

**Things Written In Earlier Times
(What NT writers taught from the OT Events)
Lessons from the creation**

Intro: Today there is a lot of skepticism about the creation account of Genesis one and two. Those embracing a secular worldview would simply dismiss it as a myth created by ancient Israel to explain their origins and incompatible with modern “science.”

But the Christian has a perspective from which to view the creation account. It is the testimony of one who was there when all things were made—Jesus. Jesus not only referred to the creation account in Genesis one and two, but also sent the Holy Spirit to guide His apostles in their use of this text as well. What did they say about the creation account? What lessons did they teach from it? So tonight as we continue our series “Things Written in Earlier Times” we want to examine what the NT writers said about the creation. What lessons did they teach from it?

The NT writers affirmed that accepting the creation account is a matter of “faith.”

Both the Hebrew writer and his audience had before them in the manuscripts of the OT the book of Moses and its account of the creation. The Hebrew writer appeals to that account to suggest that accepting the truth of that account depends upon faith.

“By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.” (Hebrews 11:3)

It occurs to me that the Hebrew writer could have easily passed over the creation account of Genesis, since the rest of the chapter is devoted to identifying people of faith of the OT era, beginning with Abel, and how they demonstrated the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.

Yet he does not pass over the creation account, but treats it in similar fashion to the narratives of the patriarchs and their descendants. For the Hebrew writer, believing in the Lord’s creation of all things is also a matter of faith, and that it also involves a matter “not seen.” Since none of us were there, we must accept the testimony of the one who was there, namely the Lord. Thus “by faith we understand...”

Moreover he shows that the creation came into existence by the spoken word of God just as Genesis reports (cf. “and God said...”), and that from nothing—sometimes called “creation ex nihilo.” Creation ex nihilo is the unique act by which God founded all creaturely reality—an act undertaken without any external aid or non- divine condition, including preexisting matter.

In the OT the word for creation conveys the idea of the bringing into existence what does not exist. It is only attributed to God throughout

Scripture. We may make things from already exists; but only God can create the matter that exists.

Thus Paul describes God:

“who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.”

(Romans 4:17)

What He did in the case of Abraham is congruent with His work in creation.

The NT writers consistently affirm the truth that the God of Israel created the heavens and the earth as Genesis 1 declares.

Jesus said about the great tribulation:

“For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created, until now, and never shall.”

(Mark 13:19)

In preaching to those in Lystra Paul said:

“Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE

SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.” (Acts 14:15)

Paul is not directly quoting Genesis, but one of several secondary texts that refer to the Genesis creation account.

To the Athens he said, He is:

“The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth;” (Acts 17:24)

To the Ephesians, He is:

“...the God, who created all things;” (Ephesians 3:9)

In the Revelation John describes the action of a great angel who...

“swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT” (Revelation 10:6)

In every case the reference to God is the God of the OT, the God of Israel.

The NT writers also acknowledge the details of God’s creative activity recorded in Genesis. They refer to...

The creation of light out of darkness

“For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Clearly Paul finds an analogy between God’s creation of light in Genesis and the light of the gospel that brings about the new creation.

The creation of Adam from the dust of the earth from Genesis 2.

As Paul explains the resurrection comparing Jesus with Adam”

“So also it is written, “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.”

The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” (1 Corinthians 15:45)

“The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.” (1 Corinthians 15:47)

Adam's name "adam" is closely related to the word for the earth (adamah).

By God act in Genesis 2 Luke could say that Adam was "the son of God."

"the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God."
(Luke 3:38)

The fact that humans were made in the image of God

"With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;" (James 3:9)

It affirms the unique place of the human in the creation. Only we are the image bearers of God. We are not just the end of an evolutionary chain subservient to our evolutionary ancestors.

It implies the need to respect and care for every member of God's creation. James regarded it incompatible with the teaching of creation to bless God as creator and curse those made in His image!

This implies the sanctity of all human life. It is the basis for which God demands the punishment of the one who takes life.

