

Genesis & A Biblical Worldview

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, June 17, 2012

Introduction

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God

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Creation

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Man

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Sin

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Grace

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Culture

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Purpose

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“And Indeed It Was Very Good”

In Genesis 1:3-30, we’re given God’s own story of His work of creation. It’s essential to our Christian worldview that this story be understood not merely as mythology but as the reporting of the actual, literal, authoritative beginnings of history. As the writer of Hebrews puts it, “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” (Hebrews 11:3).¹ It is also foundational to other things that the Bible goes on to assert. As the apostle Peter writes of scoffers in the last days, “For this they willingly forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water” (2 Peter 3:5-6).

And now, at the end of the giving of that story, God’s word gives us further insight into how we are to view creation. He gives us His own authoritative evaluation of what He made. The Book of Genesis tells us of . . .

I. THE INITIAL GOODNESS OF GOD’S CREATION (1:31).

A. We’re told, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” It’s as if, before God completely rested from his work at the end of that sixth day, He stopped to survey what He had done and give His evaluation. The evaluation “good” had already been given at individual stages of His creation--two times on the third day (once after causing dry land to appear in 1:10, and once again after allowing vegetation to grow upon it in 1:12); once on the fourth day (after setting the luminaries in the heavens in 1:18); once on the fifth day (after creating the sea creatures in 1:21) and once more on the sixth day (after creating the land animals in 1:25). But it was only after He created Mankind as the crowning act of His creative work that He looked upon it all and said that it was “very good” or “exceedingly good”. What God saw, when He surveyed His completed work, gave Him great satisfaction and joy.

- B. If taken as the Bible presents it, this verdict from God would be important to our worldview for at least two reasons:
1. It necessarily calls us to hold to a different view of the nature of the created realm than would be presented by any other worldviews that *begin* with a corrupt creation that is improved later. If God’s evaluation of the creation at its beginning was that it was very good, then there could not have been the processes of imperfection, death and progress toward improvement that, for example, Naturalistic Evolution would require. It would be difficult to conceive of God looking upon a world filled with the kind of death and disease--the jungle brutality of tooth and claw--that we see today, and saying it was “very good”. The picture we are given instead is of a created universe that was, in its initial state, very good; but that later became characterized by imperfection and death after the fall of Adam.
 2. It also helps us to appreciate the tragic significance of the impact of the fall--and of our desperate need for salvation. Dr. Billy Graham was once asked, “Why didn’t God choose to create a perfect world--instead of this world that is so filled with death and suffering?” Dr. Graham answered that God *did* create a perfect world--but that it was our sin that has filled it with the death and suffering and suffering we see today. It’s

as the apostle Paul wrote; “just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). But it’s important to stress that God does not look at the damages of sin in an indifferent way. He has done something about the devastating effects of the fall by sending His Son to be our Savior. Now, even though this world suffers the effects of Adam’s sin, God has brought hope: “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:20-21).

II. THE COMPLETENESS OF GOD’S WORK AT THE BEGINNING (1:31-2:1).

- A. At the end of 1:31, we read, “So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” It’s interesting to note that, in the Hebrew language of the text, each of the days of creation are marked-off in an indefinite manner (that is, without a definite article--“a day first”, “a day second”, and so on). But in verse 31, the definite article is introduced for the first time (that is, “a day, *the* sixth”)--as if to mark-off the sixth day in such a way as to make it stand out as a significant day in the process of creation.
- B. Verse 2:1 then goes on to say, “Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.” Observable natural processes, of course, continue to occur in the creation that God had made. But the creation of all that exists in the universe was completed on the sixth day; and those processes are not of the creation of something new, but only of new things being done with what had already been made.
- C. In the Book of Hebrews, God is quoted as saying that some who rebelled against Him would not enter His rest; and the writer adds that this is true, “although the works were finished from the foundation of the world” (Hebrews 4:3). How much of God’s work, then, should we consider to have been “completed” by that sixth day? We’re also told in Scripture that some things that Jesus uttered had been “kept secret from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 13:35); that the Lord will invite people to enter the “kingdom prepared” for them “from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34); that the Father chose the redeemed in Christ “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4); that the work of Christ was “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20); that Jesus is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8); and that unbelieving people of this world are said to be “not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 17:8). The Bible tells us that, for God’s elect, the hope of eternal life is based on that which “God, who cannot lie, promised before time began” (Titus 1:1-2); and it displays a “hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory” (1 Corinthians 2:7). It can truly be said then that, from the standpoint of the sovereign purposes of God, absolutely *all* of His works were finished by the sixth day--only to be brought to full realization in time afterward. Truly we can say, in praise to God, that “in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them” (Psalm 139:16); and rejoice in the knowledge that “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Taken in this context, we could go even further to say that when God declared His finished work “very good”, He was not looking only at the state of creation on the sixth day, but was looking far ahead to the full completion of His decree throughout eternity future. He looked ahead--through the temptation of the enemy, through the tragic fall of man, and through the sacrifice of His

Son on the cross (who victoriously cried, "It is finished" [John 19:30]); and on to the redemption of the elect in Christ, and to the full glorification of sons and daughters in Christ; and declared "very good" the certainty of their dwelling forever before Him in love in a new heaven and a new earth --all to the everlasting praise of His glory! What a staggeringly "complete" work of creation it was that was completed on that sixth day! And what a difference this should make to our worldview!

III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF REST ON THE SEVENTH DAY (2:2-3).

- A. In 2:2-3, repeated stress is laid on the completion of God's work--but with the addition that He blessed the day of His rest from His work: "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." This declaration of God's rest at the completion of His work becomes the pattern set before us in the fourth commandment--to work six days and rest on the seventh (see Exodus 20:8-11), just as God Himself ceased from His work and rested. This is a call to remember and celebrate the completion of God's work as described for us in Genesis 1-2.
- B. But more, this also becomes a picture of salvation itself. We're told in the Book of Hebrews that there remains "a rest" that is to be "entered into" (Hebrews 4:1-10). It involves a cessation *our* "works" and a 'resting' in the work that God had completed for us in Christ (v. 10). The rebellious children of Israel failed to enter the rest God offered them after their deliverance from bondage in Egypt; and thus they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. But as the writer of Hebrews says, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:11). When we do so--when we genuinely rest for our salvation by faith in the full completion of God's work for us through His Son--we "rest" indeed; and say our fullest "Amen!" to God's declaration of "very good".

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