

Article: : Creation

I began a confirmation class a couple weeks ago, and it did not take long for the students to ask some curly questions! One question that was asked, since students are being taught evolution, was, how do we properly understand creation? So, over the coming weeks, in our bulletins, I shall endeavour to give a biblical view of creation. May God bless our journey of learning about creation together!

Genesis begins by telling us, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*” (Gen. 1:1). The created world tells us that God exists, and so clear is this testimony that those who do not believe there is a God are without excuse (Romans 1:20). Yet it is still a matter of faith that God created the world. The writer to the Hebrews tells us, “*By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible*” (Heb. 11:3). We were not present at creation. God alone was. We have His account of the creation of the world in the first two chapters of the Bible. Our faith is based on what God has revealed to us in Scripture, not on our fallible interpretation of God's acts in His creation.

All three persons of the triune God were active in creating the world. God the Father is mentioned in Genesis 1:1. Verse 2 tells us, “*The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*” The Hebrew word for *hover*, which is used here, is also used of a mother eagle hovering over her young (Deut. 32:11). With care and concern, God the Holy Spirit was active in creation. God the Son was also active in creation. John wrote, “*Through Him all things were made*” (John 1:3). Paul declared, “*He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him*” (Col. 1:15-16). Creation of the world belongs to the external acts of the Trinity. All three persons of the Godhead were active in this work.

It should be noted that God made the world out of nothing (Heb. 11:3). Matter is not eternal. It had its beginning with God's creation. The Hebrew word used for *create* in Genesis 1:1 (*barah*) means to create something that is new to the situation. Since there was nothing prior to creation, God made the world out of nothing. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that “*what is seen was not made out of what was visible*” (Heb. 11:3). The universe and everything in it is a creation of the triune God.

How long did it take God to make the world? The early church father Athanasius, in an attempt to counter the influence of Arianism, taught that creation took place in an instant. We cannot accept this, since the Bible tells us that God created the world in six normal days. Critics of the Bible today, however, tell us that the six days of creation, mentioned in Genesis 1, are really long periods of time. They say this because they are trying to harmonise the biblical account of creation with the theory of evolution. Evolutionists believe that the world evolved into its present form over long periods of time (millions upon millions of years). Those who wish to retain God as the ‘first cause’ of the universe, but wish to stay in step with the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation and the Darwinian theory of evolution, say that the word *day* in Genesis 1 really stands for the long periods of time needed for evolution to take place. Modern critics of the Bible turn Genesis 1 into primitive man's attempt to explain the origin of the universe. They say that in an age of science, we simply cannot accept a six-day creation of the world by God.

The Bible, however, clearly teaches a creation in six normal days. In the first place, the book of Genesis is historical narrative, not folklore or legend. Moses divided the book into ten historical accounts (using the Hebrew word *toledoth* to indicate that the account is historical). These accounts are as follows:

Genesis 2:4: The account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Genesis 5:1: The written account of Adam's line.

Genesis 6:9: The account of Noah.

Genesis 10:1: The account of Shem, Ham, and Japheth - Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood.

Genesis 11:10: The account of Shem.

Genesis 11:27: The account of Terah (where Abraham is the chief figure).

Genesis 25:12: The account of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's maidservant, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham.

Genesis 25:19: The account of Abraham's son Isaac.

Genesis 36:1: The account of Esau (that is, Edom).

Genesis 37:2: The account of Jacob (in which Joseph plays an important role).

Throughout the accounts, the promise of the Saviour is prominent. The book of Genesis establishes how sin corrupted God's good creation, how God promised a Saviour from sin, and how God promised that the Saviour would come from the line of Abraham. The book of Genesis ends with the account of the journey of Jacob's family into Egypt. There they developed into a great nation that would return to Canaan over four hundred years later and conquer it. There, in that conquered land, the promised Saviour would be born. The whole book of Genesis is historical narrative. Only those who totally ignore the message of the book itself could interpret Genesis as myth or folklore.

Jesus regarded Moses as the author of the first five books of the Bible (Mark 12:26) and as a historical figure (Matt. 8:4). Jesus accepted the creation of man and woman as historical fact (Matt. 19:4). The apostles and the early church accepted the creation of the world as fact. They prayed, "*Master, You, who have made the heaven and the earth, the sea and everything in them*" (Acts 4:24). The apostle Paul, in his sermons at Lystra (Acts 14:15-17) and Athens (Acts 17:22-31), spoke of the creation of the world by God as a fact. The book of Revelation speaks of God as the Creator when it states, "*You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being*" (Rev. 4:11).

The whole Bible, then, accepts the Genesis account of creation as historical fact. To interpret it in any other way is to ignore the context of Genesis itself, the witness of the rest of the Bible, and the testimony of Christ and His apostles (to whom He promised the gift of inspiration). It is only when people approach the Genesis account of creation with a biased mind that they can try to harmonise creation and evolution. If a person looks carefully at the context of Genesis and the testimony of the rest of the Bible, he or she cannot arrive at the view that the creation account is a myth.

To be continued...