

Ye Realms of Joy, your Maker's Fame,
Exalt above the starry Frame;
Ye Cherubims, your Voices raise,
And Seraphims, to sing his Praise.
Thou Silver Moon, that rul'st the Night,
With all the glitt'ring Stars of Light,
Thou glorious Sun that guid'st the Day,
To him your grateful Homage pay.

Ye Heav'ns above, his Praise declare,
And Clouds that move in liquid Air,
Let all adore their sov'reign LORD,
For all, at his creative Word,
At once from silent Nothing came;
Oh, let them bless his holy name,
Whose firm Decree stands ever fast,
And to Eternity shall last.

Let Earth her grateful Tribute pay:
Praise him, ye Fish that through the Sea
Glide swiftly by, with glitt'ring Scales;
Oh, praise him all, ye dreadful Whales,
Let misty Air, Fire, Hail and Snow,
And Winds that, where he bids them, blow,
To him their constant Praise address,
And his great Name for ever bless.

By lofty Hills, in concert join'd,
Cedars and Trees, for Fruit design'd,
By ev'ry creeping Thing and Beast,
And winged Fowl, GOD's Name be bless'd.
Let Men of low or royal Birth,
Let all the Judges of the Earth,
Let Youth and Maids his Praise proclaim,
And hoary Heads advance his Fame.

United Zeal by us be shown,
To raise his endless Fame alone,
Whose Pow'r o'er all the Earth extends,
Whose glorious Sway the Sky transcends,
His Saints he doth with Honour grace,
And ever favour Israel's Race;
Your grateful Voice, O, therefore raise,
Rejoicing still the LORD to praise.



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In the Nick of Time

Creation as Foundational

Kevin T. Bauder

When it comes to the opening chapters of Genesis, many conservative Christians spend their energy defending the text against the counter-narrative of evolution. That is right and proper: the theory of evolution entails in all its forms an utterly anti-biblical and anti-human philosophy. Nevertheless, the point of these chapters is not to contradict theories of evolution, which only became prevalent during the late Nineteenth Century. Instead, these chapters are valuable for the theological underpinning that they provide for virtually the entire system of faith and belief—including some categories that are rarely mentioned within systematic theologies.

Perhaps the most important function of the early chapters of Genesis is to introduce us to God. They show that God is Creator, and no truth of Scripture is more important than the Creator-creature distinction. Besides depicting God in terms of His power, they also show Him in His benevolence. What He makes is good, and the good is contextually understood as what is good for humans. God knows what is good, and when He knows that a good is absent (as when the man was alone), He provides it. He is also a God who blesses and, when humans sin, a God who promises a deliverer.

The early chapters of Genesis also explain both who humans are and why they were made. They are the image of God, and they were made for dominion. Within His universal kingdom, God created a world that He did not intend to govern directly. Instead, He planned for this world to be ruled mediocrally by godlike creatures. He gave them dominion, and He blessed them with authority to be fruitful, to multiply, to fill the earth, and to subdue it. They were made to be kings and queens. They were also made to be priests, standing in the presence of God and enjoying His companionship.

These narratives also explain what went wrong with this beautiful vision. God imposed a test upon the first man and the first woman. They were forbidden to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. If they ate the fruit, they would be claiming for themselves the prerogative to determine the good. Instead, God wanted them to trust Him for the good, which He abundantly provided. Rather than trusting the Creator, however, the man and woman chose to declare independence of God, choosing what seemed good to themselves. By declaring independence of God, they neces-

sarily separated themselves from life, for their life came from God. They passed under sentence of death, a sentence that lies heavy upon humanity until this day.

In later Scriptures, the apostle Paul would appeal to these early chapters as fundamental for his doctrine of imputation (Rom 5:12ff). All humans, he claimed, sinned in Adam. That is why all humans die. Paul's understanding of imputation also gets transferred to Christ, whose sufferings and merits are credited to His people.

The third chapter of Genesis gives the first glimpse of salvation to come. God offers hope through the seed of the woman, who will crush the head of the serpent, though not without pain. Furthermore, while God drove the man and woman out of paradise, He clothed them in skins, replacing the sustainable, plant-based garments they had fashioned for themselves. Covering the results of their sin required the shedding of blood—surely a picture of redemption to come.

According to the text, God made humanity in two sexes, both of which exhibited His image. These two sexes were made for companionship, for union, and for procreation. God chose to protect this marvelous relationship with the institution of marriage, which from the beginning necessitated exactly one man and one woman. God defined marriage in terms of a leaving and a cleaving or faithful devotion, which was subsequently to be cemented in one-flesh sexual union. Jesus and Paul both understood the creation narratives to be definitive for marriage, sex, and gender, including an order between the sexes within marriage and (later) the church.

Since human sin damaged the created world, it also introduced the problem of correctly caring for that world. For the first time, creation became recalcitrant and even dangerous. Human dominion was not entirely lost, but it was profoundly damaged. Furthermore, predatory use of the created world became possible for humans, with the result that they could destroy parts of their environment. A right understanding of both human dominion and human sin are fundamental to any genuinely useful environmentalism.

The Fall also brought scarcity into the world. Along with scarcity arose the necessity of hard labor, of exchanging goods, and of inventing various media of exchange. In other words, the discipline of economics is possible only in a post-lapsarian world, a world of scarcity. Furthermore, a right understanding of economics must take account of the necessity of labor, the reality of scarcity, and the self-seeking bent of human nature as these are communicated in the opening chapters of Genesis. A sound economics must be a biblical economics.

The opening chapters of Genesis also matter for our understanding of last things. Eschatology parallels protology. Whatever God intended to do when He created is exactly what He intends to accomplish in redemption. The

end will bring us full circle to the purpose of the beginning. If indeed God intended to rule the world mediatorially through godlike creatures, then that is how things are going to turn out.

Genesis opens with the accounts of creation, the Fall, the flood, and the division of nations. These stories are in the text to make important theological points. They become the basis of doctrinal reasoning throughout the rest of Scripture. Genuine biblicists should plunder these chapters, not merely to refute false theories about origins, but to be able to answer the most important questions that people can ask.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
