A CLOSE CREATION

Genesis 1 and 2 tell different aspects of the same creation story. While detailing humanity’s beginning, they simultaneously provide an introduction to God who is identified by what He does. He is the Creator.

Every aspect of creation is made by the Word of God with the exception of Adam and Eve. God formed Adam with His own hands and breathed into him His own breath. The picture portrayed is that of the great God of the universe bending over a mound of dust and shaping together a beautiful, but lifeless form—concluding with God intimately placing His lips over Adam’s mouth or nose and infusing into Adam God’s own breath—His own life. There seems to be no reason that necessitated this kind of act from God in the creation of humanity except that God cared enough for Adam to do things this way.

In the Garden of Eden, we also find a very significant insight about education. God Himself takes Adam and puts him into the garden to dress it and keep it (Gen. 2:15). Caring for the garden was God’s means of teaching and educating Adam and Eve—this was in effect the first system of education in Scripture. What God does not do here is as significant as what He does: He doesn’t allow Adam to discover the garden on his own. He doesn’t have an angel direct him through the garden. Instead, God places on Himself the responsibility of teaching Adam and Eve. And He does this through the human privilege of communion between finite humanity and the infinite Godhead.
Write out Genesis 1 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write Genesis 1:1–8. You may also re-write the passage in your own words, outline, or mind-map the chapter.
IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

In Christ’s command to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind” (Luke 10:27), we find an insight into the nature of God and the nature of humankind. Implied in this command is our ability to love, as well as God’s ability to be loved in this manner. In this text we find a fuller understanding of what it means to be created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27).

Being created in this imago Dei means that we have been created with heart, soul, strength, and mind. It signifies that we have been created with emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental faculties. It also suggests that these attributes are what connect us to the likeness of God—He also is an emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental Being.

When God created the human race, He created it in His likeness. Furthermore, He created it with the ability to further grow into His likeness. The thought is almost beyond human comprehension! Adam and Eve were perfect when they came forth from the Creator’s hand. They were perfect physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental beings. However, God purposed that the longer they lived, the more perfect they would become. God granted them the ability to develop in capacity as well as in vigor. Not only were Adam and Eve able to receive larger quantities of physical, mental, and spiritual blessings, but they were also able to accept even better qualities of these blessings.

The creation narrative implies that if the pair had remained loyal to God, this ability to grow in capacity and intensity would have been theirs forever, affording them the privilege of discovering newer and better insights into the wisdom, power, and love of God. Moreover, in these discoveries, the holy couple would increase in knowledge and happiness. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27).

In asking humanity to reflect His own image, God gave the human race an eternal objective to accomplish. Also, by making them in His own image, He equipped them to accomplish this objective. No greater and more fulfilling goal could have been given than for perfect human beings to mirror the awesome image of a God who Himself is perfect in wisdom, power, and love.
WHO IS GOD?

In addition to serving as the story of beginnings, the Creation narrative is also an introduction to God. By looking at each of the verbs in Genesis 1, we gain insights into who is God the Creator.

A God Who Speaks

God is a God who speaks (Gen 1:3). He is not mute or unwilling to communicate. He has the ability to communicate with His creation. Thus, although He is infinite and eternal, He is not separate from the finite and temporal. More than creating light, God’s Word defies present experience and creates reality itself, “so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Heb. 11:3). In creation, we find that God’s Word can be true even if it doesn’t appear to be true, for it is His Word, not the present state of things, that defines reality.

A God Who Sees and Divides

In addition to speaking, God is able to see and divide (organize) (Gen. 1:4). He has the ability to see what is good (and by implication what is not good) as well as divide, or organize, the chaotic condition of an earth that is “without form, and void” (Gen 1:2). There are rich consequences attached to God’s ability to see, to know what is good and bad, and divide or organize the chaotic state of the planet. God looks upon His creation and wishes a good outcome for it. He is not afraid of inhabiting chaos. More important, He is well able to fix chaotic situations and transform them into realities that are altogether new.

A God to Trust

The Creation story also speaks of God’s dependability and why faith in Him is reasonable. His Word caused the fruit tree to yield seed according to its kind with a seed in itself that had the power to do the same (Gen. 1:11, 12). In other words, God made several requests of fruit-yielding trees. First, He said that the apple tree must produce apples. Second, He ensured that the apple tree, in addition to producing apples, should not produce a different kind of fruit such as a banana. Third, He commanded that the apple tree produce seeds that would multiply the production of similar trees with similar characteristics and abilities. To this day, no apple tree produces a banana.

