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IN SIX DAYS: DAY ONE

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We humans have a capacity to argue about just about anything. It's this very capacity that might cause you to dread the business meeting after the service today.¹ People do tend to argue, don't they? There are people who dispute well documented events, such as the lunar landings or the Holocaust. We may as well argue about whether or not air exists--even though the one who argues against the existence of air would be using air to make his argument!

I've spent two weeks giving evidence for the existence of God, showing that it is reasonable to believe in His existence; but you will note that the Bible, in its opening chapter, does no such thing. It simply opens with the assumption of the existence of God, just as it assumes the existence of heaven and earth. One fact is as real to the other in the author's mind.

Let's take this a step further, though: just as the heavens and the earth are the source of all of man's material knowledge, so God the Creator is the source of all of man's spiritual knowledge. Pastor Ray Stedman puts it this way: "The first verse of Genesis begins with the greatest observable fact known to man: the existence of the universe, 'the heavens and the earth,' (Genesis 1:1b); and it links to that the greatest fact made known by revelation: the existence of a God who creates."² Both are equally real to the author and equally obvious. The fact of creation declares the Creator; and the Creator has chosen to reveal Himself in this word, the Holy Bible.

We need to take a moment and discuss the construction of the book of Genesis itself, because there is something very exciting I want to show you about these opening words. The book of Genesis is divided into sections which are marked by the words "These are the generations..." Some commentators take these to be the headings of the section that follows, as in, "This is what happened to the descendants of such-and-such person." However, we should observe a few significant things:

1. What we now know is that ancient writings, written on clay or stone tablets, were marked with the author's name and other information at the end. This information was in part used to catalog the tablets, thousands of which are still in existence today.
2. In Genesis, the divisions are situated in such a way that the material that comes *before* a particular person's "generation" would have been known to that person; but the material *after* would not have been known to him. It appears that the material in each section could have come from an original, written source that was available to Moses.
3. Jesus and the apostles frequently cite verses from Genesis but do not in any case attribute the statements to Moses, although they do call the first five books as a whole the "Law of Moses."

¹ *EDIT: For the record, there was no dispute at the business meeting. It was a time of good fellowship and united effort.*

² Ray Stedman, "Out of Darkness" (Peninsula Bible Church, October 1, 1967). Available at <http://www.raystedman.org/genesis/0302.html>.

4. Abraham had written commandments from God in his possession. Consider Genesis 26:5:

Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

According to the Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon, the word *commandments* has as its root the word for *engraved*, and *commandments* actually means a code of law written in stone or clay.³ Abraham was from a well-developed city in a highly literate culture. As I mentioned, thousands of clay tablets from Abraham's day and area are still in existence today. Considering Abraham's wealth, it is not difficult to imagine that Abraham was literate, especially when he is commended by God for keeping his *written* commandments.

5. There is a great diversity of vocabulary and word usage within the book of Genesis, which gave rise to something called the JEDP theory over a hundred years ago. Basically, critics of the Bible refused to believe that Moses could have written the books attributed to him because it was thought that writing had not yet been invented, and because different sections, as I mentioned, showed certain literary differences. What they said was that much, much later in history, perhaps during the Babylonian exile, the priestly class took early oral traditions, mixed in with some stories from other cultures, produced the first five books of the Bible, and attributed it to Moses to give it credibility. The theory was once almost universally accepted except by very conservative Bible scholars, but has now been shown to be totally false. The point for us is that there are different, unique word usages in different sections of Genesis.

6. The Bible often refers to extra-biblical sources. The book of Luke, for instance, was put together by Luke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit from information he had gathered. In the Old Testament, there are many such examples:

- Joshua 8:9. Described land "in a book"
- II Samuel 1-18. "Book of Jasher" (also mentioned in Joshua 10:13)
- I Kings 11:41. "Book of the Acts of Solomon"
- I Kings 14:19. "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel"
- I Kings 14:29. "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah"
- I Chronicles 27:74. "Chronicles of King David"
- II Chronicles 12-15. "Book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the Seer Concerning Genealogies"
- II Chronicles 20:34. "Book of Jehu, the son of Hanani - mentioned in the Book of the Kings of Israel"⁴

We no longer have these original sources, such as the Book of Jehu. They were not inspired but they were still of historical value.

