



**Sunday School Lesson Summary for September 2, 2007
Released on August 29, 2007**

"God Created the Universe"

Printed Text: Genesis 1:1-6, 8, 10, 12-15, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25

Background Scripture: Genesis 1:1-25

Devotional Reading: Psalm 8

Genesis 1:1-6

1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

4 And God saw the light, that *it was good*: and God divided the light from the darkness.

5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

Genesis 1:8 & 10

8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:12-15

12 And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

Genesis 1:19-20

19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl *that* may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

Genesis 1:22-23

22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

Genesis 1:25

25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after hi kind: and God saw that *it was*; good.

INTRODUCTION

As you are probably aware, evolution is the theory that all life forms developed from the very simple into the more complex, a process taking millions of years.

While the proponents of evolution frequently assert that this theory is a fact, it has never been proved — nor can it be! Others, called theistic evolutionists, claim that God used evolution to bring about life on our planet. A great many evolutionists, however, are atheists. Evolution, they say, leaves no place for belief in a Creator.

In contrast to the mechanistic theory of evolution is the simple but profound account of Creation found in Genesis, the book of beginnings. Genesis should not be thought of primarily as a book of science, for it never claims to be that.

It is nevertheless an accurate account of the beginnings of the universe and of life on earth.

Interestingly, a growing number of scientists today do not believe that the world is millions of years old. In addition, the intelligent design theory is being proposed by some, suggesting that the world is too complex to have evolved over time by random chance.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Genesis is not merely the first book in the Bible. It stands as the first book in a five-book section of the Old Testament we call the Pentateuch, or the Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). This collection was finished

long before the end of the Old Testament period; it was already in use during the times of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, many centuries before Christ.

The overall purpose of the Pentateuch is to tell the story of the origins of the nation of Israel. With this purpose in view, we can understand that Genesis serves as an introduction to the great events of nation-birthing found in Exodus. Genesis provides us with the place to start: the beginning, with God's creation of the heaven and the earth. What better place to start could there be?

Included in this account is the creation of humanity, the first man and woman. They are the ancestors of all people, not just the nation of Israel. The tragedy of Genesis is that humanity rebelled against its creator. Sin flourished. Later, the story focuses on Abraham, father of the nation of Israel. He was chosen because God planned to use one of his descendants (Jesus) to redeem humanity from the bondage of sin.

And so we begin the greatest story ever told. It is the drama of human origins and humanity's eventual deliverance from its self-caused alienation from the creator of the universe. The stage could be no bigger.

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to see how God created the universe in six days.

Principle: to know that God is always active in the work of creation.

Application: Make a plan for greater stewardship toward one aspect of God's created resources.

God at the Beginning (Genesis 1:1, 2)

Where did God come from? The opening of Genesis has no comment on *God* other than to place Him at *the beginning*. However far back in time we can imagine, God was there! This is an understated, yet striking testimony to God's eternity. God is uncreated, separate and apart from any created thing. The existence of an uncreated creator is the reason there can be anything instead of nothing. The universe is not self-explanatory. It exists because God upholds it by His powerful word (see Hebrews 1:3; 11:3; Psalm 19:1).

1. What does it mean that "the earth was without form" (Genesis 1:2)?

When "God created the heaven and earth" the earth was "without form, and void." God has yet to mold it into final state.

At this point in creation, the future home of humanity is characterized three ways. First, it is *without form* or unfinished; Second, it is *void* or empty; the living creatures who will inhabit it have yet to be created. Third, it is dark; this is not a limiting factor for God (see Psalm 139:12), but the condition must be changed in order for earth to be a suitable habitation for humans.

2. How is the Trinity seen in the biblical passages concerning the Creation? (Gen. 1:2b)

Particularly noteworthy is the presence of the Spirit of God moving across the face of the waters in the latter part of verse 2. We know that the preincarnate Son of God was active in Creation (John 1:1-3), and the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is affirmed at the beginning of the Bible (cf. Ps. 104:30).

3. What should our acceptance of the fact that God created the world mean in our lives on a day-to-day basis?

Humans think of themselves as rulers and owners of the world. But the truth is that the world belongs to God. God provided the world to meet our needs, but also to demonstrate His glory. Therefore, it is our role to be caretakers of the earth, not abusers. Instead of treating the world as our disposable possession, we are to view it as something for which we are to be responsible stewards.

This realization affects our understanding of ecology and environment (although "environmental extremism" is to be avoided, as it tends to see the earth itself as something almost to be worshiped). How we care for the earth is an indicator of what we think of the things of God. As stewards of this world, we are to be faithful.

Creation, Days 1–3 (Genesis 1:3–6, 8, 10, 12, 13)

4. What did God do on His first day of creation (vs. 3-5)?

God's first day of creation concerns not living creatures but *light*. It is difficult to conceive of life without light, for it is a necessary component of life as we generally understand it. If there were no light, it would be a blind universe.

Notice that *darkness* is not created. Light is separated from darkness, but there is no sense of God "making darkness." This is because darkness has no real existence. It is simply an absence, a lack of light. Darkness is a "without." This is why darkness is an apt metaphor for moral evil and sin, which is living "without God" (our moral light).

Verse 5 establishes the pattern for the days of creation. The expression "the evening and the morning" establishes the pattern for the days of creation. Each section ends with the statement the evening and morning were the ... day, indicating a creative cycle has been completed. This is also the source of the Bible way of reckoning days. For most of the Jews of Bible times, the new day does not begin at sunrise but at sundown, because that signals the end of the old day.

