

Genesis & A Biblical Worldview

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, May 20, 2012

Introduction

—

God

2

Creation

—

Man

—

Sin

—

Grace

—

Culture

—

Purpose

—

The Triune God Who Acts and Speaks

In our last study, we introduced Genesis 1:1 as the foundational verse for a Biblical/Theistic worldview--“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”¹ This establishes--as the “beginning point” of our worldview--that God is; and that all else that is was created by Him. It affirms God’s existence as a presupposition to be reasoned from, rather than a proposition that needs to be proven; and in so doing, it distinguishes our worldview from every other alternative worldview (such as *atheism*, *polytheism*, *pantheism*, *materialism*, and *philosophic humanism*) that basis itself on the denial of His existence and that seeks to make sense of life apart from Him.

In today’s study, we take up the next two verses of the book of Genesis to see more of what the Bible tells us about the nature of God--and thus add further to the foundation of our worldview. In looking further, we see . . .

I. THAT GOD IS ACTIVE WITH RESPECT TO HIS CREATION.

A. Genesis 1:2 says, “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.” This raises a question: Was it created as formless and void by God, or did it become this way sometime subsequent to its creation? Among faithful Bible believers, there are basically two schools of thought on this:

1. One school of thought holds to a Gap-Theory of Genesis 1:2. It teaches that there is a “gap” of undetermined time between verses one and two; during which a cataclysmic event (which is not told to us) caused the already-created earth to become “without form and void”. It looks to such passages as Isaiah 45:18; which tells us that God is He “Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain [or “a waste”], Who formed it to be inhabited . . .” It sees the references to formlessness and voidness (see Jeremiah 4:23) and darkness (Isaiah 13:11) as a description of judgment. Some see the fall of Satan (as described in Ezekiel 28:11-19) as the cause.
2. Another school of thought holds to what we might call a “sequential approach” to Genesis 1:2. It teaches there is no “gap” between verses one and two; and that nothing in the context of this passages requires that we see anything in it but a natural sequence of events--that the earth, when God first made it, was formless and void; and that He later gave it form. It looks to the grammar of the text (pointing to a *waw* consecutive at the beginning of verse two; which can be translated “and”) as evidence that a natural, normal sequence of events is being described from verse one to verse two.

B. Whichever view one takes--and both are held by reliable Bible teachers--it’s important to note that the purpose of this verse is not to tell us *how* it was that the earth became formless and void; but simply that it was; and that God acted upon it to give it order. The description of the condition of the earth in verse two gives context to the active involvement of God that is described to us in verses 3-31--culminating in God looking upon it all and seeing that it was “very good” (v. 31).

C. Our worldview does not hold to a deistic concept of God (that is, that God simply created the universe and left it to run on its own); or to a God who is so transcendent as to be uninvolved with His creation. Instead, we affirm God as the Creator who is separate and distinct from His creation,

but is nevertheless in intimate and active contact with it. He is not far away; but very near, involved, and--as it were--"hands-on".

II. THAT GOD IS A PLURALITY OF PERSONS.

- A. The second half of verse two not only shows us more of God's intimate involvement with His creation, but also of His plurality of being. We saw just a hint of this in verse one; when we noted that the word for God that is used is *Elohim*--which though clearly intending to communicate a singularity of Being, is plural in nature. We will see an even more remarkable hint of this in verse 26--when, at the creation of man, God said something remarkable that He did not say with respect to any other thing that He created: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness . . ." In verse 2, we're told, "And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (which also, by the way, affirms His intimate contact with His creation). This "Spirit" is presented to us in the Bible as a Person (see Isaiah 40:13-14), that "the Lord" a short time later speaks of as distinguished from Himself: "And the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever . . .'" (Genesis 6:3).
- B. The full doctrine of the triune being of God--that is, that God is one God but three distinct Persons--isn't presented to us in these first few verses. But what *is* presented to us is the implication that the creator God exists in a plurality of divine Persons. Dr. Henry Morris saw in the first three verses the creative involvement of all three Persons of the Trinity: "The Father is the source of all things (verse 1), the Spirit is the energizer of all things (verse 2), the Word is the revealer of all things (verse 3)."²
- C. Our worldview holds that, before creation ever was, three Persons already were. They enjoyed an eternal relationship of love together--which gives substance to the phrase in 1 John 4:8 that "God is love". When God made human kind, it wasn't because He lacked an entity to love; but rather so that He could graciously share with other finite creatures the love that He already eternally perfectly enjoyed in the Plurality of His Being (see John 17:22-24).

III. THAT GOD SPEAKS.

- A. In verse three, we read, "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." This is the first record in all the Bible of God speaking. This sets the pattern for all that will follow. As we will explore in our next study, God brought into being all that there is by "speaking" (see v. 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). As Psalm 33:4-9 says, "For the word of the Lord is right, and all His work is done in truth. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Hebrews 11:2 tells us, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."
- B. The importance of this to our worldview is tremendous! It establishes that we serve a God who is not silent, but who speaks and reveals truth about Himself to His creatures. This greatly distinguishes our worldview. All other worldviews operate on the presupposition that the God of the Bible does not exist; or that if a god exists at all, He is not the God of the Bible; and that in either case the God of the Bible has not spoken authoritatively. They often assert that God--if He exists--is so transcendent that He cannot communicate to man; that man could not understand His communication if He did; and

that, therefore, man has no reliable, authoritative revelation from God. We, however, affirm that God can and has spoken meaningfully to man; because it was by God “speaking” that all things came into being--including man.

- C. God’s ability to speak includes His ability to reveal all the truth to people that is necessary for their salvation. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:6; “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” As Hebrews 1:1-2 says, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds . . .” Our worldview, then, is absolutely consistent in holding that all of mankind *can* hear, and understand, and believe, and be saved by revealed truth from God their Creator.

¹All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

²Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), p. 55.