

Genesis 1:14-23 "How God Made the World: Days 4 & 5"*

Proposition: On days four and five, God continued to fill His universe with two creative acts, as explained in Genesis 1:14-23.

I. On Day Four, God filled the heavens (14-19).

A. God said what He would do (14-15).

B. God did it (16).

1. He made two lights.

2. He also made the stars.

C. God explained why (17-19).

1. The luminaries are to benefit the earth.

2. The luminaries are to govern day and night.

3. The luminaries are to separate light from darkness.

II. On Day Five, God filled the water and sky (20-23).

A. God said what He would do (20).

B. God did it (21).

1. He created sea creatures.

2. He created winged creatures.

3. He created according to specific categories.

C. God blessed what He made (22).

Application: We learn some life-changing truths in Genesis 1...

1. We are living in God's world.

2. In God's world, what God says *goes*.

3. In God's world, what God does is *good*.

God created the heavens and the earth. Those are staggering words, especially when you ponder them carefully.

Do you realize just how big this universe is? For starters, it's so big that scientists don't use *miles* to determine distance, but *light years*. A "light year" is the distance that a beam of light travels in one year, that is 186,000 miles per second. The length of a light year, then, is six trillion miles. How far is that? Make twelve million round trips to the moon and you've gone *one* light year!

So there's the yard stick, the light year. Now let's use that measuring stick to describe the size of this universe. Here's how far the following objects are from earth:

Object Distance from Earth

Moon 1.3 light-seconds

Sun 8.3 light-minutes

Pluto 5.3 light-hours

Big Dipper stars 100 light-years (average)

Milky Way, diameter of 100,000 light-years

Andromeda 2 million light-years

Quasars 10 billion light years

It's kind of mind-boggling, isn't it? And this morning, we're going to see what God's Word has to say about the origins of this vast universe.

We've come to our third message in the series, "In the Beginning, God." We're seeking to get to know God better by examining the biblical record of how God made the world. Our approach is to do an expositional study of the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

According to Genesis 1:1, in the beginning of time God created the heavens and the earth. But when the earth first came from God's hand on day one, it was *bohu* and *tohu* (according to verse 2). It was "formless" and "empty." That is, the world lacked *form* and *inhabitants*.

Which is exactly what God gave it during the six days of creation. On days one, two, and three, God gave "form" to the "formless" by creating three boundaries--the light/darkness boundary on day one; the expanse to separate the water canopy in the atmosphere from the water on the earth on day two; and the boundary between the dry ground and the sea on day three. He also created the vegetable kingdom on day three.

So by the end of day three, the world was no longer "formless." But it was still empty. It lacked inhabitants, but not for long, as we'll see in today's study.

On days four and five, God began to fill His universe with two creative acts, as explained in Genesis 1:14-23. On day six, He performed two more creative acts which we'll consider next time.

I. On Day Four, God filled the heavens (14-19).

Here's how it happened, in three movements. First...

A. God said what He would do (14-15). "And God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth. And it was so.'"

Notice that the creative work on Day Four began as it had on Days one, two, and three. *And God said*. God spoke. God created by speaking the non-existent into existence.

Remember the context. The human author of Genesis is Moses. Genesis is part of a larger book called the Pentateuch. In the Pentateuch God established a covenant with His chosen people, the Israelites, and told them how they were to live for Him in the Promised Land.

The climax of the Pentateuch occurs in Exodus 20. The Israelites are at Sinai. What happened there? God *spoke* and gave the Law to His people. And the One who spoke at Sinai is the One who first spoke at Creation. God's Word is powerful and worthy of attention.

What did God say on Day Four? "Let there be lights." Notice it's plural. God had already created light on Day One (1:3). Now He formed *lights*.

That causes us to scratch our heads, doesn't it? How can you have *light* without *lights*, that is, without a *source of light*? For us, the flashlight precedes the beam in the night sky. You don't have the beam until you have the source.

I can't explain it fully, but I know this. God is not limited by our understanding. In the first world, He created light before He created the sun, and according to Revelation 22:5, in the new heavens and new earth, the sun will no longer be needed for light--yet there will be light.

In ancient times, the heavenly lights were believed to be powerful gods. But Moses makes it clear, no, they're just lights. They're created objects just much as the plants and birds and fish are. God made them.

But why? According to verse 15 God fashioned the heavenly luminaries to fulfill three specific functions: 1) to separate the day from the night, 2) to serve as signs or time indicators, and 3) to provide light for the earth. Since Moses repeats the purpose in verses 17-18, we're hold our comments until then.

So on Day Four, first, God said what He would do--"Let there be lights." Secondly...