5. What is meant by "firmament" (vs. 6,8)?

The word "firmament" can be understood as the expanse of the sky. "On the second day God separated the atmospheric waters from the terrestrial waters by an arching expanse, the sky. This suggest that previously there had been a dense moisture enshrouding the earth" (Walvoord and Zuck).

This firmament is called "Heaven" (Gen. 1:8). Both the place where the sun, moon, and stars exist and the air where the birds fly were called "heaven" by the ancients. Throughout Scripture, the term is also used of the place where God's throne exists (Ps. 103:19; Isa. 66:1).

The term Heaven here probably does not refer to the dwelling place of God and His angels. Rather, it is the sky and atmosphere above the earth, the place where birds fly.

Thus the second day of Creation concluded with God making the firmament, or sky. Without this atmosphere surrounding the world, no life could exist on earth.

6. What would be a very practical reason for gathering the waters? (vs. 10, 12-13)

A practical reason for gathering the waters would be to produce a distinction between the "Earth" and the "Seas." The organization of the earth continues. Now *the waters* are no longer allowed to dominate, but are confined to appropriate areas. This allows for *dry land*, a prerequisite for plant life.

Once the land appeared, God was able to create the great variety of plant life that exists in the world. He created within each kind of living thing the ability to reproduce after its kind. This took place on the third day.

Creation, Days 4–6 (Genesis 1:14, 15, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25)

The author now moves on to describe the creation of the patterns of the earth in relation to other heavenly bodies.

7. How does the author describe the fourth day of creation (vs. 14, 15, 19)?

The author is explaining how *days* and *seasons* came into being, thus allowing for the growing cycles that result in crop production from the plant life (food) that came in day three.

It is astounding for us to contemplate the perfection and intricacy of God's system! Consider that water can exist in its liquid form only within a very narrow temperature range, namely from 32 to 212 degrees Fahrenheit. This is a tiny slice of the range of temperatures found in our solar system, from the inferno of the sun (27 million degrees Fahrenheit at its core) to the temperature of absolute zero of the outer planets (approaching -459 degrees Fahrenheit).

Yet, because of the precise distance that the earth is positioned from the sun as well as various other factors, water is able to remain liquid over most of our planet. There could be no life as we know it without this precious liquid.

Furthermore, if earth were not in its precise location, revolving around the sun and rotating on its axis, life could not be sustained. If the world were just a little closer to the sun, we would burn up, a little farther, and we would freeze. Could this have occurred by accident? The precision with which the world and the universe operate is more evidence for believing in a divine Creator. Modern scientific knowledge does not negate the majesty of these verses, but only makes them more astounding.

8. When God blessed the animals, what did He tell them to do? (v. 22)

On the fifth day of Creation, God made the creatures that live in the waters and those that fly in the air. He blessed them and told them to be fruitful and multiply in the earth. God's blessing enabled them to reproduce after their kind and to enjoy

what He had created. Later, God would bless man and command him to, "Be fruitful, and multiply,...and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (v. 28).

At the time of the writing of Genesis, the total human population of the earth was a tiny fraction of what it is today. Even so, the rivers and oceans of Genesis are full of fish, and the skies are full of a marvelous variety of birds. The few urban varieties of birds that most people are familiar with today are but a small fraction of the avian creatures.

The Lewis and Clark expedition explored the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. some 200 years ago. On that expedition the explorers observed such a heavy migration of salmon that it seemed as if one could walk across the river on the backs of the fish! This abundance now has been reduced, but we can still appreciate God's original provision for *the earth*.

9. What is the main purpose of the Creation account? (v. 25)

The sixth day of creation was God's last stage of preparation of the earth for the coming of humanity is to create land animals. The term cattle has the larger meaning of range animals that eat plant life. Later, the author differentiates between domesticated and wild animals of this class (Genesis 3:14).

In all of this, God was carefully preparing the universe in which people would live and prosper.

The purpose of Genesis 1 is to render praise to the Creator and to give a basic outline of how God made the world. Our existence and sustenance are made possible by the mighty works of God. The Lord has the ability to sustain everything that He has created. He is worthy to be praised.

CONCLUSION

"All Creation Waits"

Violin players are taught from the first day of lessons that their violins must be tuned every time they play. The longer the violinist waits to retune, the worse the instrument sounds. After Adam and Eve's disobedience, creation ended up being "out of tune" because of sin. The one who created our earth and its heavens intends to return and "retune" it according to His perfect will.

Paul teaches that all creation is anticipating the revelation of God's ultimate purpose (see Romans 8:19-23). Paul even speaks of creation groaning in pain as it waits for its creator (Romans 8:22). The one who created will re-create, and there will be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). What a glorious day that will be! Then sin will be no more, and "he shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

As wonderful as this promise is, however, we do not know when God's re-creation of the universe will be. It could be tomorrow. It could be 10,000 years from now. Until that day, this present universe is what we have. Although it is marred by human sin, it retains the pattern and intention of the master designer.

That fact should bring praise to our lips. When science discovers some new intricacy or complexity in nature, we should marvel. When we see the vivid colors of the sunrise on a stately peak, we should stop to ponder the artistry of the maker. When we are high in the mountains on a clear night and see the uncountable stars in all their majesty, we should stand in awe of their creator, for "the heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1).

PRAYER

Mighty and loving creator, the all-wise and all-powerful God, may we stand in awe of Your master design and plan for the universe. May we live daily in appreciation of the marvels of Your creation, our world, which exists and is sustained through the word of Your power. In Jesus' name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

It was God who created.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Study Background Scripture: **Genesis 1:26–2:3** "God Created Humankind."

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