

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 1/23/2000 Bradley S. Brandt

Genesis 1:3-13 "How God Made the World: Days 1, 2, & 3"*

Proposition: According to Genesis 1:3-13, during the first three days of creation God gave form to the formless world by creating three boundaries.

I. On Day One, God created the first boundary (3-5).

A. We learn that God formed light.

B. We learn how God did it.

1. He spoke.

2. He saw.

3. He separated.

4. He named.

II. On Day Two, God created the second boundary (6-8).

A. We learn that God formed an expanse.

1. It was between the waters.

2. It was to separate the waters.

B. We learn that God named the expanse.

III. On Day Three, God created the third boundary (9-13).

A. We learn that God formed dry ground (9-10).

1. In the created world, the waters were gathered in one place.

2. In the created world, there was one land mass.

B. We learn that God formed vegetation (11-13).

1. There were seed-bearing plants.

2. There were fruit-bearing trees.

Implications: Some Lessons for us about God...

1. He is the Creator.

2. He is the Law-giver.

3. He keeps His Word.

4. He works according to an organized plan.

5. He gives meaning to life.

6. He's a specialist in giving form to the formless.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Those are the first words of the Bible, the foundation upon which the rest of God's revelation stands. In the beginning, God created.

That raises the question--*how*? How did He do it? How did God make the world? And how can we know how He did it? That is, how do we know what happened at the creation event?

We weren't there, obviously. No one was there. Critics of creation assert that the present is the key to understanding the past. But that assumes that the processes in operation today have always been at work.

The fact is this. There was only *one* eyewitness present at the creation of the world. I wasn't there. You weren't there. No human being was there. Only God was there. Since that's true, the only way we can know for sure what happened at creation is if God *revealed* it to us.

Which is exactly what He has done. In His grace, God was kind enough to record for us in His Word how He fashioned the universe.

Last week we introduced a new series I've entitled "In the Beginning, God." Our aim is to do an exposition of Genesis 1-11 with this goal in mind--to get to know God better by looking at the record of how He made the world.

So back to the question. How did He do it? This morning we're going to examine the first three days of the creative week, next week days four and five, then day six the following week.

A quick review will set the stage for today's study. According to verse 1, the universe is here because God created it. When? At the beginning of time. Before the creative event, there was nothing but God, the self-existent, Triune Being who existed in perfect fellowship throughout eternity past. Then God created the heavens and the earth.

What did the world look like as it first came from the hand of the Maker? Verse 2 tells us, "Now the earth was formless and empty [*tohu* and *bohu* are the rhyming Hebrew words]." Those two words are key to understanding what transpired on the six days of creation.

The created matter as it first came from God was *tohu*. Formless. It lacked boundaries to give it form. That's exactly what God gave it on days 1, 2, & 3, as we'll see in a moment. It was also *bohu*. Void. Empty. At this point, the earth lacked inhabitants, but that will change on days 4, 5, & 6.

Furthermore, in addition to lacking form and inhabitants, the newly created earth lacked something else. *Light*. We're told that "darkness was over the surface of the deep." But even then, even in its unfinished state, the newly created world was under the care of God for, as verse 2 explains, "The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

Remember the setting we sketched last time. Moses is writing this account around the year 1400 B.C. Moses penned the Pentateuch, and in fact, this creation account serves as a prologue to it. What was happening in Moses' day? God had just rescued His chosen people, Israel, from bondage in Egypt, and was taking them to the Promised Land.

And once there they would confront people who believed in *polytheism*. What did God do to prepare His people for the coming clash? On the way, He stopped them at Sinai where He gave them His Law. Exodus is the record of it. Leviticus fleshes out some of the details, as does Numbers. Deuteronomy, which means "second law," actually repeats the law-terms for the second generation after the forty years of wandering.

What about Genesis? Genesis is the introduction to the Pentateuch. In Genesis, God explains to the Israelites how they came to be His chosen people. The first eleven chapters tell how God formed the world, while the next thirty-nine chapters record how God formed a family that eventually became the nation of Israel.

Moses, then, wasn't writing a science textbook when he penned Genesis. His intent was to prepare two million, just freed, Hebrew slaves for a battle. Not simply a military battle, but a world-view battle. And the

latter battle still rages today.

So how did God do it? Let's take a look at days 1, 2, & 3. According to Genesis 1:3-13, during the first three days of creation God gave form to the formless world. He did it by creating three boundaries.

I. On Day One, God created the first boundary (3-5).

Notice the text (3-5): "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day,' and the darkness he called 'night.' And there was evening, and there was morning--the first day."

According to Genesis 1, when God fashioned the universe, He did it in successive stages, six days to be specific. Could He have done it all at once? Certainly. The Almighty can do anything He pleases. But God intended that His activity be a pattern for man--so He worked six days and rested the seventh.

