



The Good Creation



The Beginning

The Bible begins with the beginning of the universe.¹ The Bible starts, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..." (*Genesis 1:1*).²

The Days of Creation

Genesis 1 presents the six days³ of creation, which may be summarized as follows.

Location	Inhabitants
1. Light and dark	4. Lights of day and night
2. Sea and sky	5. Fish and birds
3. Fertile earth	6. Land animals (including mankind)
7. Rest and enjoyment	

Source: *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 50.

On the sixth day God created man. Read Genesis 1:26-31.⁴ God created humans "in his own image"⁵ to reflect and represent him.

The Seventh Day

Read Genesis 2:1-3. God rested, not because he was tired but because he completed his creative work. "The motif of God's resting hints at the purpose of creation... God's purpose for the earth is that it should become his dwelling place; it is not simply to house his creatures."⁶

¹ The first book of the Bible is called 'Genesis' which means 'origin' or 'beginning.'

² Before God created the universe, nothing else existed except God himself. Only God is truly eternal. In the beginning God created everything. See Psalm 33:6, 9; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 4:11.

³ Christians differ in their interpretation of 'days' in Genesis 1, primarily including 1) the 'days' are six successive 24-hour days ('young earth view'); 2) the 'days' are six sequential ages of unspecified duration ('day-age view'); 3) the 'days' should be interpreted symbolically as part of a literary framework ('literary framework view'); and 4) the 'days' should be interpreted analogically as 'God's workdays' ('analogical day view').

⁴ 'Let us' (1:26) – The Bible consistently describes God as One. Scholars differ on their interpretation of the plural here, but it most likely refers to the plurality in the Godhead – that is, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (though 'the Trinity' would not be fully revealed until the New Testament).

⁵ The 'image of God' is commonly described as the reflection of particular qualities of God for which at least a partial counterpart can be found in his human creations. This includes spiritual life; moral consciousness; ability to think abstractly, appreciate beauty; creativity; capacity to relate to God and other humans, and to represent God. In the context of Genesis 1:26, the emphasis is mankind's responsibility to exercise dominion over the earth as God's vice-regents (*cp. Psalm 8*). Human beings are special, and given a status and role superior to all other visible creation. The biblical concept of mankind is perfectly consistent with mankind's propensity for knowledge, discovery, invention, progress, development, beauty, art, etc.

The Garden of Eden

The second account of creation (*Genesis 2:4-25*) provides more detail, especially concerning the creation of the man and the woman and their unique responsibility. "According to Gen. 1, man and woman, as those who image God, are to display his image as they rule the world for God. In Gen. 2, this rule begins in the garden the Lord planted."⁷ Read Genesis 2:8-14.

? The garden of Eden was a wonderful place. "Eden" (*Hebrew 'ēden*) means "delight." Would you consider it the *perfect* place?

In Vaughan Robert's words, "We see in the garden of Eden a pattern of the kingdom of God" but the "perfected kingdom" is future.⁸ The garden of Eden was "very good" (*Genesis 1:31*) but it was lost. The future New Jerusalem will be *perfect* and will last forever (*Revelation 21-22*).

Genesis 2:15 – 18, 22, 25 (NIV)

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,⁹ for when you eat from it you will certainly die." ¹⁸ The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Verses 19-21 describe the man's responsibility of naming all of the living creatures, and his need for a suitable helper, whom God provided by taking one of the "man's ribs" while he was in a deep sleep.



²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.¹⁰

Discussion Questions

1. There are different ideas about the origin of humans. The Bible says "God created" humans, while others say humans resulted from "naturalistic evolution" (that is, without God's involvement). Does this make any difference concerning "meaning" and "purpose?" Explain.

⁶ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 52.

⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty* (Grand Rapids, IL: Baker Academic, 2013), 7.

⁸ Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 33.

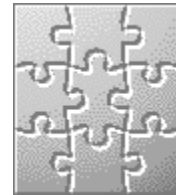
⁹ 'the knowledge of good and evil' – Interpretations include (1) consequential experiential knowledge of good and evil; (2) God-like wisdom, but some knowledge is God's sole preserve, and knowledge must be sought in the right way; (3) moral autonomy. Only God has the authority to decide what is right, and seeking 'the knowledge of good and evil' is an expression of autonomy (moral independence from God) which is contrary to submission to God. In line with Keil and Delitzsch, Collins says that 'God intended through this tree [that] humans would come to know good and evil: either from above, as masters over temptation [by *not* eating from it], or from below, as slaves to sin' [by eating from it] (C. John Collins, *Science & Faith* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003], 137-138).

¹⁰ The original human condition involved harmony with God and each other. It was a condition of moral innocence.

2. Based on Genesis 1:26-2:21, what responsibilities are given to the first humans?¹¹ In what specific ways does this apply to us today?

3. What is temporarily lacking for the first man? (2:20-22) God removes this lack by providing what man needs. Why is this provision so important?¹²

4. What seems to be the character or mood of the earliest human setting, and how does it compare to now?¹³ How should this affect us?



Reflection & Application

- Continue to think about question 1 above. If you have difficulty accepting the belief that “God created,” investigate available resources that present valid alternatives to pure naturalism. For books, videos, and other resources, contact Jay.
- The creation described in Genesis 1-2 was “very good.” There was blessing and harmony. However, in today’s world, there is much trouble and disharmony. Yet we still seek blessing and harmony. Reflect on Genesis 1-2 and ponder the question, “How can we truly have blessing and harmony?”
- To what extent can we experience that blessing and harmony today?¹⁴ As Christians, what specific things can we do to experience more blessing and harmony in our daily lives?
- Re-read Genesis 1-2, and read Genesis 3 before the next lesson.

¹¹ Humans are to 1) rule over creation (1:26, 28) on God’s behalf; 2) reproduce and fill the earth (1:28); 3) work and take care of the earth (2:15), which is connected to (1); 4) follow God’s commands (2:16-17); 5) name the living creatures (2:19-20), which is connected to (1); and 5) help one another (2:18, 20b-21).

¹² What is lacking? A suitable helper (2:18, 20b) – that is, woman. It is not good for man to be alone. Human relationships are necessary for the creation to be ‘very good’ (1:31). Of course, the man-woman relationship is significant because the sexes complement each other, and reproduction requires it (otherwise humans could not fill the earth!). But the need for human relationships, in general, is the broader significance.

¹³ Harmony is seen in the various relationships: 1) man & God; 2) man & earth; 3) man & woman (other humans). God’s creation was ‘very good’ (1:31). However, our world today is full of bad. Something went wrong and restoration is needed. Redemption is needed. Almost everyone understands that things are not as good as they should be, or can be. This is ‘common ground’ shared by both Christian believers and nonbelievers.

¹⁴ The Bible says, ‘if anyone is in Christ, [that person is a new creation]. The old has gone, the new is here!’ (2 Corinthians 5:17). In other words, that person is part of the new order. We *can* find purpose, peace, and harmony in Christ, through faith in Him as Savior and Lord. This is spiritual. We still live in this messed up world, but one day those who are ‘in Christ’ will enter the ultimate peace and harmony in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22). Still, even in the present time, we can experience blessing, peace, and harmony, in part, as we live in Christ.