



grow. pray. study.

February 9, 2025 *Evolution, Adam and Eve*

Genesis 1:26-27 (NRSV), Genesis 2:4b and 7 (NRSV)

## Speaking Life: God's Word Shaped Our World

### MONDAY 2.10.25 Genesis 1:1-13

Genesis included two stories about our world's origin. The structured, poetic story in Genesis 1 was a worship statement, not a scientific treatise. Notice, for instance, the story's assumptions about the world's structure (e.g., the sky as a dome dividing waters above and below). "The inspired author(s) of the primeval prologue drew on the manner of speaking about origins that was part of their culture and literary traditions. [Genesis] 1 needs to be read in light of creation accounts from Mesopotamia." \*

- Pastor Hamilton wrote that if Genesis 1 is read as science, "it raises some questions. Genesis teaches that our planet formed, its atmosphere developed, and even trees and plants grew before the sun was created. While this made sense to ancients, today we know that it was the sun's gravitational field that made possible the formation of our planet. The sun was pivotal in the formation of our atmosphere." \*\* How does this part of Genesis reflect pre-scientific perceptions of the world?
- Dr. Stuart Briscoe wrote that while Genesis 1 "raises many unanswered questions about how [God] created, it provides many answers to questions about who did the creating." \*\*\* Similarly, Pastor Hamilton wrote, "It makes a claim not about scientific knowledge but about truth and theology." \*\*\*\* How does it vitally alter how you see your life's meaning to trust that God created all that is (including you), rather than that the universe "just happened" as a cosmic coincidence?

**Prayer:** Dear God, before anything else existed, Genesis said, you were there. You set it all in motion. Thank you for still creating and for being the God of new beginnings and fresh starts in my life. Amen.

\* William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Second Edition). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996, p. 20.

\*\* Hamilton, Adam, *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* (p. 189). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

\*\*\* D. Stuart Briscoe, *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 1: Genesis*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1987, p. 25.

\*\*\*\* Hamilton, Adam. *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* (p. 190). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

## A poetic picture of God's completed creation

### TUESDAY 2.11.25 Genesis 1:14-2:3

Genesis showed God completing creation with poetic symmetry. On Day 4, it said, God put two great lights in the heavens (though there was "light" on Day 1). On Day 5, God caused the sea and the dome of the sky, brought into being on Day 2, to "swarm with life." Day 6 brought creatures to live on the dry land, whose plant life was the main part of Day 3's creative work. And verses 26-27 crowned it all by adding human beings, "male and female," and by God "resting," satisfied with the results.

- In ancient Israel's world, many people deified the sun, moon, stars and other natural objects. (Many scholars think Genesis 1 said "lights," not "moon" and "sun" because other nations viewed those bodies as gods.) Does this passage sound more like a science textbook or a poem to you? What would it have said to sun and moon worshippers? What natural things do people you know tend to "worship" (informally if not formally) instead of the God who made them?
- Pastor Hamilton said, "The first Creation story is... like a hymn, a creed, or a liturgy declaring that God exists, that God is the Creator of the world, that Creation is a good and beautiful gift from him, and that human beings are created in his image.... Genesis 1 is not meant to teach science; it is meant to make a powerful theological statement about God and a terribly important affirmation about God's will for humanity." \* How does trying to conform what science knows about our world to Genesis 1's details obscure that theological truth?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, mountain lakes or ocean waves, fall colors or spring flowers, so much about this world is still beautiful even after the worst we humans can do. Thank you for the beauty your creative power put on this planet for me to enjoy. Amen.

\* Hamilton, Adam, *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* (p. 193). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

## God's Garden: A Story of Life Together

### WEDNESDAY 2.12.25 Genesis 2:4-25

We may think of Genesis 1 through 3 as just one "creation story." When read carefully, the stories show substantial differences. "If we take a step back from the details, we see that not just the order of events is different—the whole **"feel"** of Genesis 2 is different." \* "The focus turns from Elohim (the generic name for God used throughout Genesis 1) to Yahweh (the personal name by which the Israelites addressed God.... This is the name used for God throughout Genesis 2 and 3)." \*\*

- If we read Genesis 2 as scientific history, it would conflict with Genesis 1. "In Genesis 2... one human ("the man," a.k.a. Adam) is created before vegetation (2:5–9) and before the animals, which Adam names (2:19–20). When it was clear that no suitable 'partner' for Adam could be found among them, only then does God create the woman from Adam's side (2:21–25)." \*\*\* How did this second story teach important archetypal ideas about how humans relate to God and one another?
- We can compare Genesis 2 to creation stories from the Mesopotamian peoples around Israel. In those, selfish gods created humans to do all the work they wished to avoid. Genesis said God made people for a loving relationship, and gave them a garden, a perfect setting in which to thrive. What people or things has God worked through to nurture and nourish you? Who does God give you the chance to nurture and nourish, and to help find insight and/or healing from life's wounds?

**Prayer:** Lord God, thank you for the world you have created for us to enjoy. Give us faith to keep in mind that you are the creator of all that is, while at the same time valuing the insights of science.

Amen.

\* Enns, Peter; Byas, Jared, *Genesis for Normal People* (Second Edition w/ Study Guide) (p. 31). The Bible for Normal People. Kindle Edition.

\*\* Hamilton, Adam, *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* (p. 191). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

\*\*\* Enns and Byas, *Genesis for Normal People*, p. 31.

