

## A Good and Full Creation

Genesis 1:2-25

### Introduction

**Let the Text Speak:** \*Disclaimer. Let the text speak. It's not enough to believe that God speaks through Scripture, we have to develop the discipline and skills to interpret it well (e.g., take our cues from Jesus and the Apostles). That means, among other things, we submit to the **Spirit** of God, we interpret along with the **community** of faith, and we try to understand the literary and theological **context** of the text.

- There is more than one way to undermine your stated belief in the inerrancy of Scripture. (1) Not emphasizing the themes and focus of Scripture in **due proportion** to the text. (2) Forcing personal or **modern** questions on this ancient text.

Modern believers (understand it is a particularly *modern* problem) have obsessed over the debate between creation and evolution. If Ken Hamm is your spirit animal and you take an annual pilgrimage to the Ark Encounter in Kentucky then I imagine you'll be a disappointed in this sermon. Not because the Bible doesn't speak to the issue (it does, cf. *40 Questions About Creation and Evolution*, Ken Keathley and Mark Rooker) but because **that is not the point of this passage**. Those types of questions are not bad and the text answers some of them directly and indirectly but that is not the main burden of this passage (e.g., like reading a cookbook to learn how to grow a cucumber).

Don't worry, we know that "all Scripture is God-breathed" and is completely true. We know that Jesus, Paul, and the rest of the Bible affirm the historicity of Adam (which is very significant in our understanding of sin and salvation, cf. Rom 5). But... I believe the Bible is **so** inspired that I want to let it speak. I want it to give me answers but also help me see the questions I should be asking. I want to understand it in the context it was written and get the intended meaning of the author. This means I want to know what it "says" and avoid too much speculation about what it doesn't say (e.g., don't be like a politician that always turns to their talking points regardless of the question asked, let the text determine the course of the conversation).

**Recap:** Last week we looked at the powerful first words of the Bible: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. We tried to tease out the implications of this paradigm-altering and world-defining truth. We looked at the eternity of God and the basic truth that everything is created by him. We focused on the "who" of God and this week we see the "how" of creation. When you put the "who" and the "how" together you start to understand the "why" of creation.

**Order and Purpose:** This week we see the purpose and design of God's creation (e.g., order, design). Too many people focus on the **timing** of creation and miss the **purpose** of creation.

**Fills the Empty:** What I've been struck with this week is not the mere *fact* that God created or the *power* he displayed in creation but the generosity of creating a good world for us to enjoy (e.g., kids room doesn't just have bed, dresser bookshelf, but is filled with books, star wars sheets, pictures, painted, toys, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup> And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. <sup>6</sup> And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup> And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. <sup>9</sup> And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup> And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. <sup>14</sup> 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, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. <sup>20</sup> 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.” <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> 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.

**Situation:** <sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Creation has come into being but the land is described as “without form and void” or “formless and empty.” It is a “wasteland” and “uninhabitable.” What is God going to do with all of this creation? He is going to paint a beautiful scene on this empty canvas.

**Formless and Empty:** תְּהוֹ וָבֹהוּ *tohu wabohu* My wife’s ability to take the blank canvas of a beautiful house and furnish it. She fills it with beauty, love, personality. The house is functional and fine but she fills it. Further, the emptiness only highlights the beauty of the filling.

- God loves to take the blank spaces of our lives and fill them with his beauty.

## Recap

**Day 1: Separate the Light from the Dark (vv. 3-5)** <sup>3</sup> And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. **God spoke** and light came to be. The light was **good**. And God separated it from the dark. All that is comes from the **word** of God. This account of creation makes abundantly clear that whatever battle exists between light and dark (i.e., dualism) still falls under the sovereign power of God. Light serves at his call, as does the dark.

- You’ll notice that the sun and moon and stars don’t appear until **day 4**. We’ll talk about that in a bit. The Israelites lived in a culture that revered the Sun and the moon and the stars as divine beings to be worshipped. But God is showing that he is the source of light, not these astral beings. There is no space to idolize the stars.
- Evening to morning (i.e., the Jewish day starts at sunset) is “day one.”

**Day 2: Separate the Waters (vv. 6-8)** <sup>6</sup> And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup> And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. The poetic picture of God creating something to separate the waters on the earth from the waters of the skies (often thought to be the atmosphere). This is the continuation of God forming and fashioning the land into a place that is habitable for his **ultimate creation**, human beings.