From all of this evidence, it seems to me that the divisions of the books of Genesis originally were written accounts that God preserved for Moses. Moses was educated in Egypt, the cultural and

³ David Livingstone, "From What Did Moses Compose Genesis?" Available at <http://www.ancientdays.net/mosescompgenesis.htm>

⁴ Ibid.

educational center of the world; and why should we suppose that the children of Abraham would not have kept the writings which Abraham apparently possessed? The book of Genesis seems to be Moses's editorial translation of these early, written accounts; so that, even though Moses was not an eyewitness to the events he wrote about, he had access to eyewitness accounts, not just oral traditions. These eyewitness accounts are stamped for us at the end of each account and are transitioned gently into the next account so that the work as a whole has unity. Keep in mind that the book of Genesis doesn't expressly say this about itself; but from what we now know of ancient historical records and from the structure of Genesis itself, this seems to be the very best explanation.

Now note the colophon at the end of the creation account, which transitions into a second creation account from Adam's viewpoint:

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens....

This is the only instance of the words "these are the generations" which are not attributed to a human. No human was an eyewitness to these events; and therefore this is God's own testimony. Did God write with his finger as at Mount Sinai? Perhaps, but there is no need to think this. As we read later, God fellowshiped with Adam daily and maybe Adam acted as God's scribe; perhaps God did give it to Moses at Mount Sinai; or God revealed this information directly to Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In any case, I want to make it clear that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. The Book of Genesis, whether by direct revelation with no written sources, or by inspiring Moses as he compiled, edited and translated earlier works, is God's revelation to us. It is God's testimony of how He created the heavens and the earth in six days.

Now let's go back and examine the Creator's testimony of how He accomplished His work of creation.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 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 (Gen. 1:1-2).

We have discussed the first verse at length already in previous sermons. It is more than interesting to note that the first two verses touch all five aspects of existence as described by physics: Time (in the beginning), Space (the heavens), Matter (the earth), Force (God, the Spirit of God), and Motion (created, moved). We should also be aware that the Hebrew word here, *bara'*, is used only with God as the subject. It means literally "to create from nothing." This word is put next to the Hebrew word for *made* in Genesis 2:3:

*And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God **created** and **made**.*

Made means "to fashion." *Create* means "to make something from nothing," "to bring into existence." If we understand these words, then we can understand verse two, which has given some people quite a headache. What does it mean that the earth was "void" and "without form"? Well, if we understand that God's very first creative act was speaking matter into existence-- "the heaven and the earth"--then it is

no problem for us to understand that He spoke into existence His building blocks from which he would then fashion the universe over the next five days. This is no small feat! God created atoms and molecules, the four basic forces that hold the universe together (electromagnetic, gravity, strong, and weak), and the mathematical laws by which they all operate. This is what He spoke into existence from nothing! These are His materials for what comes next. We should not be surprised to find the earth without form, void, and covered with water. He has spoken the materials into existence, and He will fashion them over the next few days.

Some introduce here a matter of speculation called the Gap Theory, in which it is supposed that God created a perfect, entire universe which existed in a pre-Adamic state for millions of years. Lucifer was put in charge of the earth, rebelled, and therefore the earth and everything on it was totally destroyed, and so what follows in chapter one is the re-making of the earth after its total destruction. The main reason for this theory is to allow for millions of years of geologic development and the fossil record as understood by evolutionary scientists; but as we shall see later, there is no need to believe in millions of years; and there is then the great theological difficulty of having millions of years of suffering and death before the Curse of Adam. I won't address this theory at length today; my main point is that from both scientific and theological perspectives, it is not necessary and it cannot satisfy either theology or science for various reasons.

