

Osaka International Church

Date: January 6th, 2008

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Series: Beginnings

Title: The First Word

Scripture: Genesis 1:3-13

I. Introduction

Happy New Year! This morning I am excited because we are getting back to Genesis. It has been a few weeks, so let's review briefly. In our first Genesis message, we looked at, **Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** And we saw that this one verse refutes a wide variety of man-made religious and philosophical ideas. If we believe Genesis 1:1, then we can discard all belief systems that do not teach that there is one Creator God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and who made the heavens and earth and everything in them.



After Genesis 1:1, we looked at **Genesis 1:2. "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."** This verse raises several widely debated ideas. And, when we looked at it, we discussed the gap theory, the controversial idea that a long period of time passed between verses 1 and 2, a gap during which Satan fell and became the devil. More importantly, from this verse we also saw that the Spirit of God is present wherever there is darkness and confusion. Sometimes life seems as if it is without hope. But if we remember that God is with us, then we have new hope. God, through His Holy Spirit, is always ready and able to begin something new and wonderful in our lives.



This brings us today's passage, Genesis 1:3-13. Let's read it and then discuss it.

II. Scripture: Genesis 1:3-13 (NIV)

[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. [6] And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." [7] So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. [8] God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning--the second day. [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.

III. Teaching

There is a rare power and majestic beauty to this passage which describes the creative work of God in words so simple that a child can understand, and yet with such unsearchable depths of meaning that even the best of philosophers cannot fathom the full implications. This passage reassures us that God is in complete control and that God is a God of love and order.

Let's go back and take a closer look at **Genesis 1:3-5. "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."**



No human words can compare to the power of God’s Word. **“God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.”** These are the first words, and they are words of power. God did not have to wave His arms, or jump up and down, or strain His muscles. God simply spoke, and where there had been nothing, suddenly there was light. Of course, God is Spirit and does not have literal arms or legs, or a mouth and tongue. The spoken word is just the closest human concept to how God expressed His creative will.

Genesis is written for all people of all times, children and adults, ancient and modern. If Genesis were written only for 21st century scientists and philosophers, it might say something like, *“God eschatologically expressed His omnipotent will in some humanly incomprehensible way and out of the void of nothingness the entire spectrum of all energy forms instantly sprang into being and all of the laws of physics including the equations of relativity and quantum mechanics were established.”* But Genesis is not just for modern scientists, Genesis is for all people in all times and places, so it simple says, **“God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.”** Some people wish God had explained more, but I am glad that Genesis is written simply.

Verse 4, **“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.”**” Notice that it is God who decides what is good. And it is God who established the boundaries and separations of the natural world; and here it is even God who names things, establishing a language that Adam would later learn. God is Creator, Judge, and Teacher. All things owe their existence to God and the ultimate destiny of all things is in God’s hands. And only revelation from God can show us the true way.

On the second day, God separated the waters from the waters, and made an expanse between the surface of the oceans and the cloudy sky above. On the third day, God caused the dry land to appear, **verse 9, “And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so.”**



It is fascinating that Genesis 1:9 states that the waters were gathered to one place. If the waters were together, then the dry land also had to be together. Modern scientists figured this out in the 1920s; they call this ancient super-continent, “Pangea,” and they draw pictures to show how all of the continents used to fit together. When Moses wrote Genesis, he didn’t include any pictures, but by revelation from God, Moses already knew about Pangea.



On the third day, God also caused plants to grow from the ground and God established the natural system of plants reproducing through seeds. And God saw that it was good.



We could spend more time discussing the individual days, but let’s notice the overall structure. The writing style of the creation account is not poetry; it is prose. And yet, it is highly structured prose, certain elements appear again and again. Each of the six days begins and ends in the same way. Every day begins with God speaking, and every day ends with the set phrase, **“And there was evening, and there was morning,”** followed by the day number. This set structure makes the passage easier to memorize, and it also introduces some mysteries. One of these mysteries is the realization that the first two verses of Genesis are not part of the first day.