B. God did it (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." What did God do? Just what He said He'd do! In this fashion, first...

1. *He made two lights*. Moses calls them "the greater light" and "the lesser light." What's wrong with Moses? Wasn't he intelligent like us? Didn't he have names for those two luminaries?

The fact is, Moses had Hebrew names at his disposal to refer to the sun and moon. But in his day there were pagan deities associated with the sun and moon. And he wants to make something absolutely clear. To God, the sun and moon are not rival powers. They're just *lights*. And He made them!

In Moses' day people worshiped the sun and moon and stars. In our day of secularism, the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. We *explain them away*. We've lost a sense of *awe*, the kind Stuart Hine had in mind when he penned these words:

"O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the works Thy hands have made, I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed. Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee; How great Thou art!"

We would do well to spend more time in *awesome wonder*. Donald DeYoung can help us. This Physics and Astronomy professor has written the book, *Astronomy and the Bible*, in which he contemplates the marvels of what God made on Day Four. I'm going to share several excerpts from his book with you, here's the first:

"The majesty of the sun is nearly incomprehensible. It is an immense ball of seething gases, 864,000 miles in diameter, nearly four times the earth-to-moon distance. If the sun could be hollowed out like a giant pumpkin, a million planet earths could easily fit inside, like so many marbles."

God made that sun. And the moon. And though impressive to us, to Him they're just *lights*!

2. *He also made the stars*. Ponder those words at the end of verse 16. *He also made the stars*. I'm not sure I've read a more profound statement than this one made by Moses, under the inspiration of God, nearly 3,400 years ago. In the Hebrew text the literal rendering is simply, "The stars also." There's no verb.

What an unassuming way to summarize one of the most awesome things God ever did! He--that's God--also made the stars. It's almost a passing comment, "Oh, yea, by the way, in addition to the sun and moon, did I mention that God also made the *stars*?"

I'd like to attempt to help you appreciate the magnitude of this accomplishment.

On a clear night you can see with the naked eye about 3,000 stars in the sky. If you had a small telescope the number would increase to 100,000 stars. But that's just the beginning as Donald DeYoung explains:

"The stars we can see are all in our corner of the Milky Way galaxy. This entire galaxy numbers about 100 billion stars. And beyond the Milky Way are other galaxies of all shapes and sizes. Around 100 billion such galaxies are known to exist...Suppose these stars were divided up among the world's total population of five billion people. Then each person would receive two trillion stars!"

And think about this. Our sun is but one star in the heavens, an average size one at that. There are other stars called *red giants* or super-giants, as DeYoung explains, "Their diameters reach more than five hundred times that of our sun. If such a super-giant star could be positioned at the center of the solar system, the four inner planets, including earth, would be vaporized beneath its surface."

For instance, one such super-giant is *Betelgeuse*. This star is located in the right shoulder of Orion the Hunter. The diameter of *Betelgeuse* is 1,200 times that of the sun, and it gives off 120,000 times as much light energy as the sun (DeYoung, 74).

He also made the stars. Now make it personal. The God who made the stars also made *you*. Isn't that amazing? To me it's also convicting. Why do I worry? Why do I act at times as though I doubt whether God knows what He's doing in my life? Beloved, the One who put the stars in space can surely take care of us!

So on Day Four, God said what He would do, and then He did it. Thirdly...

C. God explained why (17-19). "God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness."

Moses tells us that God *set* the luminaries in space--a vivid portrayal of His power. But why? Why did God make the heavenly *lights*? He Himself tells us why right here. The luminaries fulfill three purposes.

1. *The luminaries are to benefit the earth.* How? They give light. For whose benefit? For the *earth's* according to verse 17.

DeYoung observes (p. 55), "Only one billionth of the sun's energy output actually hits the earth. The rest streams off into all directions of space. In just one second, the sun releases more energy than mankind has produced since the creation, including all the engines, power plants, and bombs ever constructed."

God created this massive ball of energy we call the sun, as well as the other stars, for the benefit of the earth. A second purpose...

2. *The luminaries are to govern day and night.* In orderly fashion, the sun rules the sky in the daytime and the moon during the nighttime. A third purpose...

3. *The luminaries are to separate light from darkness.* In addition, according to verse 14, they also are for "signs." Moses isn't talking about astrology, and this certainly isn't grounds for the use of horoscopes. Of what are the heavenly lights "signs?" Verse 14 states they "mark seasons and days and years."

Isn't that interesting? God is not limited by time, but He uses time. He created the calendar. There's rhythm,

order, and purpose in God's universe.

Last May I rode the subway in Chicago. It's interesting just to sit and watch as they get on and off of a subway. Few will even make eye contact. But the lines on their faces communicate volumes.

