

Creation Of Everything Out of Nothing in Six Days

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:1–2)

When England was emerging out of centuries of Roman Catholicism, the Puritan Reformers put down their statement of faith in one of the most famous Confessions of Faith: the Westminster Confession. Written between 1644 and 1646, it runs over 14 000 words and covers most important matters of doctrine. Chapter 4 deals with creation and in one, concise sentence, sums up the Christian doctrine of creation.

“It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good.”

To create the world and all things visible and invisible, out of nothing, in the space of six days, and all very good, is a simple statement. If it were not for the rise of Darwinistic evolution in the 19th century, perhaps no one would have any trouble with that simple statement that summarises Genesis 1 and 2. But as it happens, many do not believe God created everything out of nothing, in six days, and all very good.

Many believe that God created out of something pre-existing. Far more believe that God did not create everything in six days, and some believe that God created with death and destruction present.

Genesis 1:1-2 set the tone for the rest of the days of Genesis by giving us this three building blocks for the rest of the chapter.

We've already mined this verse for several great truths. We've seen that Genesis 1:1 simply assumes God's existence as the great first principle of the Bible. We also saw that this verse teaches us something radically different about God: that He is eternal and timeless, that He is personal, and that He transcends His creation. We took a detour to talk about science and the Bible. But now we dive into a straight exegesis of Genesis 1:1-2 to begin to study the creation account. And here in Genesis 1:1-2, we'll see the three building blocks of the true creation account.

I. God Created Out of Nothing

¹ In the beginning God created

The first thing this passage tells us is that God created out of nothing. The Hebrew word is *bara*, and it is used only of God. There are other words for make in Hebrew, *asah* and *ya'ad*, and they are also used of God in Genesis 1, and sometimes they are used of humans making. But this word *bara* is only assigned to God, and when it is used with what is called the Qal stem, it means an absolute creation out of nothing. It does not mean creating out of existing material, nor does it mean remaking, or shaping what it exists. It means something that only God can do: bring something where there was nothing.

You recall when we described the various pagan cosmogonies, all of them had some kind of pre-existing material, or pre-existing chaos, which the gods then used or fashioned. There was even time and sequence and the gods did their fashioning within that space and time.

But only Genesis 1:1 has an absolute creation of both time and space where there had been no time and no space.

Also, the Hebrew is rightly translated as an independent clause, "In the beginning, God created". Some have translated it "When God began to create in the beginning, then verse 3 – he said, "Let there be light". But that mistranslates the Hebrew. Verse 1 is an independent statement: In the beginning, God created out of nothing.

It is a great strain upon our minds to try to picture "nothing". Timeless, spaceless existence. Even when we try to imagine nothing, we usually imagine something, just very transparent, or every empty. Of course, in some ways, there was always everything, because God always was, ever timelessly enjoying Himself in His triune glory. And you cannot speak of a *when*, a *moment*, when God created, because then you have placed God within time. You must by faith accept a timeless God, whose love overflowed into a creation that had a beginning.

Creation out of nothing. Creation ex nihilo. There are actually a few indirect witnesses to this even within the universe itself. One is what the scientists call the first law of thermodynamics, or the law of the conservation of energy. This law says that all the energy in the universe is constant: it is neither created nor destroyed; it is only converted from one form to another. Matter is a form of energy, and that means that everything in the universe: the total amount of solid, liquid, gas, plasma and radiation is a constant amount. This law says that no natural process in the universe creates new energy, introduces new energy, new matter into the cosmos. But what this law then implies is this: there must have been some way outside of time, that all this energy was created and introduced in the first place. *If the universe does not create matter or energy, you need something, or someone outside this universe to have gotten the process started.*

Not only the first law of thermodynamics, but the second law of thermodynamics points to an absolute creation of out nothing. The second law, or the law of entropy states that since energy cannot be created or destroyed, it tends to be dissipated into heat energy which cannot then be productively used. In other words, everything is 'running down', more disorder, less organisation. The universe is heading towards a heat death. We are not there yet, but it means the universe began at some point where it was not running down, but where it was absolute. If I show you a spinning top that is starting to run out of momentum, what can you conclude about what happened before? The universe, with its high degree of order and complexity, had to have begun under conditions that were non-entropic, outside of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. It must have had an absolute beginning out of nothing when there was maximum order.

There's a third pointer to creation ex-nihilo and it is found in many living organisms. As we have examined the natural world, particularly at the microscopic level, we have found structures that are incredibly complex and yet so tiny, and so specific, it is almost impossible to see how these could have developed by slow steps of development. Darwinism imagines simple things becoming more complex through random changes, and as each of these changes helps an organism to survive, it keeps those changes and communicates them to its descendants. But it is hard to explain structures within the cell that have 20 to 30 moving parts, all of which must be in place at the same time in order to work, that could have developed one part at a time, and still given a survival advantage.

