

Creation Week: Day Two

Genesis 1:6-8

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

On days two and three of Creation week we find the "mass of turbid and noisy water...reduced to order, and confined within certain limits" (Murphy, *Barnes' Notes*, p. 45)

The conception of the world which is given to us is at this point is of three concentric circles. The innermost circle consists of the solid matter of the earth. This is covered with water, which is in turn covered with "dense fogs and vapors; not merely overhanging, but actually resting on the waters beneath." (Murphy, *Barnes' Notes*, p. 46) The first act of God on day two consisted of raising the watery vapors above an expanse of open space

(1:6) *Let there be an expanse* – The word translated *expanse* refers here to the sky, or the earth's atmosphere. Its function is said to be to *separate the waters from the waters*, which is explained more fully in the next verse.

(1:7) *And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were UNDER the expanse from the waters that were ABOVE the expanse* (v. 7). The waters above the expanse are the waters that fall as rain. The waters below the expanse are springs, rivers, and (especially) the sea.

The separation of waters above and below the expanse

And it was so – This statement occurs six times throughout the passage with reference to God's activity on days two, three (twice), four, and six (twice). The meaning is, "So it came to pass, and so it has remained for all time" (Cassuto, p. 34)

The words, *And God saw that it was good*, do not appear in connection to the events of day two. Why? Because God's purpose for the water was not yet complete, and would not be complete until day three, when the waters under the earth were gathered together into one place. There must be a separation not only of the waters above the expanse from the waters below, but also of the waters from the dry land. Only then could God's purpose for the water said to be *good*.

Creation Week: Day Three

Genesis 1:9-10

⁹ And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens 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 And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

The passage begins by recounting God's act of separating the water from the dry land. This is now the third act of separation: (1) light from darkness, v. 4; (2) the waters above from the waters below the expanse, v. 7; and (3) water from dry land.¹

The creation of water and the formation of the sea are significant. The primordial deep plays a very prominent role in all ancient Near Eastern accounts of creation. In the ancient pagan myths, the deep is simply a given, a brute fact, existing independently from all eternity and possessing an unfathomable and mystical power that the gods had difficulty in subduing.

The peoples of the East used to tell many stories about the battle waged by one of the great gods against the deity of the sea... [T]he Mesopotamian mythology described in detail the combat of the creative god against

¹ It should be noted that it is not specifically said that the water and the land were "separated" from each other as light and darkness, and the waters above and below the expanse are said to be separated. Conceptually, however, a separation takes place when the land rise out of the sea and the waters retreat to their place.

Tiamat [‘the goddess of the world-ocean’] and his ultimate victory over her...

Similar myths were known to the Canaanites. In one of the Ugaritic texts...the story of Baal’s fight with the lord of the sea is narrated. (Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, p. 36)

The Bible differs from all these pagan accounts, however, in that it represents the deep, not as a competing deity, nor yet as presided over by a competing deity, but as being created by God and fully under his control.

In fact, the Lord’s control of the sea is frequently referred to as an illustration of the greatness of his power and glory (Ps. 33:6-7; 104:5-9; Job 38:1-11; Jer. 5:22).

The Lord’s dominion over the power of the sea is demonstrated in the Exodus, first by his “killing” of the Nile River (Ex. 7:14-25), which the Egyptians worshiped as a life-giving god; and second by parting the Red Sea to allow Israel to escape Pharaoh’s fury (Ex. 14).

This background helps us to see the significance of two of Jesus’ miracles. The first is his walking on the water (Matt. 14:22-33). When his disciples saw it, they confessed, “Truly, you are the Son of God” (Matt. 14:33). To walk or tread upon is to have dominion over (Deut. 33:29; Josh. 10:24-25; Ps. 91:13; Lk. 10:18; Rom. 16:20), and who but God has dominion over the sea?

The second of our Lord’s miracles having to do with the sea is his calming the wind and the waves (Matt. 8:23-27), which is reminiscent of Job’s statement in praise of God, “By his power he stilled the sea” (Job 26:12).

(1:10) After separating the dry land from the water, *God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.*

Now that the work of the water was completed and the world had assumed its proper tripartite form of Heaven, Earth and Sea, it is possible to declare, *that it was good.* (Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 1, p. 40)

As we shall see, since “two works were performed on the third day, the separation of the sea from the dry land and the creation of plants...the formula [and God saw] *that it was good* is uttered twice on this day” (here and in verse 12). (Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 1, p. 41)

(1:11) *And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.”* Here is the first appearance of life on earth. What evolutionary biology has been unable to explain, much less replicate through experimentation, namely the process by which inorganic material becomes organic and self-reproducing, the Bible explains in terms of divine fiat, God’s command, or the word of his power (Heb. 11:3).

The purpose for the creation of plants is indicated in 1:29-30. The Psalmist refers to this when he says,

You cause the grass to grow for the livestock
and plants for man to cultivate,
that he may bring forth food from the earth
and wine to gladden the heart of man,
oil to make his face shine
and bread to strengthen man’s heart (Ps. 104:14-15)

And it was so. No sooner was it said than done.

(1:12) As is characteristic throughout the chapter, the fulfillment of God’s command is related in terms similar to the command itself. *The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind.*

And God saw that it was good. As noted before, this is stated twice on day three because there were two creative acts performed: the separation of the sea from the dry land, and the creation of the vegetable world.

Some have seen a difficulty in the fact that plants are said to have been created before the sun, from which they derive their power of life. As Calvin explains, however, the

creation of plants before the sun, like the creation light itself before the sun, is designed to show us that God may work with or without means.

It did not happen fortuitously, that herbs and trees were created before the sun and moon. We now see, indeed, that the earth is quickened by the sun to cause it to bring forth its fruits; nor was God ignorant of this law of nature, which he has since ordained: but in order that we might learn to refer all things to him he did not then make use of the sun or moon. (Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 1, p. 82)