



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, April 25, 2010

Earth Wind & Fire

God — The Creator (Week 2 of 4)

Genesis 1:1-5 — *The Word from the Bible* (Today's New International Version)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

The Story of Creation — Genesis 1:1-31

The Beginning

Creation begins when God imposes order on chaos by calling **light** into existence. The picture is one of a chaotic storm churning over a mysterious abyss of infinite and formless waters. Out from this chaos the very words of God summons order, thus creating the universe. Time begins with creation.

Nothing is said of the origin of the chaos or of God's activity prior to creation. The question about whether creation is out of nothing (creation *ex nihilo*) is also irrelevant to the story. God's creation **in the beginning** is unique to the Jewish tradition and has no parallel in any other ancient history accounts of creation. Appropriately, the Hebrew word *bara*, here translated "create," is applied in the Old Testament only to God's activity. An ordered universe is conceivable only as a divine act of creation.

The most obvious sign of order is the gift of **light** and its daily separation from the **darkness**. God's lordship is expressed further in the naming of God's works. The **one day** seems to be reckoned from morning to morning. That is, God works all day till **evening** and begins his work again the next **morning**.

The Firmament

A translucent dome, like an inverted basin, placed **in the midst of the waters** defines the spatial boundaries of God's further work. This God-given vault sets limits to the universe and provides focus for the story of humanity which follows. The author is interested ultimately in the phenomenon of man, not that of nature. The solid, "hammered-out" firmament restrains **the waters** of chaos from above and receives its blue color from them. **Heaven** is therefore the upper protective limit of created order.

The contradictions in terminology between creation by word (verses 6, 14, 20, 24, 26) and creation by act (verses 7, 16, 21, 25, 27) may reveal parallel original accounts of creation. Significantly, both ideas have been preserved.

Earth and Vegetation

God further restrains the waters of chaos and the earth appears. Order has now replaced chaos so that the earth can produce vegetation and achieve part of its God-created function (verse 24) as "mother earth."

Celestial Lights

Time, too, is ordered. Light is assigned to luminaries **in the firmament**, which are to preside over **day and night** and to provide convenient guideposts for marking time and regulating activity. The **stars** and planets are denied any divine character or power like what one would believe in other pagan cultures. The primary function is to serve God's purpose to give light at their appointed times, thus restraining the darkness in an ordered fashion.

Sea Creatures and Birds

The waters likewise are freed to their destined purpose, and they bring forth swarms of **living creatures**. Also **birds** can exist where chaos is restrained. But all these are conceivable only as the creation of God, since the watery remnants of chaos are incapable of producing life. To insure continuation of this life God blesses the creatures with reproductive functions.

Land Creatures and Human Beings

Everything is ready for the appearance of land creatures and human beings. The creatures are the offspring, as it were, of the life giving earth, but the account is clear that all life comes from God.

Humans, however, are unique among the creatures of the universe, resembling but not to be equated with members of the heavenly court. They are to rule living things on earth as they in turn are ruled by God. But such creatures must be created by God. Order, birds and fish, and human beings are thus considered unique – unthinkable apart from God’s special creative activity, expressed in the Hebrew word *bara*.

Creation Finished

God now surveys the work and is well pleased. It has come from God’s hand precisely as God intended it and is therefore **very good**. The chaos has been effectively restrained, and order prevails. The world is furnished and populated. Humans have been brought into being to maintain God’s created order.

The Day of Rest

One work remains to fill out the week of creation (the measurement of time by weeks is taken for granted); it is called God’s rest. God takes delight in creation. In sanctifying **the seventh day** God wills that human beings shall take similar delight. This rest is thus considered to be God’s climactic work and humanity’s highest good.

The text says nothing explicit about the cultic institution of the Sabbath, the origins of which are unknown. Implicitly, however, the institution of the Sabbath is traced to God’s creative act. Significantly, the formula **there was evening and there was morning** is omitted. The work of creation has ended; there is to be no new seven-day cycle.

God as Creator

Genesis takes a religious and theological view of humanity and the universe. The reader is given a theological view of the beginning of history, not a scientific account of nature. The setting is provided for the drama of humanity. The account thus presents with soberness and exaltation something of the grandeur of a human being, the beauty of creation, and joy in the gift of life. God is creator. All that God does brings life – the giver of life.

