

## IN THE BEGINNING

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There is a unique majesty about the Genesis account of creation.

Much has been made about its alleged connection with the Babylonian account, Enuma elish, but in fact, apart from a similar, common-sense order of creation, there are few connections. Another ancient epic, Atraharsis, is marginally closer to Genesis because it covers both creation and the flood, but again there are fundamental differences.

Heathen mythology is affected by an inadequate view of God. This in turn influences the understanding of every other relationship between the Deity and the world in general and with man.

In stark contrast, Genesis introduces us to an already-existing, uncreated God. No attempt is made to explain Him. There is no conflict between God and the forces of chaos, as in the heathen accounts ; nor is God in any way identified or confused with the whole, or any part, of creation, as were the ancient gods. He is absolutely sovereign in nature. It follows that what we term natural law, the rhythm and order of the universe is the expression of His will. Colossians 1 verse 16 and 17 underlines these truths, and affirms God's continuing rule. Note too the much-repeated statement, And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1 verses 12,18. 21 and 25).

Man's sin disrupted society, and even affected the natural world (Genesis 3. 17 and 19) but God's creation remains good and to be enjoyed (1 Timothy 4.4)

Attempts have been made to reconcile the statement of Genesis 1 with our still increasing scientific knowledge. This is understandable since man is a questioning being. But there are dangers. Science and religion ought, properly, to be in partnership. Science could open up our understanding of the natural world, but there is a realm which transcends this, in which science has no competence to make dogmatic pronouncements. Equally foolish is the theologian who closes his mind to other insights. Genesis puts the focus upon God and His creation but tells us little of the mechanics of creation. Such selectivity indicates where we should concentrate our attention having regard for proven facts \and not the speculation of scientific investigation. Ultimately as Hebrews 11 verse 3 makes clear we accept that the worlds have been framed by the Word of God and this is received by faith ... but what a well-founded faith.

Faith, believing that God, the great Creator, is in perfect control of so vast and intricate a world, accepts that He is well able to take care of His children In the beginning can control our every new beginning.

The sixth day, with the creation of man, was clearly the climax and crowning glory of all God's works. This day was very good (verse 31).

Man, in contrast to the Babylonian accounts, is given a worthy position. But he remained fundamentally distinct from God; he is not born of God but created. Man, however, is distinguished from the rest of creation, over which he is given the right to rule. Psalm 8 sets out clearly man's dependence upon God in this created world. The two passages teach the vital lesson that man, though a creature, is elevated by grace into a vital and privileged position of co-operation with God. Our doctrines of man and God are related, and an appreciation of the theology of creation leads to a deeper understanding of ourselves.

Whilst man's authority over the lesser creatures is part of his uniqueness in being in the image and likeness of God (verses 26 and 27).That likeness is not physical but moral in the sense that man

knows what is right and what is wrong. There is also a hint of that extra dimension of spirit or soul in man, that capacity for communion with God, which marks him off from the animals, involves also a capacity for self-determination, that is to say freewill. Man was no automation. There was a danger that man would abuse this trust, but God knew what He was about, and the measures of the risks He took indicates the value of fellowship with man of a voluntary and spontaneous kind.

When man slips from the position here and sins he becomes less than the man God created and little better than beasts.

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