What was the first boundary that God put in place? It was the boundary between light and darkness. According to verse 3...

A. We learn that God formed light. "Let there be light," God said. These are the first recorded words of God in the Scriptures. It's significant that they are cited in 2 Corinthians 4:6 to illustrate how spiritual light illumines the hearts of believers in Christ. Frankly, we wouldn't know Christ today had He not caused the light of the gospel to shine upon our hearts.

"Let there be light." The Vulgate uses the Latin '*Fiat lux*,' from which we get the expression "creation by fiat."

In the ancient world, people often viewed the day and night as warring powers. In our modern world, they're just the products of a spinning globe. But superstition and secularism both miss the mark.

The truth is, the reason we have day and night is because God created light and put a boundary between light and darkness.

It's interesting to compare how the Bible begins with how it ends. In Genesis 1 we're told that the creation of light preceded the creation of the sun (which wasn't created until day four). In Revelation 22 we're informed that light outlasts the sun (Rev 22:5), for in the new heavens and earth there will no longer be a need for the sun, yet there will be light. In Genesis 1, God put a boundary between light and darkness. In Revelation 22, apparently the boundary will be removed for in the new heavens and earth there will *be no more night* (Rev 22:5).

Now let's take a closer look at day one. When we look at the text we learn that God formed light. What else do we learn?

B. We learn how God did it. Moses mentions four divine activities in verses 3-5.

1. *He spoke.* "And God said." This phrase appears ten times in Genesis 1. When God created something, He *spoke* it into existence.

Answer this. *Why?* Why did God speak? Why didn't He just *do* it? Obviously, He could have had He so desired. But He *spoke*.

Think about it. To whom did God speak? There was no one to listen. I think He's revealing something to us about how He works.

When God created the world He chose to use *words*. In fact, John 1 reveals that the One who spoke was *the*

Logos Himself--the Word. Speaking is the revelation of thought (Keil, 49).

In 1986 Ted Koppel won the Broadcaster of the Year Award, and said this in his acceptance speech, "What is largely missing in American life today is a sense of context, of saying or doing anything that is intended or even expected to live beyond the moment....We have become so obsessed with facts that we have lost all touch with truth.... Consider this paradox: Almost everything that is publicly said these days is recorded. Almost nothing of what is said is worth remembering."

But God's Word is different. What happened right after God spoke? "God said, 'Let there be light,' *and there was light*." We immediately learn a vital truth on day one. In God's universe, what God says *goes!*

Listen to David in Psalm 29:3-9. The psalm is a hymn to the King of creation: "The *voice of the LORD* is over the waters; the God of glory thunders over the mighty waters. The *voice of the LORD* is powerful; the *voice of the LORD* is majestic. The *voice of the LORD* breaks the cedars...The *voice of the LORD* strikes with flashes of lightning. The *voice of the LORD* shakes the desert...The *voice of the LORD* twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'"

When God created, He *spoke*. What else did He do on day one?

2. *He saw*. Verse 4, "God saw that the light was good." There's God's assessment of the first barrier He put in place. God saw what He made and said it was *good*. As humans when we make something we'll often step back when we're finished and decide if it meets our intended purpose. We'll decide if it's *good* or not.

That's what God did. Here we learn that God is concerned about goodness, and He determines what goodness is.

We're told, "You have no right to impose your ideas about sexual orientation upon another human being. You have your opinion, and I have mine." Frankly, in God's universe, it's what God thinks that matters.

3. *He separated*. Verse 4 concludes, "And He separated the light from the darkness." In verse 2 there was only darkness. Then God created light, but the formation of light didn't mean that darkness was eliminated. Just separated. Light and darkness are both created realities in God's world.

4. *He named*. Verse 5, "God called the light *Yom*, and the darkness he called *Lila*." Why the names? Who needed these designations? God didn't, but man would.

On day six, God created an image-bearer. What was one of the first assignments that God gave to Adam? It was his task to *name the animals* (2:19).

Answer this. Who taught Adam how to talk? God did. God gave language symbols to the things He created. Then He told man, His representative, to do likewise.

There's another reason for the naming. In biblical times, to name something or someone implied dominion or ownership. Asaph prays in Psalm 74:16-17, "The day is yours, and yours also the night; you established the sun and moon. It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; you made both summer and winter."

That brings us to the end of the first day in the creation of God's yet-unfinished world. God put in place the boundary between light and darkness, then states, "And there was evening, and there was morning--the first day (5)."

There's a lot of debate as to what the word "day" means in the creation account. Some suggest it refers to "ages" or "indefinite periods of time." I've read and reread their arguments and remain unconvinced that they do justice to the text. I see no reason to question that when Moses used the term *yom*, or "day," particularly

when linked with a number, he had in mind twenty-four hour periods of time.

