

Exegetical Notes – Genesis 1:3-2:3
“Order is Imposed”

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Having answered the first question that the Book of Genesis asks, “Whose world is it anyway,” by affirming that we live in God’s world because God made it, Genesis addresses the process by which God created (see the introduction to Genesis for a fuller explanation of the three questions that Genesis asks which accompanies the Exegetical Notes for Genesis 1:1-2).

Genesis 1:3-2:3

The act of creation happens over a period of seven days. The telling of the story of creation follows a specific pattern. It is divided into seven sections, each section recording what happened on a single day. The word “day” is the normal Hebrew word for day. It signifies a 24-hour period. Each section begins with the words, “And God said.” All of creation happens with the spoken command of God. It requires no effort. God speaks, and it is so.

Verses 3-5

³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

- On the first day of creation, God created light. Light reveals. Darkness conceals. By turning the lights on, so to speak, God makes it possible to evaluate his work as Creator.
- God called the light day and the darkness night. Naming is part of the act of creating because he who owns it gives it its name. Naming is an act of ownership.

Verses 6-8

⁶ And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

- On the second day of creation, God commands a separation of waters. He orders a “vault” to appear which divides that above the vault from that which is below it. The description is not scientific although it describes scientific realities. It is poetic and pictural. This happened according to God’s command.
- God named the “vault” sky.

Verses 9-13

⁹ And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

- On the third day, God began to work on what was under the sky. He gathered the water under the sky into a specific place so that dry areas appeared under the sky.
- God named the places where the waters congregated seas and the dry areas he called land.
- God commanded the land to produce vegetation which it did. Life had begun at the command of God. The land’s vegetation became self-reproducing at God’s command. Note that each type of vegetation bears the ability to reproduce only after its own kind. Cross pollination and mutation are not possible until after the fall (see Genesis 3). They are the marks of a sinful world and sinful rebellion against the Creator.

Verses 14-19

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and

years,¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so.¹⁶ God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth,¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

- On the fourth day, God created the sun and the moon and the stars.
- He created them for two specific reasons: 1. To provide light in the darkness of night, and 2: to mark sacred times, days, and years. To this day these remain their purposes. Days, months, years, seasons, sacred moments (i.e. Easter) are determined by the movement of the lights in the sky.

Verses 20-23

²⁰ And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.”²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.²² God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.”²³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

- On the fifth day of creation, God created creatures which filled the sea and flew over the land. He gave them the ability to self-reproduce after their own kind.

Verses 24-27

²⁴ And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so.²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

- On the sixth day of creation, God created all the creatures, including humankind, which live on the land. It is clear that there are two orders of land-living creatures. There are all of the other land-living creatures and there is man.
- Man differs from all other creatures in that he is made “in the image of God.” This description of mankind is uncertain in the text. We are not told exactly what it means to be made in the image of God except that it means that humanity will “rule over” the other creatures.

Verses 28-31

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

²⁹ Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

- On the sixth day, God blessed the last act of creation, mankind. Humanity would “rule over the other creation and have authority over them.”
- God gave the creatures seed bearing plants for food. Creation did not feed on creation until after the fall (see Genesis 3).

Verses 2:1-3

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

- This is the way God created. Clearly, creation was not evolutionary or accidental. It happened according to the plan of God and ended in the creation of humankind.

- At its conclusion, God pronounced it good. It was balanced and in perfect order.
- On the seventh day of creation, God ceased the work of creating, for creation was complete. The seventh day, God declared to be a day of rest.

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