

Genesis 1 (part 2 of 2)

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By Bob Mendelsohn

Designer Extraordinaire

For those who are with us for the first time today, we are starting a whole new Bible series. You are on the right day. Each week we take a section or sections of the book, this time the book of Genesis, and see if it has anything to say to us, as 21st century people.

The saying in Israel is "All beginnings are hard." Hard to get going; hard to understand; hard to make a difference. We look at things in the long haul, but really, if we saw the beginnings of things, we might have different concepts about them.

Kim Linehan held the world record in the Women's 1500-meter freestyle in 1981. According to her coach, Paul Bergen, the 18-year-old was the leading amateur woman distance swimmer in the world. Kim does endless exercises and swims 7 to 12 miles a day. The hardest part of her regimen? "Getting in the water," she said.

Texas Monthly, quoted in Reader's Digest, June 1981.

The first electric light was so dim that a candle was needed to see its socket. One of the first steamboats took 32 hours to chug its way from New York to Albany, a distance of 150 miles.

Wilbur and Orville Wright's first airplane flight lasted only 12 seconds. And the first automobiles traveled 2 to 4 miles per hour and broke down often. Carriages would pass them with their passengers shouting, "Get a horse!"

We started Beth Messiah and some folks are pioneers and are with us; others are wanting to come to an established group and we are just not that yet. So they drop by, sus us out and step on.

That's the way it goes. Maybe they'll drop back by in 5 years when we are very established, and maybe they never will. All beginnings are hard.

Today we continue our lessons in the Bible, and we have started only a week ago with Genesis chapter one verse one. Now we will look today at more of Genesis chapter one. But remember, we cannot even begin to imagine the beginning as it really was. This is just a glimpse. This is just an image of what really was.

We see the beginning of time and matter, of space and energy according to the people of the world. We look through the glass dimly and even more dimly is it over 6000 years ago. Actually the beginning is only the beginning in human history. Before time began, we know God the Father loved the Son and enjoyed Him. Before time began we know the Lamb of God was slain. Before the foundations of the earth, God and the angels had sweet communion, and then some broke ranks and entered the heavenly rebellion that resulted in final judgment on Lucifer. As a result Lucifer became known as Satan, the resister, the defeated, but constant enemy of God.

So for those who are new to the Bible, this is a tough read. Tough due to time and space difference. Tough due to the subject matter. Tough due to our own incapacity. But well worth it if we will but give it a chance.

Read Gen. 1

This week of course here in Sydney was Fashion Week. And designers from the globe came here to strut their stuff. Today I'm going to share with you that God designs things. Eden is His consummate design. And as a result design is a valued enterprise in today's world, as it truly can reflect God the Master Designer or not. Today our story breaks down into an outline of:

God designed the place.

God designed a people

God designed a purpose.

God designed the place

Last time we spoke of God designing a place. What lengths He went to. He flung stars to space, making sun and moon, and physical matter to fill the greatness of the expanse of His glory.

There is an interesting parallel between the Creation account (Ge 1) and the account of the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus. In both the work of God (Ge 2:2; Ex 31:5) is to be accomplished by the “Spirit of God.” As God did his “work” of creation by means of the “Spirit of God,” so Israel was to do their “work” by means of the “Spirit of God.”

In the same way, Y'shua is the one who brought the Spirit of God to humanity, sending it down after His ascension so that we could be filled with the Spirit and accomplish His work.

Regarding the sun and moon coming after light, But the sun, moon, and stars are all to be included in the usual meaning of the phrase “heavens and the earth,” and thus according to the present account these celestial bodies were all created in v. 1. Verse 3 describes the appearance of the sun through the darkness (cf. 44:3; Ex 10:23; Ne 8:3). The division between “the day” and “the night” leaves little room for an interpretation of the “light” in v. 3 as other than that of the sun.

Remember, now, the purpose God has in sharing through Moses with us of Creation is to point to Eden. It's the zoom lens. Earlier we are outside the realm of cosmology and now the camera begins focusing through the mist, through the darkness, and onto earth, even onto the place of God's choosing, Eden itself.

The frequent repetition of “And God saw” (vv. 4, 10, 12, et. al.) describes the “seeing” activity of God. This is obviously an element that Moses wishes to emphasize about God. The first name given to God by others within the book is that of Hagar's: “El Roi” (the “God who sees,” 16:13; cf. 22:1-19, where the verb “to see” is rightfully translated in its secondary sense of “to provide”).

Other significant places where the author records God seeing are 6:5; 11:5; 18:21; these verses, however, record a tragic reversal of chapter 1, where God sees what is good.

If you will God sees the design, and He wants us to see it as well. Look and keep on looking. See what God sees. Look at things from God's point of view. Get it?

Continuing with the days of creation, the sense of the account of the second day is largely determined by one's understanding of the term "expanse". Does it reflect a cosmological perspective or an immediate, everyday experience (e.g., the "clouds" that hold the rain)? The text assigns it the meaning "to separate water from water" and calls it the "sky", a term that refers not only to the place of the sun, moon, and stars (v. 14) but also to where the birds fly (v. 20). Is there a single word or idea that would accommodate such uses of the term "expanse"? The word "sky" appears to cover this sense well. The "waters above" the sky is likely a reference to the clouds (cf. 7:11-12; 2Ki 7:2; Pss 104:3; 147:8; 148:4).

