

Osaka International Church

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Series: Beginnings #4

Title: The First Blessing

Scripture: Genesis 1:14-23

I. Introduction

Good morning! This month we are gradually working our way through Genesis chapter one and discussing various approaches to interpretation. Hopefully this will help us to understand Genesis better, but more importantly, I pray that it will help us to know God better as we respond in faith to His Word. The key issue is not which interpretation we prefer; the key issue is our faith response. So we will continue to look for life-changing spiritual truths as we also seek understanding of the text. Let's go ahead and take a look at today's Scripture, Genesis 1:14-23.



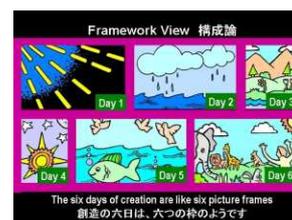
II. Scripture: Genesis 1:14-23 (NIV)

[14] 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, [15] and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. [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. [17] God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, [18] to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. [19] And there was evening, and there was morning--the fourth day.

[20] And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." [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. [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." [23] And there was evening, and there was morning--the fifth day.

III. Teaching

Last week, we briefly discussed what is called the Framework View and we saw that scholars who adhere to this interpretation see the purpose of the text as mainly prophetic and evangelistic, and therefore they see the six days of creation as figurative, and propose that the six days are intended to be a literary device that focuses attention on certain truths, sort of like six picture frames.



Supporters of this interpretation also point out that the six creation days appear in two sets of three days each that are closely related. They say the first three days focus on realms, or kingdoms, and the second three days focus on the rulers, or kings, of those realms. Light is, in a sense, ruled over by the sun, moon, and stars. The sky is ruled by birds; the seas are ruled by fish and other sea creatures. Land and the plant world are ruled over by the animals and by man, and man also rules over the animals. On the seventh day, God rests, and the rule of God over all is reemphasized. The arrangement emphasizes that God is sovereign over all and that man is the peak of God's creation. Adherents of this viewpoint are not concerned about the length, or even the order, of the days, but only about the theological implications of the passage. Because of this, Framework View supporters usually have little interest in comparing Genesis to modern scientific theories.

Focus for each day (Framework View)	
Creation Realms	Creation Rulers
Day #1 light	Day #4 sun, moon, stars
Day #2 sky, seas	Day #5 birds, fish, etc.
Day #3 land, vegetation	Day #6 animals, man
Day #7 God rules over all, establishes Sabbath	

諸日の焦点 (構成論)	
創造の領域	創造の支配者
第一日 光	第四日 日月星
第二日 空海	第五日 鳥魚など
第三日 陸地植物	第六日 動物人間
第七日 神はすべてを支配し、安息日を定める	

Today, I would also like to discuss another interpretation, one which is often called the Day-Age Theory. The idea here is that each of the creation days represents a long period of time, similar to what scientists call

the geological ages. In contrast to supporters of the Framework View, Day-Age interpreters sometimes go to great lengths to try to reconcile Genesis with scientific theory. They emphasize that there cannot be any real disagreement between nature and the Bible, because God is the Author of both. Any apparent disagreements come from either an incorrect understanding of the general revelation of God in nature, or from errors in Bible interpretation. Therefore, Day-Age theory supporters, including Dr. Hugh Ross, who visited us last summer, strive to reconcile apparent differences by reexamining both science and the Bible.

Most Day-Age interpreters adhere to a high view of the inspiration of Scripture and strive to show that evidence within Scripture supports their interpretation. Here are a few commonly cited evidences for the Day-Age Theory:

1. In Genesis, there is no end to the Seventh Day and Hebrews 4 implies that the seventh day is still continuing. If so, then the seventh day is thousands of years long, and the other days can also be long.
2. The events of some days imply long periods of time. For example, the third day seems to include trees growing from seeds and bearing fruit. And the sixth day includes Adam naming the animals and the creation of Eve, as recorded in Genesis 2.
3. The Hebrew word translated as, “day,” can also refer to a long period of time. The phrase, “evening and morning,” would then refer simply to the ends and beginnings of the long time periods
4. The Bible includes other examples of using the word day to refer to longer time periods. For example, in Leviticus 25, the land is given a Sabbath rest every seventh year, and in **2 Peter 3:8b**, we are told that, **“With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.”**



So there is some positive evidence for the Day-Age Theory, but there are also some difficult problems. For example, this theory leads to a complex interpretation of **Genesis 1:16-18**. This passage says, **“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. 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. And God saw that it was good.”** When we read this in English or Japanese, the impression is that the sun, moon, and stars were created at that time, which is on the fourth day. But the Day-Age Theory supporters would say that this is a sort of parenthetical comment and that the actual creation of the sun, moon, and stars occurred in Genesis 1:1.

They would say that what happened on the fourth day is that the earth’s atmosphere cleared of heavy cloud cover and the sun, moon, and stars became visible from the earth for the first time. This interpretation introduces several ideas that do not appear in the text, and also sounds overly complex. However in support of this view, Day-Age interpreters argue that starting from Genesis 1:2, when the Spirit of God is said to be, “hovering over the waters,” the events are described as seen from the point of view of an observer on earth; and the description of the fourth day is also based on how things appear from earth. **Genesis 1:14-15**, says, **“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.”** The sun and moon mark day and night only if you observe them from earth; and they are to, **“give light on the earth.”** So the passage is earth-centered in several ways, and perhaps the idea that what is occurring on the fourth day is the clearing of clouds so that the sun, moon, and stars are visible from earth is not as far-fetched as it sounds at first.

