

Osaka International Church

Date: December 2nd, 2007

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Series: Beginnings

Title: The Origin of Evil

Scripture: Genesis 1:2

I. Introduction

Good morning! As this Giant Nebula photo from the Hubble telescope reminds us, we live in a pretty amazing universe. Last week we took a look at Genesis 1:1, and we saw how the Bible reveals that God created all things, the entire universe, and everything in it. The Bible begins with the clear teaching that there is a single all-powerful, all-knowing, personally active, and self-revealing God who created this world and everything in it. And we also saw that God had a purpose in creating this world, a purpose that was motivated by His love for us. This morning we will continue with Genesis 1:2. Let's read it, and also Genesis 1:1 for context.



II. Scripture and Teaching

Genesis 1:1-2, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 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.” Last week, I mentioned that some of the things which we will discuss in studying Genesis are controversial. And, the meaning and significance of Genesis 1:2 is definitely one of those areas.

Some people interpret Genesis 1:2 as a simple transitional sentence that indicates that there is a process to God's creative work. Others find a lot of significance in the phrase, **“the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters,”** and assert that this phrase means that the rest of the creation account should be interpreted as being told from the perspective of an observer at the surface of the earth. Still other people find deep meaning in the statement that, **“the earth was formless and empty,”** and interpret it as revealing that some disaster must have happened to cause the earth to become, “formless and void.” This last idea is sometimes called the, “Gap Theory.”

Among Christians, there are both a lot of supporters and a lot of opponents of the Gap Theory, and we will not solve the controversy this morning. However, I am going to share a little about this theory, because it provides a convenient introduction to some important questions. I am not taking a position for or against the Gap Theory, I just think it is helpful to discuss it.

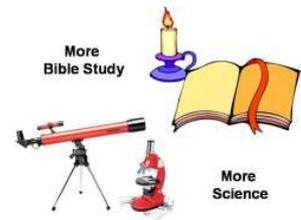
The Gap Theory proposes that there is a long gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Supporters of the Gap Theory usually place the geological ages of the earth and the fall of Satan in this gap. The concept is that God created the earth as a beautiful and inhabited world in Genesis 1:1, and then millions or billions of years passed before this first age of the earth ended in a huge disaster which caused the earth to become, “formless and void”. According to the Gap Theory, the six days of creation that begin with Genesis 1:3 are a recreation, or reestablishment of the earth after the disaster. Most supporters of this theory point to the fall of Satan as the cause of the huge disaster.



The arguments for and against the Gap Theory are complex and I don't want to use up a lot of time on them. Those who are interested can do some extra study on their own. But, very briefly, the Gap Theory offers one approach to resolving the difference between the Genesis 1 description of the six days of creation and the findings of science which indicate that the earth is billions of years old. At the same time, the Gap Theory also offers an answer to the question of when Satan fell and became the devil.

We will talk more about the age of the earth and the various approaches to reconciling Genesis 1 with science later on. For today, the important thing is to remember that there are several approaches for trying to

reconcile the differences between the Bible and science concerning the age of the earth, so there is no reason for anyone to feel that the record of creation in Genesis is incompatible with science. As I stressed last week, we should not be discouraged by any apparent problems, we should just work harder at understanding both the Bible and science. No real conflict between the Bible and nature is possible, because God is the author of both.



For today, I would like to take a closer look at the issue of Satan's fall, because this issue involves the very important question of the origin of evil. Let's look at a few Bible passages that relate to this issue.

First of all, we should know that the Bible teaches that the angels were created by God, just like all of the things of this world. **Psalm 148:1-5**, say, **"Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights above. Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created."** Here the angels are included in the list of things that God created. Just like the sun, moon, and stars, the angels also are part of God's creation.

Genesis 1:1 does not mention the creation of the angels. The verses simply says, **(Genesis 1:1), "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** But the creation of the angels has to be somewhere in the events which Genesis 1:1 summarizes, because in Job 38, when the Lord is speaking to Job, we read in **Job 38:4-7, "'Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone -- while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?'"** The language is poetic and should not be taken too literally, but still, this passage clearly indicates that the angels were already present when the earth was formed.