## **Trust broken, but grace showed amid consequences**

### **THURSDAY 2.13.25 Genesis 3:1-24**

In Genesis 3, the archetypal nature of the story is even clearer. “[Adam and Eve] hear a talking serpent whisper to them all the reasons why they should disobey Yahweh’s command. This is not ancient history. This is *your* story. It is *my* story. Which of us has not heard the serpent’s whisper in our ears, beckoning us to do what we know is wrong?” \* The vivid image of “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” showed that God gave **us** the freedom and responsibility of making moral choices.

- One of the first consequences of choosing to know evil came in the way the human couple related to one another and God. “When confronted with their disobedience, the people pass the blame instead of accepting responsibility. The man even blames God indirectly (*The woman you gave me.*)” \*\* Have you ever tried to “pass the buck” for a bad choice you made? When has someone else tried to blame you for a mistake they made?
- The archetypal stories in Genesis made crucial claims (humans were created in God’s image, God made certain portions of time holy, God provided what humans needed to thrive, and they lost innocence by distrusting God). Could the scientific method possibly prove or disprove claims of that kind? “These lessons are not in conflict with science. They are the deeper truths about the nature of the universe and our place in it.” \*\*\* How can you see that science and Scripture address different dimensions of truth?

**Prayer:** Loving God, remind me to focus on and apply the Bible’s big principles to my life. Let me learn not just fragments, but the Bible’s overall message to empower me to choose your way of life.

Amen.

\* Hamilton, Adam, *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* (pp. 191-192). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

\*\* Theodore Hiebert, study note on Genesis 3:12-13 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 9 OT.

\*\*\* Hamilton, Adam, *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* (p. 194). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

## Ancient Stories Speak God's Timeless Truth

### FRIDAY 2.14.25 Romans 15:3-4, 1 Corinthians 10:1-12

The apostle Paul had as good a rabbinic education as was available in his day (cf. [Acts 22:3](#)). With no smart phone or laptop computer, he could link 5 passages from the Hebrew Scriptures to support an important point (cf. [Romans 3:9-19](#)). He consistently used the Scriptures to address the big inner questions of life's origin and purpose. "Paul's words substantiate the idea that the point of [Genesis' stories] was not to teach history, or geology, but to teach us about God and God's will for our lives." \*

- Pastor Hamilton said wise Bible reading requires something like "a kitchen colander or strainer, holding the important things while the less desirable are rinsed off." One of the best "strainers," he said, is "What is the heart, character, and will of God that Jesus reveals?" So, he ended, "Jesus... serves as the final Word by which other words of scripture are to be judged." \*\* In what ways did Paul use that "strainer" principle in his choice of verses to guide first-century Christians?
- Paul identified specific traits the Bible can nurture in us: "So that we could have hope through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures." Those are much bigger realities than just second-guessing specialists in science or history. In Pastor John Stott's words, the Scriptures can help you look "beyond time to eternity, beyond present sufferings to future glory." \*\* In what ways does the Bible help you strengthen your hope and build your spiritual endurance?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, lead my heart beyond theories, abstractions and rigid systems. Meet me as I come to the Bible and speak your life-giving word into my heart. Amen.

\* Hamilton, Adam, *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* (pp. 203-204). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

\*\* *Ibid.*, pp. 176- 177.

\*\*\* John Stott, *The Message of Romans*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994, p. 371.

## Scripture's True Purpose: Teaching God's Way

### SATURDAY 2.15.25 Colossians 1:15-20, 2 Timothy 3:15-17

Scholar N. T. Wright wrote that today's Colossians passage strikingly linked creation and the good news of salvation in Jesus: "Jesus holds together the old world and the new, creation and new creation. The 'salvation' or 'redemption' on offer in Christianity is sometimes described as if it meant that the old world, the ordinary world of creation we all live in, was worthless.... Jesus Christ, says the poem boldly, is the one through whom and for whom the whole creation was made in the first place.... the Jesus through whom the world was made... is the same Jesus through whom the world has now been redeemed." \* The apostle Paul did not say the Bible would answer all of Timothy's historical, scientific or financial questions. More important, he said, it was "useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good."

- Francis Collins, a leading geneticist and leader of the international Human Genome Project, wrote, "I hope you will agree that the scientific and spiritual worldviews both have much to offer. Both provide differing but complementary ways of answering the greatest of the world's questions.... Science is the only legitimate way to investigate the natural world.... science alone is not enough to answer all the important questions. Even Albert Einstein saw the poverty of a purely naturalistic worldview. Choosing his words carefully, he wrote, 'Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.' The meaning of human existence, the reality of God, the possibility of an afterlife, and many other spiritual questions lie outside of the reach of the scientific method." \*\* The *United Methodist Articles of Religion*, which date back to church founder John Wesley, say "The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation." \*\*\* What keys have you found that make the Bible, including Genesis 1-3, words God uses to equip you "to do everything that is good"?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I am ultimately your creation, and you love me, just as you redeemed and love the whole creation. Keep teaching me how to love and value what you made. Amen.

\* N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, pp. 152-153.

\*\* Collins, Francis S., *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (pp. 227-228, with quote from A. Einstein, "Science, Philosophy and Religion: A Symposium," 1941). Free Press. Kindle Edition.

\*\*\* From <https://www.umc.org/en/content/articles-of-religion>.

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