

God Loves Creation More Than We Realize: Genesis 1:1-2:3

Sunday, February 5, 2023
Covenant Church
Pastor Zack Phillips

Genesis 1:1-2:3

¹ In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the 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 waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” 29 God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. 2 And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

A. Genesis 1...

- Created things “good” even before humans created: earth and seas (1:10); vegetation (1:12); sun, moon, and stars (1:18); water creatures and birds (1:21); land creatures (1:25). Read Psalm 104 carefully!
- Indeed, “everything that God made” is “very good” (Gen 1:31).
- Humans are *part of* Creation

Similarity	between...	...and
God “blesses”	Sea creatures and birds (1:22)	Humans (1:28)
God commands to “be fruitful and multiply”	Sea creatures and birds (1:22)	Humans (1:28)
God gives vegetation for food	Animals (1:30: green plants)	Humans (1:29: plants with seed, trees with seed)

- Genesis 1 is primarily a *worship* text!

B. ...and beyond

- *Repeated* incarnations

“God does not create the world from a lofty and disinterested height... God draws near to the earth and then animates it from within” by “taking the dust of the ground into his hands, holding it so close that it can share in the divine breath and inspiring it with the freshness of life” —Bahnsen and Wirzba¹

- God makes an everlasting covenant with non-humans

Gen 9:8-17 ⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰ **and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.** ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall **all flesh** be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹² God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and **every living creature that is with you, for all future generations**: ¹³ I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and **the earth**. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you **and every living creature of all flesh**; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy **all flesh**. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and **every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth**." ¹⁷ God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and **all flesh that is on the earth**."

- Sabbath protections for animals (Exod 20:10-11; Lev 25:3-8; Lev 25:23)
- God cares for animals' blood, not just humans' (Gen 9:3-6)
- Various laws protect animals (Deut 22:6-7; 14:21; 25:4)

Deut 20:19-20 If you besiege a town for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them. Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down. **Are trees in the field human beings that they should come under siege from you?** You may destroy only the trees that you know do not produce food; you may cut them down for use in building siegeworks against the town that makes war with you, until it falls.

- God cares for, watches, preserves all things

Luke 12:6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight.

Matt 6:26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Matt 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

C. Conclusion

The history of the church shows that Christians have frequently curtailed the scope of what and whom God cares about. Are we to include everyone—all men and women and children, all races and ethnic groups, all social and economic classes—within the group that God chooses to love and save? Should we think of God's salvific purposes as including bodies, communities and the land? — Bahnson and Wirzba²

Is nature for us, as it was for Saint Francis, "a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness"?³

Question: What is one thing that God may have said to you through this sermon?

¹ Fred Bahnson and Norma Wirzba, *Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012; Kindle edition) loc. 92, 98.

² Bahnson and Wirzba, loc. 155.

³ Pope Francis, *Laudato 'Si*, 11.