- The same God that separates the waters to make the land habitable for us is the same God who sustains us in his creation forever. It reminds me of the Israelites after they cross the Red Sea. God separated the water from the water so they could walk through on dry land (cf. Ex 14-15). The result is a call to praise God (cf. Moses’ song). Creation should cause praise.
- “The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him (Ex 15:2).

**Day 3: Separate the Water from the Land (vv. 9-13)** <sup>9</sup> And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup> And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. We get to the third day (Tuesday?) of creation where God gathers the water and brings up the dry land. He then decorates the land with vegetations and fruit trees. The earth begins to play its part in facilitating the growth of trees. Twice in this section (vv. 10, 12) God looks at his creation and declares it is good.

- Various attempts to explain the “twice” good have been proposed. One suggestion is that this twice good creation both makes up for the lack of mention of “good” in day 2.
- Another explains both the lack of “good” in day 2 and the “twice good” in day 3 to be functions of the purpose of those days in relationship to humanity. Day 2 doesn’t directly impact humanity as day 3 (e.g., fruit, etc.).

- Notice how the description of the days gets longer and longer as you progress toward the peak of Creation (i.e., humanity).
- In any case, this is why Tuesdays are historically special days for Jewish weddings because they are “doubly blessed” (remember that in the next tough Tuesday).

**Day 4: Fill the Heavens (vv. 14-19)** <sup>14</sup> 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, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. God creates the sun, moon, and stars to separate seasons, days, years, and times. They become the beings that bear the light for the universe. Light existed before the sun, moon, and stars (cf. day 1). Reminder that light originates with God. So worship God not the sun.

- Ancient cultures most frequently worshipped the sun, moon, and stars (e.g., Sun God).. Here they are not even named but merely called “lights” or “two great lights” or “the greater” and “lesser light.” These false gods are not even dignified by name.
  - What the Ancient Near Eastern culture considered the most powerful god(s) were not even able to be named in the presence of the one, true God.
  - The ancient belief that your fate was held by the alignment of the stars, that harvest and fertility were at the behest of the sun god and moon god might seem ridiculous to us but it makes a little sense in the ancient world (e.g., harvest, etc.).
  - And, the number of people in our day-and-age (some claiming to be Christians at that) who believe in horoscopes *astounds* me.
- The sun, moon, and stars serve at the behest of the one true God. *Worship him. Trust him.*
  - In Revelation, when Jesus returns: “When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place (Rev 6:12-14).
  - “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Rev. 21:23).
- When Jesus returns, there is nothing to worship but him. In heaven, there is no sun because God is the source of light.

**Don’t worship creation.** Romans 1 reminds us that the worship of the created thing over the creator is idolatry. That idolatry dooms us to disorder and devolution. It pulls us away from our purpose and turns our focus inward to ourselves. And no created thing is able to bear the weight of worship and glory that only God can (REI or beach worship, SALT life). Can you *enjoy* creation without worshipping it?

**Day 5: Fill the Sky and the Water (vv. 20-23)** <sup>20</sup> 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.” <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. God fills the waters he separated with fish and other creatures and the sky with birds. Even the great sea creatures (famous in ANE lore as sea-monsters, dragons, and gods) are mere creatures of God. Here we find the first instance of “blessing” by God (v. 22). This blessing is God’s benevolent setting apart, his favor upon creation. They are not merely created but are shown God’s generous love and given an assignment (an assignment that will be important to humanity next week) to “be fruitful and multiply” to “fill” their habitat.

**Day 6: Fill the Earth (vv. 24-25)** <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> 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. Now we’ll look at the beginning of day 6. The pinnacle of this narrative involves the creation of humanity and God’s commands to them. It is such a big deal that we’re going to look at it by itself next week. But the first part of Day 6 shows God’s filling of the earth with animals. Day 6, like day three, has a “twice good” description one occurring in v. 25 and one in v. 31.

### 1. God’s creation is good.

- “All the works of the Lord are exceedingly good, and whatever he commands will be accomplished in due season” (Sir 39:16).
- “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving” (1 Tim 4:4).

It is good because it is made by God. It is without sin. Everything is functioning according to its created purpose. Ultimately, something is good because it is pleasing to God (i.e., “he saw that it was good”).

