

8. GENESIS SERIES: The Generations of the Heavens and Earth

'These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:4-7).'

In verse four of chapter two we see the beginning of a new section of Genesis, marked off by the 'toledoth' formula spoken of in our introductory study. Rather than being a conflicting view of the creation of man as some liberal critics claim, it is an account with a very different focus. It is the natural division of Genesis at this point, indicating the beginning of a new theme. What we have here is the beginning of the history of man, rather than being just a part of the entire creation account as in the previous section.

The use of the word 'toledoth' or 'generations' points to that which is the offspring of the heaven and earth (in this case) when they were created. In other words, it is pointing to a specific part of creation that came into existence at the time of God's creative work - man (for man is the focus here, as the rest of the section makes clear).

Verse 4: Verse four is the beginning of a new section in Genesis. It is the beginning of a more detailed account of the creation of man. More information can be found in this section than in the previous section which gave a mere summary of man's creation. This verse takes us back to the time when God made the heavens and the earth, referring not to a specific day (as though all was made in one day - for the context determines the use of the Hebrew word 'yom.'), but to the period of history when God created the heavens and the earth. The verse takes us back to a time that was the very origin of creation.

Verse 5: This verse may appear very difficult to understand. It cannot be speaking of the non-existence of plants already created before man was created, for that would be contrary to what chapter one has already told us. But we must remember what verse 4 has already told us about the picture being painted in this section. We have been taken back to a time when the world was being created by God. It was a time when things as they are today did not exist. It was a time when the earth and the heavens were created, when the plant and herb of the field were also created. Prior to God's work of creation these things did not exist.

The inclusion of an explanation as to why there were no plants or herbs of the field perhaps makes the verse a little more difficult to understand. It basically says that these plants were not yet in existence because God had not caused it to rain and because there was no man to yet till the earth. However, I do not believe that the verse must be interpreted as saying that until these two aspects of the world as we know it were set in place, there could be no plants or herbs of the field. Rather, the verse seems to be painting a picture of the origins of all things by way of a summary statement, than by giving a more thorough explanation (as given in chapter 1). The reason for this more truncated description is that the focus has now shifted from that of a cosmic view, to that of a much more narrowed focus on man himself. Man is now the centre of attention in the Genesis creation account.

Verse 6: How did the plants survive without rainfall? This verse tells us that there was a mist that came from the earth and watered the ground. However, the King James Version appears incorrect in its translation of what it calls mist, for apparently the Hebrew word actually gives the idea of ‘flow.’ In other words, the ground water would in some way move up through the soil and water the ground and plants (It is perhaps worth noting at this point that this idea ties in well with the Noahic flood).

Yet this verse may also be referring to the almost chaotic scene of the early verses of Genesis 1, pointing out once again that the earth at the beginning of history was ‘without form and void,’ etc. With this understanding, verses 4 through 6 are largely parallel with the opening thoughts of Genesis 1, pointing to a time when the earth was being created. This is why at the beginning there were no plants or herbs of the field. In short, the passage is a quick summary of the origins of the earth before the creation of man.

QUESTION: Discuss the mental picture you now have of the pre-fall creation. What was it like?

NOTE: INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION HERE: Is there any significance with man being formed of the earth in Genesis 2:7 as far as the theory of evolution is concerned? Please give reasons for your answer.

Verse 7: In this verse we come to the creation of man during this period of creation’s origin. More information on the creation of man is given here than was given in Genesis 1:26ff, adding to our understanding of how man was created by God. This verse tells us the process by which God made man (Gen 3:19,23; Job 4:19; 10:8,9; Ps 94:9; 139:14-16). It would seem that the ‘shell’ was made first, that is, the physical side of man.

This ‘shell’ was made out of the dust of the earth. It is worth noticing the care that God used in making man. Taking both chapter 1 and chapter 2 into consideration and how creation came to pass overall, it would seem that an especial interest is taken in the creation of man. There is not just a word spoken and man became, but a forming of man from the dust.

Following the ‘shell,’ life was given to man by God ‘breathing into his nostrils the breath

of life. This of course indicates further care and attention being paid to the creation of man by God. We have our life only as a result of God's especial care and life-giving breath.

Only after the entire process of creation was completed did man become a living soul (1 Cor 15:45). There is no mention of a gradual development by the process of evolution, just the Divine process of creating man. We must also be careful not to read too much into this verse, for it is simply stating that as a result of God's creative work man came into being, in the totality of all that that means. It is to other parts of Scripture that we must turn to fully understand what that means (Eccl 12:6,7).

QUESTION: Is there any indication in this verse that God gave man a soul? Explain your answer.

INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY

How was man to dress and keep the Garden of Eden?

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