And so, at the end of verse two, we have the building blocks of the heavens and the earth in place. Time, space, and matter are new, all having just come into existence. The earth itself is covered with water, and God is present with His creation--His Spirit moved upon, or as some translate, "was hovering over," the waters. That leads us to the next portion:

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness (Gen 1:3-4).

Thus light came into existence by the word of God. The Bible describes God as light, the light of life, the One in Whom is no darkness at all. The entrance of His Word gives light, that is, it illuminates our minds, hearts, and souls. It is most fitting that God's first act in His new creation is to fashion light.

This is fascinating for a few reasons. First of all, we have no mention of organized sources of light until the fourth day of creation. Here we simply find light being brought into existence, and being "separated" from darkness.

In the twenty-first century, what do we know about light? The answer is, Not as much as most people probably think we know! We know how to measure light. We know the speed that it travels. We know that it is produced when an electron changes position within an atom from a high energy state to a lower energy state; but that is the real extent of our knowledge. We do not know what light actually *is*. In fact, there are two contradictory theories which cannot both be true at the same time; they are mutually exclusive; and yet both seem to fit! You see, light sometimes behaves as a wave, a visible radio wave, and it sometimes acts as a particle. We do not yet understand this mystery; perhaps in time we will, and if that day comes, we will have a better understanding of the wisdom of our Creator.⁵

⁵ A few weeks ago I talked about the vast sums of money our government is spending to try to find dark energy for the purpose of showing that the earth is *not* located in a special place; but finding it wouldn't prove the earth *isn't* in a special place, only that it *doesn't have to be*. Since there is nothing in the creation account that says earth *is* in a special place, finding dark energy wouldn't disprove a special creation. But if there is something called dark energy, it would only show us that the Bible understood it long before humanity did.

In this first day, God created light; but he also separated light from darkness. We are used to thinking of darkness as the absence of light; but it seems plain here that the watery form of earth is depicted as rotating. The sun was not yet formed, but apparently the light that God created was already being directionally emitted upon a rotating planet. He fashioned it and focused it.

We also note that the light was “good” in God’s sight; that is, it performed exactly as He intended it to act. The transfer of light and heat, the dispelling of darkness, was perfect. It could not be improved upon, and indeed never will be.

Let us continue:

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day (Gen. 1:5).

God brought time, matter, and space into existence by His word, and from those fashioned and directed light. How long did all this take? *Exactly one day.* “Whoa, whoa, whoa--how can you say one day, Brother Jeff? How do you know it wasn’t millions of years?” Because the Bible says so, right here.

Maybe you’ve got it in your head that since *there must have been millions of years*, the Genesis account uses the word day to mean “an indefinite period of time.” Actually, the Hebrew word *yom*, which means *day*, is sometimes used to mean an indefinite period, such as a *day of judgment*. However, it is never used that way when it is used with a number, as it is here--the *first day*. Not only that, but it is never used of anything other than a twenty-four-hour period when used with the qualifiers “the evening and the morning.” Remember, a Hebrew day begins at sunset--the evening and the morning. Using both the evening and the morning formula along with a number shows that the author fully intended to show a literal twenty-four-hour day.⁶

Millions of years are not necessary for the Creator to accomplish His work. If He is powerful enough to make matter, time, and space, and to fashion and direct light, why suggest that He is not powerful enough to do so in a single day? The reason is that some Christians attempt to “reconcile” this Creation account with evolutionary thought by making each day of creation millions of years long. We will discuss this more fully another time, but for now let’s just point out that, like the Gap Theory, this “progressive creation” or “theistic evolution” satisfies neither evolutionary thought nor biblical theology.

To summarize, the Creator spent one literal day bringing matter, time, and space into existence, and then fashioning and focusing light. He did this, and then gave us the record by special revelation as the only witness to His work.

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens....

This is the God we worship--the God who made us, loves us, and longs to redeem us.

⁶ Robert McCade, “A Defense of Literal Days in the Creation Week,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* (Fall 2000): 97-123. Available at <http://www.dbts.edu/journals/2000/McCabe.pdf>.