophy. I had a course in philosophy once that ended, a whole year of philosophy ended with professors saying, now, during this year class, we've come to four conclusions, and he wrote them on the chalkboard. He said, the first one is, I don't know.

And he wrote that down, and we thought that was a good possibility. We've been listening to him for a whole year. We thought perhaps he doesn't know.

And then his second conclusion, which he wrote on the board was, you don't know. And of course, if he didn't know with all of his education, who are we to say that we knew? So we accepted that. His third conclusion was, nobody else knows.

And he wrote that down. And based upon all the collateral reading that he made us do that year, that wasn't too hard to accept either. Those people didn't seem to know either.

And his fourth conclusion was, it's intelligent to think about it. Now, that's philosophy. I don't know, you don't know, nobody else knows, but isn't it intelligent to think about it? Now, if you want to, you can put creation in the realm of philosophy, and you can come up with just the conjecture of the philosopher and say, I don't know about creation, you don't know about creation, nobody else knows about creation, but isn't it intelligent to think about it? Or of course, Genesis tells us, the book of Genesis starts out by telling us, listen, it belongs to God, the subject of creation, God created, only God was there, only God really knows.

So the only person who can even come close to telling us about origins is the prophet who says he has a revelation from God. And that's exactly what Moses was. Moses was a prophet.

He went up on Mount Sinai three different times for 40 days and 40 nights without eating and said, God, I want a word from you more than I want to eat. And God gave him a revelation, God gave him a word. And that revelation, which is really the first five books of the Bible, the law books, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, that revelation begins with a simple statement about creation.

Now that statement about creation is a revelation from God. And so even though it wasn't intended to be an exhaustive study of origins, I believe what it says about origins is true, and it will be confirmed and affirmed to be true. But I do think that when we come to the subject of creation, we have these two opposite positions again.

And frankly, I don't like to be forced to accept one or the other. On the one hand, you have the conservative believer who says, if you believe the Bible, you must believe that the earth is only 6,000 years old and man's only 6,000 years old. The Berkeley translation of the Bible, which was done by conservative scholars has a footnote in Genesis.

And it says millions of eons is acceptable to conservative biblical scholarship. You don't have to believe the earth is 6,000 years old or that man is in order to believe the Bible because the Bible doesn't give dates. Years ago, I heard Billy Graham on Meet the Press and a lady reporter asked him the question, Dr. Graham, how can you get up there in front of all those people and say, the Bible says, the Bible says, since you've got a degree in anthropology.

And Billy Graham said, that's no problem to me, ma'am. What is your problem? And she said, well, any anthropologist should know that the earth is billions of years old. And the Bible says that it's only 6,000 years old.

Now, how can you believe the Bible's credible? He said, I beg your pardon, ma'am, but the Bible nowhere says that man or the earth is 6,000 years old. That was based upon a chronology written by a man. And most conservative scholars don't accept that now.

Well, to save face, the woman said, well, Dr. Graham, how old do you think the earth is? And he said, ma'am, I think the earth is very, very old. I think that was an excellent, excellent answer. On the one hand, you have this position that says you have to accept a proposition like that, or you have to accept this proposition.

Materialistic, humanistic, secularistic, atheistic, scientific people who really want to perpetuate a life philosophy that's secular and materialistic and humanistic and atheistic and scientific. In order to give a basis for that philosophy of life, they say we have to accept evolution as they describe evolution. I don't believe the choices are like that.

I believe in between those two positions, you have the Genesis account of creation. And I find it's amazing that so many people don't ever really read it. So many scientists who know a lot about science have never really come to the Genesis account of creation and read it seriously, objectively, taking it seriously.

And of course, there are many, many people, I believe who believe the scripture who are so afraid of the subject of evolution, they won't even look at what it really does say. So my challenge here and what I'm proposing is this, I'm not a scientist and I don't know anything about evolution. That's not my discipline,

that's not my calling.

But what I would like to propose is this, since this issue keeps coming up and coming up, let's come to the Genesis account of creation. Don't be afraid of it. Don't think that you have to defend God.

Just come to it and ask these simple questions. What does it really say? And expect that what it says will be true and it will be affirmed and confirmed by a true scientist. Then of course, we also need to ask this question.

Why did God tell us anything at all about creation? It wasn't as we said, because he felt that he owed us an explanation. I believe God knew that one day we would come to the conclusion that we ourselves need an act of creation right in here, right in our hearts. I believe God knew that that would happen to us like it did to David.

After David sinned very grievously, David prayed this great prayer. He said, God, show me the truth about my inward part. And when God showed him the truth about his inward part, David said, I'm a sinner.

I was a sinner when I took shape in my mother's womb. I was a sinner when I was conceived. That's my problem.

And so having seen God's diagnosis of his inner man, then David prayed this great prayer. Create, and he used that word bara, create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a right spirit within me. What David was really saying was, God, if you don't perform a miracle of creation right here in my heart, then I'm gonna fail again and again and again.

I need an act of creation in my inner man. Now, the answer to David's prayer is the new birth. And this is what Jesus was talking about when he said, marvel not that I say unto you, you must be born again, because that which is born of the flesh is just flesh.

You must be born again. You need an act of creation. When the apostles comment on the new birth teaching of Jesus, they call it creation.

They say, if any man is born again, he's a new creation. Paul says that we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. People that are born again have experienced an act of creation.

And as a result of that act of creation, they are the workmanship of God. Now, I believe God wanted us to realize that we need that act of creation. And then I believe he wanted us to know when we come to the place where we know we need that act of creation, that he is the one who does that.

Only God can create.

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