At the conclusion of each of the days he specifically says there was "evening and morning." Those are the boundaries of one day. The Jews customarily figured their calendar days in this fashion. A new day would start and then end at sunset.

We gain an important insight right here in verse 5. God called the light "day," thus defining what is likely meant by the term as it appears throughout the chapter. The first day's work of creation ended when the light of day ended. Then "evening" came, then a period of darkness, and then "morning," when another "day" began.

It appears that although the sun has yet to be created, the earth's axial rotation has begun. Again, the text specifically mentions both evening and morning. And there is a source of light in place--though what it is we're not told.

The first boundary is in place. Now we come to day two...

II. On Day Two, God created the second boundary (6-8).

"And God said, 'Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.' So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse 'sky.' And there was evening, and there was morning--the second day." We learn that God did two things on day two...

A. We learn that God formed an expanse. How? Again, He *spoke*. And by speaking He put an "expanse" (or "firmament," as the KJV translates) in place.

Many think the firmament is earth. It's not. Here we're told it is part of the heavens, that is, the "sky" as we'll see. It seems to refer to the atmosphere around the globe.

What was the purpose for the creation of this expanse? We're given a couple of important details about it in verse 6.

1. *It was between the waters.* And...

2. *It was to separate the waters.* Remember, when God created the world it was *tohu* or "formless." It lacked form, so God gave it form by putting boundaries in place. This is the second boundary. God put a barrier or division in place. On the second day of creation, God took the water that was on the earth (already there in verse 2), and put some of it above the expanse and put some of it under the expanse.

Apparently, on day two God put a water canopy around the earth, referred to in verse 7 as the water "above the expanse." That "canopy" would have had a tremendous effect on the climate in the created world. It would have shielded the planet from many harmful radiations coming from outer space, and would have produced a wonderful "greenhouse" effect world-wide. It's conceivable that with that canopy in place there would have been no polar caps, but rather a warm, pleasant climate all around the earth.

You say, "What happened to all that water above the earth?" I think we find the answer in Genesis 7:11-12. "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month--on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth [that is, subterranean caverns of water broke through the earth's crust], and the floodgates of the heavens were opened [that is, the waters above the expanse came crashing down]. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights."

Someone might object, "I can't buy that. That's not the way the world looks *today*. There's no canopy of

water." It's interesting that Peter responded to similar critics in his day by reminding them of Day Two. Listen to 2 Peter 3:5-6, "But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed *out of water and by water* (in the KJV it says, "The earth standing *out of the water and in the water*"). By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed."

God did something else on Day Two. First, He formed an expanse...

B. We learn that God named the expanse. He called it *Shamayim* in the Hebrew--it's "sky" in the NIV, and "Heaven" in the KJV. It's the same word translated "heavens" in verse 1, although here it refers to the atmosphere, the portion of the "heavens" that meets our eye when we first look up, thus, the "sky."

And with that, the second day comes to a close, as Moses repeats the phrase, "And there was evening, and there was morning--the second day." Two boundaries are now in place. Let's look at the third and then talk about application.

III. On Day Three, God created the third boundary (9-13).

On Day Three we actually observe *two* creative acts, the first in verses 9-10 where...

A. We learn that God formed dry ground (9-10). "And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' And it was so. God called the dry ground 'land,' and the gathered waters he called 'seas.' And God saw that it was good."

Here's the third boundary. On Day Three God divided the water under the sky from the land. What water? The water *under* the sky. He gathered that water into one place. Where had it been before? According to verse 2, the entire earth surface was in an unfinished, watery condition when it initially came from God's hand. Then on Day Two God took some of the waters and formed the water canopy in the atmosphere. On Day Three He gave form to the water on the earth.

And a name. He called the gathered waters "seas" (in the NIV and KJV). The Hebrew word is *Yamim*, a plural noun. But as Keil suggests, it's probably an intensive rather than a numerical plural (55). And He called the dry ground "land." And He said it was "good."

Think carefully now. Moses records two important characteristics of the created world as it existed on day three.

1. *In the created world, the waters were gathered in one place.* Furthermore...

2. *In the created world, there was one land mass.* God formed "the dry." That's the literal meaning of the word translated "dry ground" (Keil, 54).

How many places was there water? One place. There was no Atlantic ocean, no Pacific ocean, and no Indian ocean.

And how many land masses were there? Again, just one. The text indicates that in the first world there was one continuous land mass. There were no continents as we know them, just as there were no oceans as there are today.

Yes, that world was very different from ours. In our world, seventy percent of the earth is under water. That wasn't true of the world as God first created it. In that world there was much more livable land for the human and animal population.

Something else occurred on Day Three...

B. We learn that God formed vegetation (11-13). "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. 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. And there was evening, and there was morning--the third day."

Please notice that the first inhabitants of God's world were the vegetable kingdom. And there is still no sun. Moses identifies two classifications of vegetation...

