

The sermon

Intro

Last week we learned about an unformed and unfilled earth. God formed the earth in days 1-3. God fills the earth in days 4-6.

This morning, we'll look at days 4-7, what Genesis 1:1-2:3 meant for Moses' original audience, and address the age of the earth question.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Day four (1:14-19)

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. – 1:14-15

God speaks lights into existence for three reasons:

1. "to separate the day from the night"
2. "for signs and for seasons, and for days and years" = to mark off the passage of time.
3. "to give light upon the earth"

"**expanse**" = the sky/the atmosphere.

And God made the two great lights- the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night- and the stars. – 1:16

Three categories of lights:

1. "greater light" = sun. Which we see during the day.
2. "lesser light" = moon. Which we see during the night.
3. "the stars" = every other light in the sky.

And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. – 1:17-18

The heavens are populated. God's pleased with his work once again.

And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. – 1:19

The fourth day is complete.

Comment

Some make a big deal that the sun arrives on the 4th day. We have light before the sun (1st day). We have vegetation before the sun (3rd day). Simple explanation. God supplied the light by other means.

It appears things were like they'll be in the new heavens and new earth. No need of sun or moon because Jesus is the lamp (Rev 21:23).

Note Genesis isn't intended to be a science textbook. Things are described as we see them, not from a scientific viewpoint. Here the clouds (waters above) are above the sun, moon, and stars (in the expanse). In reality, the sun is behind the clouds and higher than the clouds.

Day five (1:20-23)

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." – 1:20

God speaks sea creatures and birds into existence. ***"swarm with swarms"*** = multiplication of sea creatures to fill the sea.

So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. – 1:21

"living creatures" distinguishes sea creatures from vegetation. Plant/trees aren't living creatures.

"according to their kinds...according to its kind" = indicates boundaries and distinctions within the animal realm.

God's pleased with his work.

And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." – 1:22

God's blessing upon animal life is ability to reproduce and multiply, to fill/populate the earth.

Here God speaks reproduction into existence.

And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. – 1:23

The fifth day is complete.

Day six (1:24-31)

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds- livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. – 1:24

God speaks land animals into existence. ***"Let the earth bring forth"*** seems to mean God tells the ground to produce these animals and it does. God creates animal life by telling the ground what to do!

"livestock" = four-footed, domesticated animals, especially cattle/livestock.

"creeping things" = smaller animals like rodents and reptiles that move close to the ground.

"beasts of the earth" = wild animals of the land.

And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. – 1:25

God approves of his work.

Then 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 birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. – 1:26-27

“*Let us*” = plurality (more than one) within God. In 1:2 and 1:26, we have hints at the Trinity: one God eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit.

“*man*” = mankind, both man and woman.

“*image*” = replica, representation. Often refers to idols, a visible representation of a false god.

“*likeness*” = to be like, to resemble. Man is similar to God.

Likeness explains image. Man is a replica of God, but not an identical replica of God. We’re like God, yet different than God. Because God is spirit, we’re a visible representation of the invisible God.

Image/likeness pertains to our **nature** that’s like God (intellect, feelings, desires, relational). Our nature enables our **function**: to rule over God’s creation.

Like God, we think, we plan, we assess, we evaluate. Like God, we rejoice, we experience pleasure, we desire, we grieve, we get angry. Like God we experience loving relationships.

Image/likeness means:

1. We were created to reflect God to one another.
2. We were created to rule over creation for God.
3. We were created for relationships.

With God and one another.

4. We were created to find our identity in God.

Not in wealth, possessions, abilities, beauty, muscles, skin color, etc. Fundamentally, who am I? I am the image and likeness of God! That’s why you have value. That’s why there’s a death penalty.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." – 1:28

God’s blessing is indicated by five commands:

1. “*Be fruitful*” = produce offspring.
2. “*multiply*” = multiplication through offspring.
3. “*fill the earth*” = fill the earth with people.

Where there’s land, there should be people. God wasn’t concerned with an over-populated earth. God was concerned with an under-populated earth.

4. “*subdue it*” = make the earth serve you. Use its resources for your benefit (fields, minerals, trees, animals).
5. “*have dominion*” = rule over.

Animal life multiplies. Humans multiply and rule. Life has purpose. Humans exist to fill the earth and rule over it!

And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. – 1:29

Man's food was plants and fruit. This indicates to me that humans didn't eat animals before the fall.

And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. – 1:30

Animals were given plants for food. This indicates to me that animals didn't eat animals before the fall.

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. – 1:31

"**very good**" ≠ God gave himself a B for his previous work and he gave himself an A for mankind. Things are "**very good**" because God's creation work is complete. The unformed and unfilled mass (earth) is now well-ordered and filled and systems are in place for the ongoing survival of God's creation.

Three duties of mankind:

1. Fill.
2. Rule.
3. Reflect.

Practical question: how am I personally contributing to the command to subdue the earth?

Practical question: how am I reflecting God (thinking, feeling, goals, relationally)?

Practical question: where do I find my identity?

Day seven

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. – 2:1

The process of creating "**the heavens and the earth**" (everything) is finished/completed/concluded.

"**all the host**" = stars, animal life, humans, etc.

And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. – 2:2

"**he rested**" = ceased working.

A word of caution. God ceased his creation work. But God didn't stop his activity within creation (deism). For example, no sparrow falls to the ground unless God wills it (Matt 10:29). Jesus is holding all things together (Col 1:17).

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. – 2:3

The 7th day is holy = set apart, special, not common. God resting on the 7th day served as a pattern for Israel's observance of the Sabbath under the Old Covenant.

