

Lesson for August 10, 2008

Old Testament Survey

Creation (Genesis 1:1-2:25)

When examining the creation of the universe, which includes planet earth, we will consider only what the Bible says about these events. It is not my intention to delve into scientific data or attempt to disprove the theory of evolution. If a person believes the Bible, he cannot believe in the theory of evolution – they are not compatible. It must also be pointed out that there are numerous theories about the creation of the universe among Christians. Some Christian scientists attempt to make the Bible fit their particular theory, instead of letting the Bible interpret itself. A lack of study of the original languages leads one to a misunderstanding of Creation. We will examine the words from the original languages that describe Creation in order to arrive at an accurate understanding of these events. The Bible is not a science book, but when it speaks of true science it is always accurate. For our study we will exegete verses one through eight of Chapter 1 of Genesis. We will study the origin of man in our lesson, The Origin of Human Life next week.

In The Beginning That Was Not A Beginning

We begin with verse one of Genesis. The King James Version of the Bible says “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” This verse seems very straightforward as stated, but let’s examine the original Hebrew words in the context and some Greek words referring to Creation. Verse one is the only verse in Genesis that presents the creation of the universe. The Hebrew language in this verse is a key to understanding Creation.

There are three words in Hebrew for creation: Bara, Jatsar and Asah. Bara means to create something out of nothing. Jatsar means to fashion something on the exterior like a sculptor. Asah means to build out of something that already exists. These words are important to our understanding of the account of Creation.

Now let’s exegete verses one through eight of Genesis 1:

Verse 1

“In the beginning” – Hebrew “Bereshith” – this is a prepositional phrase made up of “Be” meaning “in”, plus “Rishah” meaning “beginning.” However, in the Hebrew there is no definite article. Therefore, this indicates “a” beginning, not “the” beginning.

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A more literal translation would be “In a beginning that was not a beginning.” What does that mean? It is a reference to eternity past. We have a similar verse in John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” The Greek here is “En Arche” and means the same as the Hebrew, first beginning or eternity past. John refers to the existence of God in eternity past and Moses, the writer of Genesis, refers to the existence of the universe in eternity past.

The truth is that it did not take six days to create the universe. Its creation was instantaneous and occurred sometime in eternity past before man was created. Therefore, we cannot put a date on the age of planet earth. What we find upon examination of the Bible is that after the creation of the universe and between the creation of angels and man, the earth became chaotic. This chaos was most likely the result of a battle among the angels and God’s judgment of them. (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28:15-16)

“God created” – Hebrew - “Elohim Bara” – the Trinity created out of nothing. “Elohim” is a plural noun and “bara” is a singular verb, which is an indication of the Trinity. Therefore, the entire Godhead was involved in Creation.

“The heaven and the earth” – Hebrew – “Ha Shamajim” and “Ha Aretz” – notice the “im” suffix, this indicates a plural. It should be “heavens” and earth (singular). This verse should say, “In a beginning, which was not a beginning, in eternity past, God created out of nothing the universe, including earth.”

Verse 2

“And the earth was” – Hebrew – “Hajah” – since we know that the earth was created perfect by a perfect God, the word “was” is a bad translation. It should be translated “had become.” It was created perfect, but it became without form and void.

“without form and void” – Hebrew – “Tohu Waw Bohu” – desolate and empty. Animal life and plant life no longer existed on earth. The earth had become desolate and empty.

“and darkness was on the face of the deep” – Hebrew – “Choshek” – a darkness that keeps out light and heat. “Tehom” – this is the Hebrew word for deep and it means raging waters. Absence of light and heat would result in ice (perhaps a reference to the Ice Age of science). Under this ice were the raging waters.

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“And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” – Hebrew – “Ruach Elohim” – correctly translated “the Spirit of God.” “Rachaph” is the Hebrew word for “moved” and literally means “to brood or to incubate.” The Holy Spirit incubated or provided heat to melt the ice pack. “Waters” is the Hebrew word “Hamajim” and means “melted water.”

What is God doing? He is not creating the Universe; He is preparing the earth for habitation by man, animal life and plant life.

Verse 3

“And God said” – Hebrew – “Elohim amar” – God spoke

“Let there be light: and there was light” – Hebrew – “Hajah” – a spoken command by God. Light is necessary in the restoration of life on the earth for heat and energy.

Verse 4

“And God saw the light, that it was good” – Hebrew – “Ra-ah Tobh” – “God saw” is an anthropomorphism to explain God’s attitude toward the light that He had created.

“and God divided the light from the darkness” – Hebrew – “Badal” – this means to cause to separate. The angelic conflict had caused darkness to exist; therefore, God is preparing the earth for habitation by man.

Verse 5

“And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day” – Hebrew – “Elohim Qara Jom” – God named the light, Day and the darkness, Night. The existence of light caused the earth to begin rotating once again. It became evening or dark and then it became light again as the earth was rotating. Up to this point the earth was held in an ice pack, unable to rotate. It was the incubation from the Holy Spirit and the introduction of light that caused the earth to begin to rotate once again. It should also be pointed out that the waters of the earth began to shape the earth’s surface.

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Verse 6

“And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters” – Hebrew – “Raqija” – this is the word for firmament and it means “atmosphere.” What God is doing is dividing the waters of the earth by the atmosphere. Some water will remain on earth’s surface and some water will be above the atmosphere. Our atmosphere, of course, is made up of gases and is unseen. We often call it the “Air”, but the Bible calls it “atmosphere.”

Verse 7

“And God made” – Hebrew – “Asah” – to manufacture out of existing material

“the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament, and it was so” – “divided” means to cause to separate and “it was so” means that it came to pass. Verse 6 is the command from the Father and verse 7 is the execution by the Son.

Verse 8

“And God called” - Hebrew – “Qara” – named

“the firmament Heaven” – the atmosphere was named by God. There are actually three heavens in Scripture: the atmosphere, the stars/planets and the abode of God.

“And the evening and the morning were the second day” – the same as verse 5, it became evening or dark and it became day or light.

What is the practical application of this study of the first two days of creation, as God prepares the earth for habitation by man? There are several applications:

- 1) The universe was created by an intelligent designer, God, not by the “big bang” theory.
- 2) God is not the author of confusion; everything that He does is logical and organized.
- 3) The Bible does not contradict true scientific data; it confirms it.
- 4) The believer can have a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe.
- 5) There is an unseen angelic conflict going on, in which we as believers are involved.
- 6) We can place our complete confidence in God and His Word.