1. *There were seed-bearing plants.* And...
2. *There were fruit-bearing trees.*

The well known Old Testament commentator, C. F. Keil, makes this observation (56), "We must not picture the work of creation as consisting of the production of the first tender germs which were gradually developed into herbs, shrubs, and trees; on the contrary, we must regard it as one element in the miracle of creation itself, that at the word of God not only tender grasses, but herbs, shrubs, and trees, sprang out of the earth, each ripe for the formation of blossom and the bearing of seed and fruit, without the necessity of waiting for years before the vegetation created was ready to blossom and bear fruit."

In other words, the world that God created was mature and ready for occupancy when man came along on day six. Listen to this observation by Henry Morris, "It is important to recognize that the herbs were already bearing seed and the trees already yielding fruit, as soon as they appeared. This further implies that the 'dry land' which had just previously come forth from the waters was already prepared with suitable soils and nutrients for the plants. Everything was created in fully developed, completely functioning form. The whole world thus had an 'appearance of age,' even though newly created. Creation of apparent age is inherent in the very concept of creation. No deception is involved, since God has plainly told us these events of creation."

So there's the record. On Days 1, 2, & 3 God gave form to an earth that was "formless" when it first came from Him. It's no longer *tohu*. And after days 4, 5, & 6 it will no longer be *bohu*, or empty, once God fills it with inhabitants.

But don't shut your Bible just yet. God didn't give us this account merely to *inform* us, but to *transform* us. In fact, I invite you to ponder six practical lessons about God we can derive from Genesis 1.

Implications: Some Lessons for us about God...

1. *He is the Creator.* There is no one greater than God. He's in a class all by Himself. God made this world. Make it personal. God made *you*.

You are not here by chance. You--as well as everything else in this world--are here because *the* Creator made you. Please affirm that truth today. *God is the Creator.*

Repetition is key in the Bible. When you're studying God's Word, always be on the lookout for repeated phrases. I see four in this passage, and these four phrases reveal the next four lessons about God.

The first phrase is "And God said." On each day of creation we hear those words. What do they tell us about God? Lesson #2, that in addition to being the Creator...

2. *He is the Law-giver.* Remember, when Moses penned this, he and the Israelites had been at Sinai. What did God give His people there? His Law.

Don't miss this. The One who spoke at Sinai is the One who first spoke at Creation. *And God said.* What does that mean? Here's one implication. When it comes to life, what *God says* is to be our final authority.

Answer this. Is that the way it is in your life? Are you taking the speech of God seriously? Are you obeying the Word of the Law-giver? A third lesson about God...

3. *He keeps His Word.* Notice the second, repeated phrase, "And it was so." On each day the pattern is the same: And God said let there be... And it was so.

My friend, what God says is *dependable* and *reliable*. His Word is *trustworthy*. I don't know what you are facing today, but know this. You can trust God. If He could make this universe, He surely can take care of you! Lesson #4...

4. *He works according to an organized plan.* I see this truth in the phrase recorded at the end of each day, "And there was evening, and there was morning." God's ways are not haphazard and whimsical. He works in an orderly, purposeful manner. He has a *plan*.

The Psalmist understood this truth. Listen to his reflections in Psalm 33:6-11, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the *plans of the LORD* stand firm forever, the *purposes of his heart* through all generations."

Beloved, God works according to a plan. That was true in Creation. It's also true in Redemption. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, was it an accident? No. It was God's plan. His Son died, then conquered death, just as planned. And if you will acknowledge Christ as your Savior and Lord, God will forgive and save you. That, too, is His plan.

5. *He gives meaning to life.* What did God say after creating the light and the dry ground and the vegetation? He said it was *good* (3, 10, 12)."

It's been estimated that we now have only three percent of the information that will be available in 2010. We have information galore, but do we have meaning? Only God can give that.

Paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould summarized human life with this comment, "We are because one odd group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures; because the earth never froze entirely during an ice age; because a small and tenuous species, arising in Africa a quarter of a million years ago, has managed, so far, to survive by hook and by crook. We may yearn for a 'higher' answer--but none exists."

My friend, don't miss the inevitable conclusion of a system that ignores God. If God is not the *Creator* of life, then there can be no *meaning* to life.

If He's not the Creator, then why not abort a "fetus," or eliminate the terminally ill? Why not do *whatever* you want? It doesn't matter anyway, does it?

But there is meaning to life. And why? Because there *is* a Creator. Do you want meaning in your life? Then submit your life to Him. And know this, sixthly...

6. *He's a specialist in giving form to the formless.* If He could fashion this world, is there any reason to doubt He could make something beautiful out of *your* life?

I invite you to pray this prayer: "Have Thine own way, Lord. Have Thine own way. Thou art the Potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will. While I am waiting, yielded, and still."