If in the sport of professional basketball, an athlete can score a long-distance shot 50 percent of the time, they are considered one of the most dependable long-distance scorers on the team. Fruit trees never miss. They testify of God’s power and that He does not fail.

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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Genesis 2
Psalm 33:6-9
Romans 1:20

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with God as Creator?

Review your memorized verse from Genesis 1.
Speaking of Jesus, John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1–3). The active Character of Genesis 1 is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. He was with God; He was God; and everything was made by Him. He is the central figure of the creation narrative; He is the Creator.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Creation story is the care and thoughtfulness that Jesus shows His creation. Specifically, it is shown in at least two instances in Genesis 1: when He named the light as day, and when He invested His creation with purpose.

The Name of Love

When you think about it, the ritual of naming is not just for pragmatic reasons. If parents wanted to name their children for the singular purpose of being able to properly identify them, they could name the first child “One,” the second child “Two,” and the third one “Three.” The custom of naming our children carries with it a sentimental value. This is why parents will sometimes spend a lot of time thinking about the name the child will inherit, or purchase books containing the meaning of names of children. Similarly, most people do not take the time to name insects that sneak into their home but may name animals or pets that are dear to their family. Jesus did not only identify the light as light but also named it Day.

The Purpose of Love

Another aspect of Christ’s love is demonstrated in how the narrative depicts the creation of the lights. God made “the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night” (Gen. 1:16). He made other lights “in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night” and “for signs and seasons, and for days and years” (Gen. 1:14).

Although it is not typically regarded as such, Christ’s bestowment of purpose on His creation is an act of love. One of the worst acts of cruelty would be for Jesus to make something exist without a purpose. Many who find no purpose in life often seek purpose in seeking death. Yet, love is the very nature of Christ. When He created humanity, He created it with the greatest privilege of all: the purpose of reflecting His own infinite and eternal image. Can there be a greater manifestation of love?
“To obtain an education worthy of the name, we must receive a knowledge of God, the Creator, and of Christ, the Redeemer, as they are revealed in the sacred word. . . .

“In order to understand what is comprehended in the work of education, we need to consider both the nature of man and the purpose of God in creating him. We need to consider also the change in man's condition through the coming in of a knowledge of evil, and God's plan for still fulfilling His glorious purpose in the education of the human race.

“When Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, in his physical, mental, and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker. ‘God created man in His own image’ (Genesis 1:27), and it was His purpose that the longer man lived the more fully he should reveal this image—the more fully reflect the glory of the Creator. All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase. Vast was the scope offered for their exercise, glorious the field opened to their research. The mysteries of the visible universe—the ‘wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge’ (Job 37:16)—invited man's study. Face-to-face, heart-to-heart communion with his Maker was his high privilege. Had he remained loyal to God, all this would have been his forever. Throughout eternal ages he would have continued to gain new treasures of knowledge, to discover fresh springs of happiness, and to obtain clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. More and more fully would he have fulfilled the object of his creation, more and more fully have reflected the Creator's glory. . . .

“Since God is the source of all true knowledge, it is, as we have seen, the first object of education to direct our minds to His own revelation of Himself. Adam and Eve received knowledge through direct communion with God; and they learned of Him through His works. All created things, in their original perfection, were an expression of the thought of God. To Adam and Eve nature was teeming with divine wisdom. To Adam and Eve nature was teeming with divine wisdom. But by transgression man was cut off from learning of God through direct communion and, to a great degree, through His works. The earth, marred and defiled by sin, reflects but dimly the Creator's glory. It is true that His object lessons are not obliterated. Upon every page of the great volume of His created works may still be traced His handwriting. Nature still speaks of her Creator. Yet these revelations are partial and imperfect. And in our fallen state, with weakened powers and restricted vision, we are incapable of interpreting aright. We need the fuller revelation of Himself that God has given in His written word. . . .

“Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought.”

*(Education, 15–18)*
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

What other aspects of God’s character are seen in the second account of creation in Genesis 2?

Why is creation *ex nihilo* (created out of “nothing”) so important to the Creation story?

How does altering the creation narrative impact our understanding of the character of God?

What are the differences between static and dynamic definitions of perfection?

How can we be more perfect physically, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally?

In what areas do you need more grace to be like the Creator God?

Why does true individuality need the creation narrative?

How does this study change your view of God and creation?