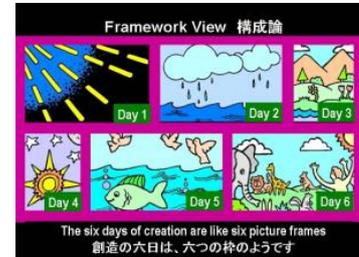
Genesis (創世記) 1:3-31	
[3a] And God said ...	1:3a 神は言われた。...
[5b] the first day.	1:5b 第一の日である。
[6a] And God said ...	1:6a 神は言われた。...
[8b] the second day.	1:8b 第二の日である。
[9a] And God said ...	1:9a 神は言われた。...
[13] the third day.	1:13b 第三の日である。
[14a] And God said...	1:14a 神は言われた。...
[19b] the fourth day.	1:19b 第四の日である。
[20a] And God said...	1:20a 神は言われた。...
[23b] the fifth day.	1:23b 第五の日である。
[24] And God said ...	1:24a 神は言われた。...
[31b] the sixth day.	1:31b 第六の日である。

Some Bible teachers try to include Genesis 1:1-2 in the first day, but the repetitive structure makes it clear that Day #1 begins in verse 3. Features of the text like this one have encouraged the development of various approaches to interpreting the passage. We have already talked about the Gap Theory, and we saw that a key feature of that theory was the idea of a long gap of time between



verses 1 and 2. But another feature of the Gap Theory is that the six days are understood as being a restoration or recreation of the earth. Therefore, in the Gap Theory, it makes sense for Day #1 to begin at verse 3.

Another approach is what is called the Framework View, a view which arises out of analysis of the structure of the original Hebrew text. Framework interpreters are still conservative Bible scholars because they affirm that the Scripture is inspired, but they argue that the purpose of the text is prophetic and evangelistic, and not historical and scientific. In this approach the six days of creation are not seen as literal days, instead, they are seen as being like six picture frames into which are placed selected facts about God and about our world. According to this view, the Genesis days are figurative and their purpose is to provide a literary framework. Therefore, they say that Genesis does not tell us anything about the time span or order of creation. Framework View interpreters still insist that the Genesis account is history. But they would say that it is history arranged with a theological purpose, and not a scientific purpose.



The Framework View and other approaches to the Genesis creation account are complex and we won't go into all of the pluses and minuses, instead, I will be gradually describing some of the better known approaches briefly just to give us all a general idea. Those who are interested in studying this more can read some books about these things.

However, I should mention that the use of metaphor is quite common in Scripture, so we cannot insist on taking everything literally. Instead, we have to examine the context of each passage to try to determine the true meaning of the text. For example, take a look at **Luke 13:31-32**. **“At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.” He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’”** In this passage, it is immediately clear that the, “fox,” Jesus mentions is not a literal fox, instead it is a metaphor which refers to King Herod. On the other hand, at first reading, we might tend to take Jesus’ statement about today, tomorrow, and the third day as referring to three literal days. But, further study of Luke shows that these days also are figurative and not literal. We have to study the context to see this, but in the original language, Jesus’ hearers probably all understood the figure of speech.

In contrast, when the Bible says that Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day, it is clear from the context that this is a literal statement. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day and He showed Himself alive to the disciples with many proofs, so it is a literal, historical resurrection. And so Jesus’ figurative statement in Luke 13:32 about reaching His goal, can be seen as prophetically pointing to Jesus’ literal resurrection.

The key issue is not whether we take Genesis 1 literally or figuratively; the important thing is that we take it seriously and respond in faith. Starting with nothing except His perfect plan, God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. This means that there is an all-powerful Creator God who owns the heavens and the earth and all of mankind by right of creation, and therefore we are all accountable to Him. On a certain day that He has decided, each and everyone of us will have to appear before God.

On that day of judgment, what defense will we offer when we are confronted with our sins? The Bible teaches us that only one defense will be accepted, and that is to confess our sins, affirm our faith in Jesus, and trust in His finished work on the cross for our salvation. The blood of Jesus is the only provision God has made for forgiveness of sins. That’s okay, because the blood of Jesus is sufficient; Jesus is, **“the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”(John 1:29)**



IV. Closing

God has not hidden Himself from us. Instead, God has revealed Himself and His ways through the testimony of nature and through the special revelation of the Bible. God is good and all that God created was originally good. The problems of the world are, directly and indirectly, the result of sin, Adam and Eve’s sin, your sin and my sin. But God loves us and He has provided a solution to the problem of sin. Through faith in

Jesus Christ and through trusting in Jesus' finished work on the cross, we can be saved. Today is a good day for trusting in Jesus and receiving forgiveness for your sins and the free gift of eternal life. And if you have made the salvation decision before, today is a good day to reaffirm that decision and to dedicate this New Year to walking more closely with the Lord. Let's pray!

V. Prayer

ⁱ The name, "Pangea," was first used by the originator of the continental drift theory, Alfred Wegener, in the 1920 edition of his book *The Origin of Continents and Oceans*.