**Biblical Theology**

Lesson 3 – Creation (Genesis 1-2)

1. If we look at Genesis 1-2 as its own context and story, it tells us the mechanics creation. In other words, it tells us *how* God created. He creates by speaking into existence. He creates all that exists. He creates in a span of 6 days. He creates an environment for man, the apex of creation, to inhabit. Everything is created “good.” After God sets everything up, He rests.
2. Bruce Waltke puts it this way, “In the beginning God created everything that exists. He made Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden of Eden. God spoke to them and gave them certain tasks in the world. For food He allowed them the fruit of all the trees in the garden except one. He warned them that they would die if they ate of that one tree.”
3. But Genesis 1-2 does not exist by itself, but is a part of the book of Genesis. Now we believe that Moses wrote the book of Genesis and it was written to the Israelites. It had to have been written in the time between Israel at Mt. Sinai and Israel at the border of the Promised Land.
4. When we consider who is writing Genesis, to whom it is being written, and when it is being written, a new layer of meaning comes into view. This new layer of meaning is to understand the creation story of Genesis 1-2 as a polemic [argument] against the creation stories of all the other peoples/cultures. Moses was raised in Pharaoh’s court so he would have been taught Egyptian religion which included creation stories.
5. Think about this way. Moses is writing to a people who are about to go in and conquer the Promised Land. This land is inhabited by all kinds of people groups – Canaanites, Hivites, Jebusites, Amorites, etc. Each people group has its own story as to how creation begin. While the specifics and names may have differed, all these pagan creation stories have some essential elements in common:
   1. There is a pantheon of gods.
   2. The point of the stories is to describe how 1 god in particular rose above the other gods to be the chief god.
   3. One or two of the gods end up taking some material in order to create the world.
   4. These creation accounts are more about the origins of the gods than they are man and the creation of the world had no connection to the history of the particular people group.
6. Babylon: All of the gods are birthed out of pre-existing water that is divided into Apsu [fresh water] and Tiamat [salty water]. All of the other Babylonian gods come from these two gods. Apsu is annoyed with the noisy children [lesser gods] and plans to kill them. They are warned and end up killing Apsu. Tiamat is angered by this which leads to battle between Tiamat and Marduk, leader of the lesser gods. Marduk wins and creates man from the blood of the god Quingu, who they believe is to be blamed for the conflict and whom Marduk kills. Marduk creates mankind so that they can do all of the hard labor so the gods can frolic and rest.
7. Sumer: There are seven great gods [Anunna] and there are lesser gods called Igigi. The Igigi are forced to work and decide to rebel against the Anunna. Before battle commences, a peaceful solution is set forth: create man to do all of the work. Both sides agree and the god Aw-ilu is killed and his flesh and blood are mixed with clay to make man. Mankind increases and the noise begins to bother Enlil who decides to destroy all of humanity with a flood. The god Enki warns Atrahasis who builds a boat to escape the flood.
8. Egypt: Different gods were worshipped in different Egyptian cities so each city had a different god as their creator god. Primordial waters existed and were represented by 8 gods, grouped into a male and female pair. The god Atum created himself by an effort of his own will, created gods and humans, and was responsible for order. He created by sneezing or spitting the god Shu (air), and the goddess Tefnut (rain). These 2 separated the sky from the waters, produced Geb, god of the dry land, and Nut, god of the sky. The sun god Ra rose up out of the dry ground. Geb and Nut would go on to produce Seth, the god of disorder; Osiris, the god of order.
9. We can see from these 3 examples how Moses’ writing of the creation story argues against all of these other creation stories. They have multiple gods; Yahweh is 1 and there is no other. They create out of other material; Yahweh creates out of nothing. They create using their body parts; Yahweh speaks all things into existence. They create humans out of dead gods so that there is no distinction between creator and creature; Yahweh forms man out of dust so that there is a distinction between Creator and creature.
10. “Because the ancients divided their world into areas ruled by different forces, the pagan religions could not explain how everything holds together. Paganism in essence was a commitment to unpredictable forces that may cooperate with each other or that may work against each other with destructive results for life on earth.” –Willem VanGemeren Everything that was divvied up amongst many gods in paganism, is found in its totality in Yahweh. He creates and holds everything together, while pagans had a god to hold up the sun, another god to hold up the moon, etc.
11. So, Genesis 1-2 to the Israelites to whom Moses was writing was to encourage them not to believe in or worship the false gods of the pagan cultures that they would be encountering in the Promised Land. Why? Because all of their gods are false gods, but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the 1 true and living God who created all things.