I usually don’t do this to you, but before moving on, I would like for us to learn about two Hebrew words. The first is, “*bara*,” and it means, “to create,” and it is especially used when something entirely new is being created out of nothing. The second is, “*asah*,” and it means, “to make,” and is used in a very broad way to mean anything that is shaped, fashioned, or accomplished. So, “*bara*,” means, “to create,” in a very narrow and specific sense, and “*asah*,” means, “to make,” in a very wide and general sense.

Hebrew ヘブライ語	
בָּרָא (bārā')	עָשָׂה ('āsā')
create	make, shape, fashion, accomplish
創造する	作る、形作る 物作り、達成する
Genesis (創世記) 1:1, 1:21, 1:27	Genesis (創世記) 1:7, 1:11, 1:12, 1:16, 1:25, 1:26, 1:21

It is good to be aware of the difference between these two words because “*bara*,” appears only three times in Genesis chapter one, in verses 1, 21, and 27. Genesis 1:1 is, of course, the original creation event. Genesis 1:21 is the original creation of animal life; and Genesis 1:27 is the creation of man. All of the other places where God makes something in Genesis chapter one, the word in the original Hebrew is, “*asah*.”

Day-age interpreters would say that this distinction in word usage shows that the original creation of time, space, matter and energy from nothing happens in Genesis 1:1, and that what is described in most of the rest of the creation story is the shaping or forming of the matter and energy that was previously created into the things that we see in the world today. The two exceptions are the creation of animal and human life, each of which requires something entirely new that did not exist before.

We will talk more about interpretation issues next week, and we will also take a brief look at the literal 24-Hour Day interpretation. But for today, I think it is time to move on to some spiritual truths. Regardless of what approach is used to interpreting Genesis, here are some clear truths which Genesis teaches us.

God created the sun, moon, and stars, and He created them with a purpose.

As **Genesis 1:14b** says, “**let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years.**” Notice that they are created to, “serve,” and this must mean that they are created to serve mankind. Perhaps there are other purposes also, but Genesis clearly teaches us that they are for the benefit of mankind. Knowing this, it is ridiculous for people to worship the sun, moon, or stars. Yet, throughout history, people have fallen into worship of things which God created. When we look at the beauty of the sun, moon, and stars, we should give thanks to God for creating them for our benefit. But we should never bow down to them or speak of them as objects of worship, because that is an insult to God. When someone brings you a gift, you do not give thanks to the gift; you give thanks to the person who gave the gift. Likewise, we do not offer thanks to the sun, moon, or stars, we offer thanks to God who created them.



Also, notice that although the sun, moon, and stars serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years; they do not serve as signs of good luck or bad luck, or of how your love life will develop. The Bible teaches us to discard superstitious and harmful practices like good luck charms, fortune telling and astrology. All such practices show that a person is putting their faith in something other than in God. Remember the words of Joshua, who led the people of Israel into the promised land of Israel. Joshua told the people (**Joshua 24:14**), “**Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.**” Many of us come from families that do not honor God. For some of us, Egypt and idol worship are no further away than the living room or kitchen of the house we share with our families. But for our salvation and for the salvation of our families, we have the opportunity to choose to serve the Lord, the Creator God who made all things and who has proved His love for us at the cross of Christ. Let’s get rid of everything that dishonors God and that weakens our faith. Let’s serve the Lord in all faithfulness.

In **Genesis 1:20**, we read, “**And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky."**” Whatever we may see in the sky, or find in the depths of the ocean, it is there because God created it and placed it there. Whatever process or method God may, or may not, have used to form these creatures, all things exist because God willed them to exist. As Christians, we have great joy in exploring nature and discovering the wonders of God’s creation, because we know that all of these things come from the Hand of God and the beauty of nature speaks of God’s great love for us.



Nature is a blessing to us, and it happens that today’s message title is, “The First Blessing.” This title comes from **Genesis 1:22**, where we read, “**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."**” In order to be fruitful and multiply, the creatures needed God’s blessing. In the church and in our individual lives of faith, we also need God’s blessing. Without God’s favor and grace, we cannot grow and multiply.



In our personal lives, we need the blessing of God in order to be fruitful for His kingdom. It is the blessing of God's Spirit in our lives that allows us to bear fruit. **Galatians 5:22-23** speaks of this fruit of the Spirit. **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."**



And in our church, we need the blessing of God in order to grow and glorify Him in all that we do. Just before Jesus returned to heaven, in **Acts 1:8**, He told the disciples, **"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."** They already knew the gospel, but before they were ready to go out and turn the world upside down with the Good News of Jesus, they needed a special blessing from the Lord, the filling of the Holy Spirit.



IV. Closing

What do you think? Do you need a blessing from the Lord? I know that I do. And I have Good News for us, the Lord does come to us and give us His blessings when we seek Him and walk in His ways. **Psalm 119:2**, tells us, **"Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart."** This year, let us seek Him with our whole heart and strive to walk in His ways. And let us wait and watch expectantly for His blessing in our lives, our homes, and in our church. Let's pray!



V. Closing Prayer