Implication: totally unlike the pagan gods

One of the reasons Moses wrote Genesis chapter one was to distinguish Yahweh from the false gods of Israel's day.

1. Unlike polytheism (many/multiple gods), there is only one true God.
2. Unlike the gods of the nations that had hierarchies (gods ruled over other gods, greater and lesser gods), there is only one true God...who rules over all.
3. Unlike the gods of the nations who were at war with one another and could be defeated in battle, there is only one true God...whose power is unrivaled and has no equals.
4. Unlike the gods of the nations that could be killed or transformed, the one true God is indestructible and unchanging.
5. Unlike the gods of the nations whose realm of rule was limited (e.g., over one nation, over the sea, over the sun, over fertility), the one true God rules over every place (heavens and the earth) and over every object (sun and moon and stars) and every aspect of life (reproduction, kinds, etc.).
6. Unlike the created gods of the nations, the one true God has always been...and he's the one and only source of all that exists.
7. Unlike the nations who ascribed deity to stars and planets, the stars and the planets were created objects subject to the commands of the one true God.

Moses wrote Genesis so that the people would be clear on one true God who created rules over all that exists.

In our day, we have Genesis one so that we don't believe human life is the result of alien civilizations seeding life on earth. Or that the universe can create itself and its creatures from nothing.

Let's talk Genesis and science.

What about the age of the earth?

I'm young earth. Maybe you're unsettled on this matter. We can disagree on this and still fellowship together. I don't want a doctrinal statement that prevents disagreement here.

Honestly, I wanted to believe the earth was billions of years old. I was undecided for about 10 years. I looked for a way to make the Bible fit with science. I read hundreds of pages. How do they interpret the key passages? Where do they get billions of years from Scripture? Where does the Bible teach this? These were the questions I was asking.

After much reading, I couldn't square billions of years with Scripture. I looked for ways to make the Bible fit, but I couldn't do it.

Genesis versus science

I don't place the conclusions of modern science (their interpretations of data) on equal footing with the Bible. I don't feel a need to make the Bible square with modern science.

I let the Bible speak freely. I let the words of Scripture dictate how I am to understand whatever the Bible talks about.

We might use science to re-evaluate our interpretation of Scripture. I did. Am I missing something? But ultimately, we go with the words of Scripture.

If you disagree with my conclusions, make sure Scripture is driving your conclusions!

Day?

24 hour days. Why?

1. “*And there was evening and morning*” indicates a 24 hour day.
2. “*days*” in 1:14 refers to 24 hour day.
3. During the six days, God was establishing order within his creation. Time was one of the things God established, including 24 hour days (see 1:14).
4. Time was established on the 1st day (“*morning and evening*”).
5. I see no contextual indicators telling us that we should understand each day as a long period of time. God speaks and it’s there.

But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' – **Mark 10:6**

Jesus says God made Adam and Eve at “*the beginning of creation.*” If Adam and Eve were created at the beginning, we shouldn’t think they were created billions of years after the beginning.

Mark 10:6 indicates the period of time, before day one, in which “***The earth was without form and void***” (1:2) was rather brief, not billions of years.

My strongest argument comes from Romans 8

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. – Romans 8:19-22

Presently, creation itself (land, seas, plants, trees, animals, etc.) longs to “*be set free from its bondage to corruption.*” Creation’s in a corrupted state because “*the creation was subjected to futility.*” “*him who subjected it* is God. This state will be lifted when the sons of God are revealed = 2nd coming. When we’re given immortal/imperishable bodies.

When did God subject creation to futility/bondage to corruption? At the fall. Genesis three. Creation’s corruption stems from the fall.

What’s meant by “***bondage to corruption***”?

The word can mean:

1. Destruction/ruin, the final state of the wicked.
2. Inward moral corruption, depravity.
3. Rot or decay within organic matter; breakdown of organic matter; decomposition/deterioration.

Destruction/ruin doesn't fit because creation wasn't subjected to the lake of fire. Moral corruption/depravity doesn't fit, because plant life, trees, etc. weren't subjected to moral corruption. The only one that fits is decay/decomposition of matter.

CSB and NIV have "*bondage to decay.*" NET has "*bondage of decay.*"

So decay happened at the fall. Meaning no decay before the fall. What does decomposition of matter result in? Death. Physical decay leads to death. Meaning the fall brought death to creation, not just man. Meaning animal death originated at the fall. Meaning animal death didn't exist before the fall.

So Romans 8 places Scripture in direct conflict with the consensus scientific interpretation of the fossil record (millions of years of animal death prior to mankind).

Additionally, Genesis 1:29-30 indicates humans and animals didn't eat animals before the fall. Humans ate plants and fruit. Animals ate plants.

So I conclude creation took six 24 hour days plus the brief period of time when "*The earth was without form and void*" (1:2).

The earth is approximately 10,000-20,000 years old. This is based on genealogy gaps.

Conclusion

Creation was very good. Later "*creation was subjected to futility.*" To "*bondage to corruption.*" God's creation was ruined by the disobedience of Adam and Eve.

Corruption involved physical decay. So we die. Sin came into the world too. So we sin. Our greatest need is to be rescued from sin and death.

In this life, God rescues from sin by giving new hearts to his people. So that we can rule for God rather than for ourselves. In the life to come, God gives his people bodies that can't decay or die. So that we can rule with him forever.

Jesus Christ, God the Son, died on the cross as a sinless substitute. So that all who believe in him will be rescued from sin and death.

Are you unsure of where you stand with God? Do you see the sin and death? If so, turn from your sins by trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus came to reverse the curse!