Michael Behe called this irreducible complexity. It means when a structure is found in a living organism which is at its most basic, but even at its most basic, it is highly complex. You can't break it down any more without making it useless. It is either a complicated fully functional little cellular machine, like the flagellum of a cell, or it will not work at all. In other words, it could not have been made gradually, as evolution suggests. It had to have been made suddenly, immediately.

This extends to certain aspects of DNA replication, electron transport, telomere synthesis, photosynthesis and many others. These three things indirectly point to creation out of nothing. But our primary source for knowing this is that the only one who was there to observe it has told us. Bara Elohim. God created out of nothing.

II. God Created Everything

God created the heavens and the earth

The term “heavens and the earth” is a Hebrew term that refers to everything in existence. The Hebrews did not have a word for the universe or the cosmos. When they wanted to express the idea of all of reality, they would use the term “heavens and the earth”.

God created matter, space, time. God created the three kinds of sub-atomic particles that make up all energy: quarks, leptons and bosons. God created the three dimensions of space: length, width and height. God created the three dimensions of time: past, present, and future. It is important to understand that time is a creature, just like matter is a creature. In fact, as scientists tell us, time and space are actually one thing: spacetime. And if there are dimensions of spacetime beyond our four, as some scientists suggest, then God created them too. God spoke it into being, just as He spoke all energy into being. All solids, liquids, gases, light waves, radiation, energy, gravity is a creature, are creatures, creations.

It's important to understand that God created a lot more than we can see with our eyes or perhaps presently detect with our scientific instruments.

¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. (Colossians 1:16)

Of course, we have already come to understand that there is a lot more light than the visible spectrum. There are gamma rays, ultra-violet light, infrared, microwaves and radio waves. Some postulate forms of matter called dark matter and dark energy. Where any of this overlaps, if at all, with what the Bible calls spirits, we know there is a highly complex spirit world made up of an array of spirit beings. These creatures include seraphim, cherubim, living creatures, thrones, principalities, powers, dominions, princes, rulers, archangels, and angels.

These beings were created alongside the heavens and the earth. The Hebrews thought of the heavens in three tiers or layers. The first heavens being the sky and atmosphere, the second heavens being the sun and moon and stars, and the third heavens being the abode of God, where angels and the redeemed worship God. Of course, God did not live in Heaven; God did not dwell in space or time. But when God created the heavens, He created a place where creatures could behold Him. Whether Heaven is a dimension of existence beyond our four, or whether it represents a cosmos beyond the galaxies, we do not know, but we know God created the heavens on the first day.

Now this raises the question, when did God create the spirit beings we collectively call angels? The Bible does not tell us explicitly, but there are two likely options. One is that God created them on Day Four. Day Four is when the sun, moon and stars were created. Often enough, the angels are related to the stars, and so the argument is that they were created on that day. That is possible, but there are one or two Scriptures that seem to suggest they were present earlier than the fourth day.

⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding. ⁵ Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶ To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4–7)

The morning stars and sons of God is a term in Job that refers to the angels. Here it seems to suggest that all of them were present when the foundation of the earth was laid. This either refers to the very shaping of the earth on day 1, or the separation of land from sea on day 3. We have to be tentative in making any kind of dogmatic statements as to when the angels were created, but I venture to suggest that they were created with the heavens, here on Day One.

Whether or not that happened, we know that the foundations of heavens and the earth were laid here. And while this text does not say it, several others tell us the way the foundations were laid. Nine times in Scripture it is said that God stretched out the heavens, like a curtain being spread. The creation of the heavens and the earth was like a massive expansion, from one place spreading out. Something to bear in mind is that if space was stretched out, then so was time. And if time is stretched, then one of the things to expect is that time in one place of the heavens might be running at a different speed to time in another, without contradiction, just as the outside of a wheel runs faster than the inside, though they are the same wheel.

The first act of day one was the creation out of nothing of the foundational matter, energy, and spacetime for the heavens and the earth, stretching them out to the size and shape God wanted.

That does not mean that they looked anything like they look now. We cannot even say if the earth was yet a sphere or even a clear mass. At this point, the cosmos was a dark, watery mix of molecules not yet energised, an opaque fog of particles awaiting light. Verse 2 describes this state of the cosmos on day One. Scientists have found masses of water in space.

God created everything, and God created everything out of nothing.

III. God Created in the Space of Six Days

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

When did the events of verse 1 take place? We really have two options. One is some distant time in the past before the creation week. The other is that verse 1 is the beginning of day one.