Third day (1:9-13)

9-13 There are two distinct acts of God on the third day: the preparation of the dry land and the seas, and the furnishing of the dry land with vegetation. Unlike the work of the second day, both acts are called "good," doubtless because they are for the benefit of humankind. Both acts relate to the preparation of the land (see comment on vv. 3-5), a central concern of the author (cf. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 26:4). Water is an obstacle standing in the way of inhabiting the dry land; it must be removed before humans can enjoy God's gift of the land (cf. the Flood, chs. 6-9, and the parting of the "Red Sea," Ex 14-15).

In his second act on the third day, God furnished the land with bushes and fruit trees. If in fact the author intended a connection to be drawn between God's furnishing the land with fruit trees in ch. 1 and his furnishing the "garden" with trees "good for food" in ch. 2, the focus of the Creation account, then, is on the part of God's creation that ultimately becomes the location of the

Garden of Eden. The selectivity of the Creation account can be seen in the fact that it focuses only on the “seed-bearing plants” and “fruit trees,” plants that are designed for human food. No other forms of vegetation are mentioned.

God is making us look closer at the place. He wants us to point and click there. To double click, and make the image larger. That's the point. Look inside the box, people. See what God is seeing here in Eden.

The word for “created” (bara) is used six times in the Creation account (1:1, 21, 27; 2:3).

Elsewhere the word “to make (asa) is used to describe God’s actions. Why is “created” used with reference to the “great creatures of the sea” (v. 21)? One suggestion is that here we have the beginning of a new stage in Creation, namely, of “living beings” (cf. vv. 1, 2, 26).

God designed a people

26-27 The beginning of the creation of the human race is marked by the usual “And God said.” However, God’s command that follows is not an impersonal (third person) “Let there be . . .” but rather the more personal (first person) “Let us make.” Second, whereas throughout the previous account the making of each creature is described as “according to its kind,” in the account of the creation of humankind it is specified that the man and the woman were made “in our [God’s] image,” not merely “according to his own kind.” Their image is not simply that of the human being; they share a likeness to the Creator. Third, the creation of humankind is specifically noted as a creation of “male and female.” Previously gender was not considered to be an important feature of the creation of the other forms of life, but for humanity it takes on importance. Thus the fact that God created “man” as “male and female” is stressed. Fourth, only human beings have been given dominion in God’s creation. This dominion is expressly stated to be over all other living creatures: sky, sea, and land. Thus the text portrays humanity as a special creature different from the rest of the creatures but like God, made in the image and likeness of God.

Many attempts have been made to explain the plural forms: “Let *us* make man in *our* image, in *our* likeness” : e.g., (1) the plural is a reference to the Trinity; (2) the plural is a reference to God and his heavenly court of angels; (3) the plural is an attempt to avoid the idea of an immediate resemblance of humans to God; (4) the plural is an expression of deliberation on God’s part as he sets out to create the human race. The singulars in v. 27 (“in his own image” and “in the image of God”; cf. 5:1) rule out explanation 2, since in the immediate context the creation of man and woman is said to be “in *his* image,” with no mention of them in the image of the angels. Explanations 3 and 4 are both possible, but neither explanation is specifically supported by the context. Verse 27 states twice that “man” was created in God’s image and a third time that man was created “male and female.” The same pattern is found in Ge 5:1-2a. The singular “man” is created as a plurality, “male and female.” In a similar way the one God (“And God said”) created humankind through an expression of his plurality (“Let us make man in our image”). Following this clue the divine plurality expressed in v. 26 is seen as an anticipation of the human plurality of the man and woman, thus casting the human relationship between man and woman as a reflection of God’s own personal relationship with himself.

28-31 The importance of the “blessing” (*barach*) cannot be overlooked since it remains a central theme throughout the book of Genesis and the Torah. The living creatures have already been blessed on the fifth day (v. 22); thus the blessing here extends to the whole of God’s living creatures, including human beings. The blessing itself is primarily posterity. Thus already the fulfillment of the blessing is tied to man’s “seed” and the notion of “life”—two themes that will later dominate the narratives of Genesis.

We’ll get to chapter two next week and see much more about blessing.

But for now, let’s reevaluate verse 26.

God designed a purpose.

Near the end of his life, Jean-Paul Sartre told Pierre Victor: "I do not feel that I am the product of chance, a speck of dust in the universe, but someone who was expected, prepared, prefigured. In short, a being whom only a Creator could put here; and this idea of a creating hand refers to God."

Protested fellow philosopher and long-time companion Simone de Beauvoir: "How should one explain the senile act of a turncoat?"

HIS Magazine, April, 1983.

So what?

On a plaque marking Abraham Lincoln's birthplace near Hodgenville, Kentucky, is recorded this scrap of conversation: "Any news down 't the village, Ezry?" "Well, Squire McLain's gone t' Washington t' see Madison swore in, and ol' Spellman tells me this Bonaparte fella has captured most o' Spain. What's new out here, neighbor?" "Nuthin' nuthin' a'tall, 'cept fer a new baby born t' Tom Lincoln's. Nothin' ever happens out here." Some events, whether birthdays in Hodgenville (or Bethlehem) or spiritual rebirth in a person's life, may not create much earthly splash, but those of lasting importance will eventually get the notice they deserve.

One man can make a difference, and one person Adam and one person Eve, certainly did. We'll look in detail about them in the weeks to come about their choices and their influence. Let's make sure we understand, God designed Eden for humanity and Him to share. He designed the people to have fellowship and pleasure with Him forever. God designed us for His purposes and all our purposes will be for naught if we do not follow Him.

God designs your whole life. Your friends, your lifestyle, your relationships. Your job.

Education. Potential. Meet Him, Pray to be part of His kingdom, his government, then listen.

There's much more he'll say.