There is an important lesson here. Genesis 1, and some other portions of the Bible also, are very short summaries of very complex events. The angels were created before the earth was formed, but Genesis 1:1 does not mention the angels. Job 38 is poetic in style, but it still indicates that God used some sort of process to form the earth. And a process takes time. You don't necessarily need a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 to account for the billions of years that science speaks of, Genesis 1:1 is a summary statement that already speaks of a process of creation, so this first verse may already represent a very long period of time.



But, getting back to the angels, theologians agree that Satan was originally a good angel who served God. But then Satan rebelled against God and fell from heaven, thus becoming the devil. Some theologians believe that Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 speak of Satan's fall. Both of these passages begin by speaking about earthly kings, but then seem to go on to say things that could only refer to Satan. The idea is that Satan is referred to in these passages because Satan is the power behind the earthly kings. Let's take a brief look.

Isaiah 14:12-15, "How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit."

This passage speaks of a terrible sin – the sin of pride, exhibited in the desire to be like God, or even above God. The one who committed this sin is, **"cast down to the earth."** Supporters of the Gap Theory would typically say that this refers to Satan and that the violence of his being cast down brought disaster on the earth, causing it to become, "formless and void," so that God had to restore the earth afterwards.

Ezekiel 28:14-15, "You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you."

A cherub is a type of angel and these verses say that there was such an angel, an angel who was blameless from the time he was created, until wickedness was found in him. This passage also goes on to say this angel was expelled from heaven. Many theologians who interpret these passages as telling the story of the fall of Satan would also cite **Revelation 12:4a**, which says, **“His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.”** Here again, the language is poetic, but the dragon is understood as a reference to Satan and a, “third of the stars,” is thought to refer to a, “third of the angels,” falling along with Satan. And so, Satan becomes the devil and the fallen angels become the demons. This 1562 painting by Pieter Bruegel portrays the fall of the rebel angels.



The story that emerges in this interpretation of these verses is that God created the angels before He formed the earth and that initially all of the angels served God, but at some point Satan became proud and rebelled against God. One third of the angels joined Satan in his rebellion and they also were cast out of heaven with Satan. And so, evil enters the world through the sin of pride. We don't know for sure when this took place. Supporters of the Gap Theory would say it happened in between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Other theologians might place it elsewhere, perhaps between Genesis chapter 2 and 3. We do know that the fall of Satan has to occur before Genesis 3, because the devil appears in Genesis 3:1 as a serpent and tempts Eve.

There are a number of debatable issues in Genesis 1, but some core truths that are very clear and which Christians agree on are these. (1) God alone existed before the creation of the universe. (2) God is good and all of His creation was initially good. (3) At some point in time before Genesis 3:1, the angel Satan fell into sin and became the devil. (4) Since that time, the devil has always been the enemy of all of mankind. (5) But God is far greater than the devil, so when we trust in God, we are safe.



III. Closing

Last week we saw that Jesus, God the Son, was right there working with God the Father when the heavens and the earth were created. Now, let's look at **Genesis 1:2** again. **“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.”** The Spirit of God is said to be, **“hovering over the waters”**. The language indicates that this is something the Spirit of God was purposefully doing, and that means that the Spirit is a person and not just a force. So already we begin to see the doctrine of the Trinity begin to be revealed. **“The earth was formless and void.”** But the Spirit of God was not going to leave the earth that way. The Spirit of God was already actively moving to bring about something new, either a completion or a restoration of the earth.

What about us, you and me. Have you ever felt like your own life was, “formless and void”? Have you ever felt like you were in need of a completion or a restoration? I know that I have had those feelings sometimes; at those times I go to God and to His Holy Spirit and seek to receive refreshing and renewal from Him. The work of the Holy Spirit is very Good News for all of us. The Spirit of God is moving over our hearts, desiring to bring about something new in our lives. Whether the condition of your heart and life is the result of some disaster, or whether it is just that you have never felt completed or satisfied, either way, the Spirit of God is there, ready to bring something new and wonderful into your life.



I believe that God is ready to bring something new and wonderful into the heart of everyone who is ready to humble themselves and turn away from the sin of pride and away from every sin. Christ has thrown the doors to heaven open wide through His death on the cross for the forgiveness of sin, and the Holy Spirit is moving over every heart to draw people to the Father. Let's go to the Lord in prayer and open our hearts wide to receive something new from Him. Let's pray!

IV. Closing Prayer