12. When we look at how the rest of Scripture uses Genesis 1-2 [Biblical Theology as defined at RTS-Charlotte], we get further understanding of the meaning of these 2 chapters.
    1. Psalm 90:2 focuses on God’s eternality. “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.”
    2. Psalm 19 focuses on God’s glory. “The heavens declare the glory of God, the sky above proclaims His handiwork.”
    3. Psalm 148 focuses on praise to God. “Praise the Lord! Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!”
    4. Psalm 33 focuses on the fear of God. “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.”
    5. Proverbs 3:19 focuses on God’s wisdom. “The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens.”
    6. Isaiah 42 uses the fact that God created to focus on His ability to restore Israel from exile.
    7. John 1 points to Christ as the eternal and pre-existent Word of God who made all things.
    8. Colossians 1 says that Christ is the Creator of all things.
    9. Hebrews 11 focuses on the faith required to believe that God made all things.
    10. Revelation 4:11 bases the worthiness of God to be praised in the fact that He created all things.
    11. From this angle, Scripture draws out of the creation account of Genesis 1-2 God’s attributes, worship, Jesus as the 2nd person of the Trinity, and the fact that it requires faith to believe all of this happened as Scripture says it did.
13. But when we look at Genesis 1-2 in the context of the whole story of Scripture [Biblical Theology in the sense of Redemptive History], we see that Scripture begins with creation in Genesis 1-2 and ends with a restored and glorious creation in Revelation 21-22. In between these two, is the entire story and history of God’s plan of glorifying Himself by redeeming a people for Himself and overcoming all opposition to Him.
14. From this perspective, the creation of the world is God building the set/stage for the drama of redemption. The world is where He is to be known, served, and worshipped and is where He is present.
15. The world is also created and set up to be God’s cosmic temple where He has placed His image (mankind) to represent Himself. Psalm 78:69 likens God’s sanctuary to the earth. “He built His sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which He has founded forever.”
16. The garden was like the Holy of Holies (“Most Holy Place”), with Eden being the holy place, and the rest of creation outside of Eden being the outer courts.
    1. As God “walks” in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:8), so the Lord “walks” among the camp of Israel (Deut 23:14). How is God “walking” among the camp of Israel? By the tabernacle. We just recently read 2 Samuel 7 where God says that He has been “walking” in a tent since Israel’s exodus up until the time David wants to build a house for God (2 Sam 7:6). Eden becomes the tabernacle/Temple where God “walks” with His people. Jesus is said to have tabernacled (“dwelt”) among us (John 1:14) and God will tabernacle with His people in His tabernacle in the New Heavens and Earth (Rev 21:3). And God will walk with His people in the New Jerusalem and the New Heavens and Earth.
    2. Ezekiel 28 calls Eden “the garden of God” and “the holy mountain of God” (vv.13-14) and the Temple is built on a mountain (Exod 15:17). The New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven and descends upon a mountain (Rev. 21:10).
    3. Eden has the tree of life (Gen 3:22). The Temple has the lampstand which serves as a model for the tree of life (Exod 25:31-40; 37:17-24). The tree of life is found in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:2). Mitchell Kim writes, “The abundance of life found in the Garden paints a picture of the abundance found in the tabernacling presence of God. God’s presence overflows with life.”
    4. There is a river of life in the Garden (Gen 2:10-14) and this river of life is found in Ezekiel’s vision of a new Temple (Ezekiel 47:8-12) and the tree of life is found in the New Jerusalem (Rev 22:1-2).
    5. Adam was to “serve” and “keep/guard” in the Garden-Temple. The word for “serve” is used of the Levites serving in the tabernacle in Numbers. The Levites are to “guard” the furnishings of the tabernacle in Numbers 3:7-8 and 8:26. Adam had a priestly role of worshipping and serving God in the Temple, which becomes the service of the Levitical priests in the tabernacle/Temple, which becomes the Lord Jesus who is the Great High Priest as well as the Temple, and in the New Heavens and the New Earth, God’s servants will worship Him as a kingdom of priests (Rev. 22:3; 1 Peter 2:9).
17. All of this to say that Genesis 1-2 sets up everything that is to come later with the Israelites, Jesus the Messiah, the Church, and the New Heavens/Earth. One way to look at Scripture is Eden created, Eden lost, Eden restored. Man’s purpose in Eden is lost by sin, set up to point to Jesus through the priests and now as new creations in Christ we have our purpose restored in part, and our purpose in worshipping and serving God will be fully restored in the New Heavens/Earth. Everything that was at the beginning in Genesis 1-2 will be at the end.
18. “Creation, in a real sense, is the preamble to the history of redemption.” –Willem VanGemeren