"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man." (Genesis 9:6)

It is why Paul could say about civil government in Romans:

"for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil." (Romans 13:4)

This implies the right to rule over the creation in ways that make use of its resources, but also cares for them as stewards of God's creation.

That the first humans were made male and female

Notice the significance of Jesus words in Mt. 19 when asked whether it was lawful to divorce a wife for any cause.

"And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, 'FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'?"
(Matthew 19:4-5)

This verse makes clear that marriage is a divine institution regulated by the creator, not merely some social construct designed by mankind. It defines God's original intention that marriage consist of a man and woman. This position stands behind Paul's affirmation that same-sex relationships are the result of rejecting the Creator and are "against nature" where nature is itself the creation of God.

That the first humans were made in near proximity to the beginning of all things.

In Mark's account it is interesting that the creation of the first human pair is said to be "from the beginning."

"But from the beginning of creation, God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE." (Mark 10:6)

Does this leave room for vast evolutionary ages of millions of years that makes humans a “Johnny-come-lately?”

And how can we explain this verse:

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20)

Who was there to do that?

That God rested from His creative work on the seventh day

The Hebrew writer used the analogy of God’s rest on the seventh day as a promised rest into which others could enter.

“For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, “AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,” although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, “AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS” ;” (Hebrews 4:3–4)

And so as the NT writers reference the creation account they accept at face value God’s actions as reported by Moses. They are a tacit endorsement of the truth of all that God did in the creation of the universe.

The NT writers affirm that all things that presently exist were created by God through the Word who became flesh as Jesus Christ.

In view of their understanding of Jesus as the divine Son of God, they explained the teaching of Genesis by showing that the Son was active in the original creation of all things.

The apostle John opens his gospel:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” (John 1:1–3)

John derives this truth from the testimony of John.

“This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’” (John 1:30)

He derives it also from the testimony of Jesus himself.

“Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”” (John 8:58)

Paul likewise boldly proclaimed Jesus as God’s agent of creation as a member of the divine trinity.

“yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.” (1 Corinthians 8:6)

“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:16–17)

The Hebrew writer (if not Paul) likewise affirms this truth:

“in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” (Hebrews 1:2)

Jesus himself speaks in the revelation to John:

“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:” (Revelation 3:14)

Thus the NT writer consistently identify Jesus with the creation of the world as the “God” of Genesis one; but teasing out the multiple personality of the godhead.

The NT writers based on the Genesis account reveal the powerful implications of the creation account.

The creation account implies that God is sovereign over the nations of the earth.

The Biblical writers affirm that all mankind and every nation proceed from the first human pair.

“and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;” (Acts 17:26–27)

Though Paul acknowledged the national divisions mentioned in Scripture, his language protests against any concept of racism, the belief that some people groups are not fully human.

Moreover he shows that God sovereignly rules over the nations determining how they arise, how long they exist, and over what territory they exert their rule.

The creation account implies that the Creator alone should be worshipped and obeyed.

“Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.” (Revelation 4:11)

The angel appeals to the unrepentant world:

“and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.””

(Revelation 14:7)

The basis for this appeal is the understanding that humans were made for a relationship with their Creator. Paul wanted the Athenians to see that the Creator made all people from one with a common purpose:

“that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;” (Acts 17:27,

NASB)

God's role as Creator gives Him the right to command and to bless or punish based on man's compliance. It gives him the right to define what are acceptable relationships. It gives Him the right to define what is moral and what is immoral. It gives Him the right to define the meaning of life and its purpose.

Conclusion: What strikes me about all these references is that Jesus and His apostles did not regard Genesis one and two as a mere myth but an account of what the Creator actually did in the creation of the heavens and earth. They treat Genesis one and two as a historical narrative with implications for the whole creation for all time.

I cannot reconcile all the assertions of modern science with the Genesis account; but I don't have to. By faith I accept the worldview implied by the Genesis account and Jesus' endorsement of it.