We are living in our world where despair and hopelessness are the norm. It shows up in the popular music, art, and even in clothing styles. Hope is gone it seems.

Beloved, we have good news! As God's people we have reason to hope. There is purpose. Every time we look at the night sky we see a reminder of a faithful Creator. We need to spread the word!

Listen to these words, "This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being." Isaac Newton said that in 1687 (in *Principia*).

Indeed, the heavens declare the glory of God! But not everyone is applauding. In 1982 Isaac Asimov remarked, "I am an atheist, out and out. I don't have the evidence to prove that God doesn't exist, but I so strongly suspect He does not that I don't want to waste my time."

Carl Sagan was nearly as blunt when he stated in 1980, "The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be."

How do explain that? How can two people look at the same evidence and come to such diverse conclusions?

The apostle Paul answer that question for us in Romans 1:18-21, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualitieshis eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

And so on Day Four God filled the heavens. What was His assessment of His work? Verse 18 concludes, "And God saw that it was good." A good God cannot do anything that is *not* good. Verse 19, "And there was evening and there was morning--the fourth day."

What happened on Day Five? The spotlight shifts from the heavens back to the earth.

II. On Day Five, God filled the water and sky (20-23).

The pattern of God's activity on Day Five is similar to that on Day Four. First...

A. God said what He would do (20). "And God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.'"

On Day Five, then, God said He was going to make two things: 1) Living creatures for the water, and 2) Birds to fly in the sky.

By the way, the term "living creatures" is comprehensive--*nephesh chaiam* in the Hebrew. Here it's used of water creatures, in verse 24 of land animals, in 9:10 of birds and land animals, and in 9:16 of man and animals. It refers to all animate creation, that is, everything that has "the breath of life" in it (1:30).

That's what God said He was going to make on Day Five--living creatures for the water and sky. In verse 20

God stated what He was going to do, and in verse 21...

B. God did it (21). "So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good." Notice three things about God's creative work on Day Five.

1. *He created sea creatures.* Moses mentions two categories here, the first being the "great creatures of the sea" ["sea monsters" in the KJV], the second being "the living and moving things." This seems to be a catch-all-phrase for the rest of the fish, crustaceans, and the rest.

The Hebrew word underlying the phrase "great creatures of the sea" is interesting. In the Old Testament it can mean "snake" (Ex 7:9) or "crocodile" (Ezek 29:3) or even "dragon" (Jer 51:34). In Moses' day it was used in Canaanite mythology as the name of a dreaded sea monster who was seen as a powerful, adversary of the gods.

But in Genesis God makes something very clear. The huge sea creature is no threat to Him, but simply one of many sea specimens that He made!

Henry Morris observes, "It is interesting to note that the first animals created (verse 21) were the 'great whales' (or sea-monsters), the largest animals that ever lived. It is difficult to harmonize this with the supposed evolution of all organic life from minute one-celled animals!"

What else did God make on Day Five?

2. *He created winged creatures.* No other breakdown is given for the winged creatures. The term "winged bird" actually denotes anything that flies, including insects (Deut 14:19, 20).

3. *He created according to specific categories.* The text states that God made the sea creatures "according to their kinds." Likewise He made the winged creatures "according to their kinds." That indicates God was interested in variety.

But that's not all it says. The phrase "according to their kinds" appears nine times in the text--in reference to plants (verse 11 & 12), sea creatures and birds (verse 21), and land creatures (in verses 24 & 25).

Don't miss the significance. God created sea creatures, winged creatures, and land creatures *instantly* to stock the earth. They did not evolve from lower forms of life as evolutionists claim. God's creatures do not change from one *kind* to another. The Bible does not allow for the crossing over of species (macro evolution).

C. God blessed what He made (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.' And there was evening, and there was morning--the fifth day."

The blessing of God is one of the great themes of Genesis. God blessed animals (1:22), mankind (1:28), the Sabbath (2:3), Adam (5:2), Noah (9:1), and the patriarchs (12:3; 17:16, 20, etc.). Wenham observes (24), "Where modern man talks of success, OT man talked of blessing."

Here God blessed the fish and birds. You say, "Wait a minute. That doesn't sound right." Not to us. We have an unbiblical dichotomy. We bless stain glass windows and altars, but God blessed fish and birds. We bless Sunday--that's God's day--but what about Monday through Saturday? Naw! God doesn't care about "secular days," does He?

The fact is, this is God's world--*all of it!* He's as interested in how you file reports at work as He is in how you sing "Amazing Grace" on Sunday.