Every religion and culture has a story of the beginning of time, the earth and humanity. Only Genesis puts this beginning in the hands of one God whose very voice brings life and order into being. Genesis uses terms which reflect the “scientific” understanding of this time, and incorporates the religious truths of the day: **“God created”; “God said, ... and it was so”; “God saw that it was good”; “God blessed them”; “God created man in his own image ... to have dominion ... over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth”; “God rested on the seventh day [and] blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.”**

God the Life Giver

In chapter one of Genesis God acts in three ways: 1) God creates, 2) God speaks, and 3) God blesses. How do you experience those actions in your life?

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Have a great week!

Two Prayers in Praise to God the Creator

from John Birch, FaithAndWorship.com

In the beginning, Lord
I was alone
Like the earth
before your Spirit moved over the waters.
I was formless and empty
and darkness filled the depths of my heart.
Then, it was as if you declared
'Let there be Light'
and out of the darkness
I began to see hope
like a shimmering ray of love
breaking through the parting clouds at the conclusion
of the night.
In the beginning, Lord I was alone
but when I saw you in the light I was no longer afraid.
You held out your hand
and though I had a choice
I had no choice
because to refuse
was to embrace again the darkness.
In the beginning, Lord I was alone
Now I feel again a part
of your creation
loved, wanted, needed, family.
In the light of your presence
I hold out my heart that others
might glimpse through it your reflection
and be drawn from the darkness that I once embraced
into the light of your sunrise
the brightness of your face

By the word of our Lord the heavens were made
By the spirit of our Lord was life begun
By the wisdom of our Lord his laws were laid
By the love of our Lord was born his Son
By the grace of our Lord mankind was saved
By the power of our Lord the victory was won

Have a great week!

**Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did.
God is doing great things through the ministry of Trietsch.**

Daily Readings

Next week we look at the Holy Spirit. How do we experience God as spirit? The following passages will give you the opportunity to explore some of the passages in the Bible that deal with the spirit of God.

Monday, April 26 – Read Genesis 2:4-7 — This is the passage that describes the creation of Adam. In chapter one of Genesis, we are told that humanity is created in the *“image of God”* — that we are different than all the rest of creation. But what is this difference? Is it our ability to love? Is it our ability to choose, instead of being driven by instinct like the rest of creation? If so, what is it that creates this distinction? In these verses we are told that the *“breath of God”* or literally the *“spirit of God”* has been breathed into us. What difference to see in our society today between the actions of humans and the rest of creation? Do we act like the *“breath of God”* — are we showing *“image of God”* in our actions?

Tuesday, April 27 – Read I Kings 19:9-13 — Elijah, the great prophet for God, has gone into hiding for fear of his life. God comes to him in a whisper with instruction and reassurance. How do you experience God? Elijah expected thunder, an earthquake, or something of equal power. Yet, the power of the whisper is what got Elijah’s attention. How has God been trying to reach you? Have you been listening in the wrong places to the wrong voice?

Wednesday, April 28 – Read John 3:1-21 — The passage includes the most famous well known passage in the New Testament – John 3:16. Yet, here in Jesus words found in verse 8 are a description of the spirit. Jesus refers to the unexpected nature of the Spirit of God and the need for complete faith and obedience no matter what our circumstances. Life is not limited to this flesh and blood. As followers of Christ, we are also born of the spirit. What habits do you practice each day, each week, each month that shows your obedience to God is complete? Do you believe that God has your future in God’s hands?

Thursday, April 29 – Read John 14:15-15:16 — In 14:15 and 15:26, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit. This word has been translated in several different ways – comforter, advocate, friend and counselor are most popular. There is no real accurate translation in the English language for the word that John uses to describe Jesus’ language. All of these words in some form capture the character of the Holy Spirit. The point is this: God loves us so much that God will always be with us through the Holy Spirit. We may abandon God, but God will never abandon us. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit in your life?

Friday, April 30 – Read Acts 2:1-12 — There are many other passages in the New Testament that deal with the action of the Holy Spirit. This is the first experience of the disciples on what we call the day of Pentecost. The birthday of the church when 3,000 heard the word of God proclaimed in their own language, gave themselves to following Christ and joined the disciples. These early followers described it as a *“rush of wind”* or *“tongues of fire.”* The point is not the experience, but rather the results. In that moment, unity was brought to individuals separated by language, culture and religion. In that moment understanding was given to those who had none. Eloquence was give to Peter, an uneducated fisherman follower of Christ, whose only qualification was faith. How would you describe your experience of the Holy Spirit – a whisper, as comforter, as a rush of wind? Do you have a new experience to add? The point is not the experience but the love that results when we experience the presence of God.