- God’s creation was not “close enough” (i.e., horseshoes, hand grenades, government work, my DIY projects), it was PERFECT.
- “Good enough” is the human way. We don’t serve a “good enough” God but a *perfect, complete* God. He has done his work *perfectly*.

**Sin** blemishes God’s good work. Salvation restores creation to its original function. **Creation is good** and God takes delight in it. We should also delight in God’s good creation and be thankful that God, in his love, prepares a good earth for his people.

**Definition of Good is God:** God defines good because God created all that is good.

Sometimes God’s good creation is broken (not fulfilling its purpose). Sometimes we’re broken and are trying to find goodness in a false place (e.g., relationships, sex before marriage, gimme what I want rather than yourself).

**2. God has authority over creation.** The triune God created everything (the progressive unfolding of the nature of God, “can’t pretend I haven’t read the whole thing). The Spirit of God is seen in the act of creation and the Spirit does what the spirit does (i.e., “give life”). “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground” (Ps 104:30).

- “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host” (Ps 33:6).
- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Jn 1:1-3).
- “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col 1:16-17).

God spoke and all that is was made. The universe is not self-existent, or random. All things that were created exist by God’s free, determined will.

- Everything belongs to him.
- When he names things, he is showing they belong to him.
- God has authority over us (e.g., writer/director of a movie).

**3. God created for a purpose.** God’s creation shows a beautiful orderliness. Each day has a purpose. Each part of creation has a purpose. Each category of creation fits perfectly into the overall design and plan. The narrative has a beautiful poetic shape (e.g., repetition of phrases and patterns of telling, the symmetry of narrative), mimicking the pristine craftsmanship of God in creation.

**Peace and Order:** Augustine made a big deal that peace, harmony, shalom can only occur when things exist in the proper order (*tranquillitas ordinis*). Disordered love can be as detrimental as false love. We will never have peace and justice and harmony in our world if things are not functioning according to their created order (e.g., the house feels anxious when things are “out of place”; also why “injustice” can’t coexist without peace because relationships and value are out-of-order).

- Existence isn’t enough. **Existence isn’t the same as purpose.** God made every part of this creation with a purpose (we’ll see how humanity fits into it next week).
- If you read Genesis 1-2 and focus on timing you will miss the point, it is showing the purpose for which God created all things (to bring him glory, humanity as the highest created beings, to worship and serve God, to fill the earth, to flourish and have dominion, etc.).
- Genesis has a lot to teach you if you’ve just been “existing” and have failed to understand your purpose.

**4. God fills the emptiness.**

Uninhabitable		Empty	
1	Light and Dark	4	Sun, Moon, and Stars
2	Waters Above and Below	5	Sea Creatures and Birds
3	Land and Vegetation	6	Animals and Humans
Complete			
7	Rest		

God transforms the inhabitable wasteland into a place full of beauty. He fills it and completes his creation. Nothing is left out. He has made a world and, we will see, he calls us to participate in caring for and enjoying his creation.

- **God didn't just make all that is, he fashioned it into a beautiful place for his people to flourish.**

And this teaches so much about **sin** and **salvation**. If we look ahead in the story we see that sin is the opposite of this. Sin takes the beautiful creation of God and turns it back into an empty wasteland. "For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are 'wise'—in doing evil! But how to do good they know not." I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and behold, there was no man, and all the birds of the air had fled, I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger" (Jer 4:22-26).

- Sin destroys the fullness that God has for us (e.g., counseling situation; adultery goes from home to empty apartment, etc.).

But the same God of **creation** is the God of **re-creation**. He is re-making all that is broken into the perfection it was intended. What sin has robbed from us, he offers to restore to us: "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God" (Is 35:1-2). Our lives, in our sin, are like a barren desert and God's salvation is like a beautiful garden grown in the wasteland.

## Conclusion

God has created a good world and filled it with creation for a purpose. All creation exists by him and for him and he has generously filled his creation with beauty and love.

- Is your life empty or full? We can enjoy the good gifts of God's creation because we enjoy God.
- What is your purpose? We can find our purpose in filling the earth with beauty because of God.

- What is your joy? We can find joy in a relationship with the one who made us.

Is your life destroyed by sin? Addiction? Broken relationships? Distorted self-image? Empty pursuits? Fear? Doubt? Anxiety? The same God that spoke creation into existence offers new creation into your life. If you turn to God by faith in Christ, he makes all things new! The same Spirit that was hovering over the emptiness of creation can bring life into the emptiest parts of your life.