Those who think that it refers to some time in the past have suggested that verse 1 is not the beginning of day one of creation. Instead, they say it is like a title, or a superscription over the whole chapter, or even a summary. They suggest Day One of creation begins in verse 3, and verse 2 describes some kind of existing state of chaos that was present when God began remaking the universe in verse 3.

But some of this comes from a theory that became popular in the 19th century, that has come to be called the Gap Theory. The Gap Theory had existed from at least the seventeenth century, but it was really popularised by a British pastor named Thomas Chalmers. It was picked up by the Scofield Reference Bible in its notes, and so became almost the default position of many Fundamentalists. Faced with the growing onslaught of Darwinistic evolution, and geology that seemed to show aeons of time, with fossilised plants and animals in the rock beds of the world, the Gap Theory tried to find a solution. The solution went like this. Verse 2 says the earth was without form and void, and

darkness was on the face of the deep. They then noticed a verse in Jeremiah 4:23 that referenced judgement. It reads, “²³ I beheld the earth, and indeed *it was* without form, and void; And the heavens, they *had* no light. (Jeremiah 4:23)

From that, they read Jeremiah back into Genesis 1:2 – this must be a state of judgement. They then found Isaiah 45:18, which says, “¹⁸ For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: “*I am* the LORD, and *there is* no other. (Isaiah 45:18) The word for vain is the same as in Genesis 1:2, translated “without form” - *tohu*. So on this tenuous evidence, they said, God could not have created the world in the state of Genesis 1:2.

Therefore, they placed a gap of time between verse 1 and verse 2. Verse 1 describes the creation of the original heavens and the earth. But somewhere between verse 1 and 2 there is an unrecorded Fall of Satan, which caused a devastating destruction on that original heavens and earth. All the original plants, animals, and even humanoid creatures were destroyed in that judgement, explaining the presence of all these bones and fossils in the ground. That all happened perhaps millions of years ago. Then, in the recent past, God began to renovate and remake the wreckage of the world, and created the world we know upon the wreckage of that old world that perished. This way, Gap Theorists got to do two things. One, they could place Adam and Eve and the days of creation in the recent past. But they could also explain the existence of dinosaur bones, sedimentary rock layers, fossils and the apparent old age of the earth and cosmos by stating that that was the old world of verse 1.

First, the main reason for the existence of the Gap theory is the acceptance of Darwinian timelines. You have to have decided that the millions and billions of years are absolutely established to even be motivated to find a gap between verse 1 and verse 2. But, as we'll see in future messages, there are reasons to dispute many of the dating methods, and there are alternatives to explain what appears to be an old universe. Once you deny evolutionary cosmology or biology, you don't need a Gap Theory.

Second, the Gap Theory is bad exegesis. We don't do theology by arguing from silence. It's hard to imagine that any biblical writer saw something as massive as the fall of Satan and the ruin of the ancient world as being hidden between verses 1 and 2. It's a bad use of Jeremiah and Isaiah. Jeremiah is speaking of judgement, but we don't read Jeremiah back into Genesis 1:1. When Isaiah say God did not create the world void, the idea is simply that God did not create the world to remain that way. But on day one, it began that way, not in an evil sense, but simply in an incomplete sense.

Third, verse 2 is grammatically linked to verse 1. In English it is rightly translated by beginning the verse with the word 'and'. You can't split them up. Verse 1 gives you the independent clause: God created everything out of nothing. Verse 2: and this was the state of that first creation.

Fourth, the Gap Theory places death and destruction before the Fall of Adam. For us to imagine there was a massive judgement involving the death of billions of creatures is to imagine death before the Fall of Adam. But Romans 5:12 is very clear: Adam introduced sin, and only then introduced death.

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— (Romans 5:12)

You cannot have God continually looking upon His creation and seeing it is good, if, buried under the surface are the bones and remains of billions of dead creatures. Remember the words of the Westminster? “ to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or

invisible, in the space of six days; **and all very good.**”

Fifth, the Gap Theory means much of creation was not completed in six days. If God created a prior world, then judged it, and then remade it and replenished it and renovated it in six days, then it doesn't agree with what the rest of Scripture says, which is that God made everything in six days.

Ex. 20:11. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day....

for *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.’ (Exodus 31:17)

Either God made everything in some other time over an unspecified period and then remade the world in six days, or God made everything in six days. The Bible says God made everything in six days.

So what we are reading in verses 1 to 3 is all Day One of the creation week. Three things happen on Day One: an absolute creation of space-time and matter in all its dimensions, the preparation of the elements in their unformed, unshaped state, unenergised state and then the creation, or the ignition of light.

As we proceed in the Genesis account we'll consider the next days, and take some time to understand what Genesis means by days – does it mean long ages, it it using days poetically, or does it mean 24-hour days?

For now we return to our English Puritans and hear it this time from the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

What is the work of creation?

A. The work of creation is, God’s making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good.