For too often we've been more influenced by Plato than by the Bible. We think, "The immaterial is good, not the material. God doesn't care about physical things." And we view heaven as a place where our spirits will float around finally free from the "evil" bodies that once held us bondage.

Not so according to God. God blessed fish and birds. And after six days of making physical *things*--like stars, and plants, and dogs, and dirt--God said, "It's *good*."

Granted, the created order is under the curse of sin now, but that curse will be removed in the new heavens and new earth.

So ends Day Five. We're almost ready now for the pinnacle of creation which we'll see next time. But first, let's talk application...

Application: We learn some life-changing truths in Genesis 1. I'll mention three truths.

1. *We are living in God's world.* Listen. God did not give us creation texts in the Bible merely to satisfy our curiosity. They're not intended to *inform* us so much as to *implore* us to do something. To do what? Worship!

Genesis 1 shouts this truth to us. *There is a Being who made this universe and because He did, He deserves our worship.* He is God.

God is superior. As Creator, He is in a class all by Himself.

I must warn you of a serious danger. If we leave Genesis 1 and all we get from it is intellectual stimulation, we've missed the point. Indeed, we've robbed God of something He deserves. The purpose of Genesis 1 is to cause us to worship our Creator!

Have you ever noticed that almost all of the creation texts in the Bible are in a context of *praise*. Think about it. What did man do on his *first* full day of life? God created man on day six, after making the animals. When Adam woke up after his first night of sleep, what day was it? The *seventh* day, the rest-day which God sanctified according to Genesis 2:3. Man's first full day of life was a day of *worship*.

Let that sink in. There's more to life than punching the clock and playing with our toys--though there's nothing wrong with work and recreation in their proper place. We were created *to worship God*.

And why? Because we are living in *His world*!

2. *In God's world, what God says goes.* The pattern of Genesis 1 is clear. "And God said, Let there be... And it was so." What God says, goes. Always.

I'm struck by something in Genesis 1. When God created the universe, He accomplished His work by using a plan. He didn't make the world in one, split moment--though He could have. Instead, He took six days to do it. Why? In part, it was to give us a pattern, but ultimately, it was because it was His will and purpose to do it that way.

God operates by a plan. He chose to create this world in six stages. He took six days to form and fill a world that at the beginning was formless and empty.

Chew on that thought for a moment. Do you remember what your life was like before Christ saved you? For some of us, our lives were in shambles. They were formless and empty, kind of like the world in Genesis 1:1.

Did God bring instant wholeness to your life? When you repented of your sin and believed in Jesus Christ, did you experience instant and total transformation? Did you experience sinless perfection?

Certainly God can do whatever He wants. But in redemption, as in creation, God works in stages, through the power of His Son, Jesus Christ.

When you placed your faith in Christ, God eliminated the *penalty* of your sin immediately. But what about the *power* of sin? Did God set you free from the stubborn habits of sin all at once? No. Why not? Why do you still struggle with sin? Is your salvation deficient? No. According to Romans 6 the work to overcome the power of sin is a lifetime work.

And what about the *presence* of sin? When will God remove the final residue of sin from your life? Not until we see Christ face to face.

We have been justified. We are being sanctified. We will one day be glorified. Those are the stages in God's wonderful plan of redemption.

If Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, know this. You are eternally secure in Him. Because in God's Word, what God says goes. And He said, "He who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ (Phil. 1:6)."

3. *In God's world, what God does is good.* Indeed, according to God's own assessment in Genesis, it is *very good* (1:31). Beloved, *everything* God does is good.

If that was true in God's work of creation, you can be sure it's just as true in the work God is doing in your life. God is good and what He does is good. Will you affirm that truth today?

Beloved, I'm afraid we've domesticated God in our day. But if Genesis 1 does anything, it reminds us that the Creator God is *great* and worthy of honor.

Centuries ago St. Francis of Assisi penned the following words.

All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou burning sun with golden beam, Thou silver moon with softer gleam,

O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia.

Thou rushing wind that art so strong, Ye clouds that sail in heaven along,

O praise Him, Alleluia!

Thou rising morn in praise rejoice, Ye lights of evening, find a voice,

O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia.

Thou flowing water, pure and clear, Make music for thy Lord to hear,

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou fire so masterful and bright, That givest man both warmth and light,

O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia.

And all ye men of tender heart, forgiving others, take your part,

O sing ye, Alleluia!

Ye who long pain and sorrow bear, Praise God and on Him cast your care,

O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia.

Let all things their Creator bless, And worship Him in humbleness,

O praise Him, Alleluia!

Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son, And praise the Spirit, Three in One,

O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia.

Alleluia, Alleluia! Amen.