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IN (the) BEGINNING

GENESIS ONE REVISITED

A Fresh view of Genesis, Chapter One
by
Wayne E. McMorran

GENESIS ONE REVISITED

Many studies have been done on Genesis One. I have done a number myself. There are differing opinions on its meaning and how one looks at the text determines ones interpretation of it. In this study, I shall refine a study done previously in which I consider Genesis 1:3-33 to be an early form of Hebrew Poetry. Most know that there are five poetic books in the Bible: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. However, other books contain, at least some, poetry. The book of Genesis is no exception.

Hebrew verse is characterized by parallelism. This is a type of sense rhythm constituting thought arrangement rather than word arrangement. This basic phenomenon of Heb. versification was first clearly set forth by Robert Lowth in 1753. . . . This basic pattern of Heb. poetry conveys thoughts pleasing to the mind and produces a musical cadence pleasing to the ear. There are numbers of variations in parallelism discovered since Lowth's day,

—New Unger's Bible Dictionary

In addition to the parallelism noted above, Hebrew poetry uses a number of words which are considered poetic since they appear only in the poetic sections of the Old Testament. I discovered the later a number of years ago. In studying and restudying the book, I have now discerned a large degree of Parallelism. Does it make a difference whether it be prose or poetry? Surely! One does not write poetry because he is tired of prose, he does so to express thoughts and feelings that can not be expressed in any other way. Interpreting Genesis 1 in this way brings to light things not otherwise seen. Note, however, I have not included verse 1 or 2 in this. We shall start with these and then get into the poetic part.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1 (NKJV)

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 1:2 (NKJV)

Note there is no "And" at the start of verse 2 as found in the KJV. It should not be there. There are marks in the Hebrew text to separate one division from the next. There are marks which more or less like a colon (:) which have been added at a later time. More important is the Hebrew letter ו (waw) which, other than yod (י) is the smallest letter in the Hebrew Alphabet (of 22 letters). It is other used as a connective (i.e. "this AND that). It also functions in a manner similar to the symbol § used in English to denote the start of a new section. If you do not believe this, look at Exodus 1:1. It may start with "and," "now," or neither of these. This is because the Hebrew text of Exodus begins with Waw, denoting a new section of the Scriptures.

What this all says is that verse two is to be treated apart from verse one. They are not correlated.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. This might well be translated "the heavens and, especially, the earth." since the earth is a part of the "heavens (universe). It is especially the earth that this book is addressed to. Is there some planet somewhere called X that has a book that

starts, "In the beginning God created the heavens and X?" There could be but I would certainly doubt it and, even if there were, we need know nothing about it.

Incidentally, verse 1, taken by itself is not at odds with the "big bang" theory or the idea of "Intelligent Design." How the heavens and earth got here should not be important to us except to know the God who did it.

By the way, who did it?

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 (NKJV)

If you believe John, it was Christ who was responsible for the creation. We will discuss this when we get into the "poetic part."

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.

Many attach verse 2 to verse 1 and claim that this is what the earth was like upon being created. Do you believe this? If so, you will have to argue with Isaiah and Jeremiah.

I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; And the heavens, they had no light.
Jeremiah 4:23 (NKJV)

Jeremiah is not describing the creation here. It is of a judgement on Israel. Isaiah wrote,

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. I have not spoken in secret, In a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, 'Seek Me in vain'; I, the LORD, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

Isaiah 45:18-19 (NKJV)

Here Isaiah quotes the Lord as saying He did not create the earth if the form described in Genesis 1:2.

So what happened between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2? I do not know. The Bible does not say. Therefore it is best to say, "We do not know." There are archeologist who are always digging up fossils of some prehistoric creatures. That is for them to worry about. Some, good Christians try to explain this away by saying that God created the earth with all the fossils and prehistoric things in place. I do not believe God plays tricks on us. I do not believe He would put these fossils in place just to confuse us.

One further note.

"I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. "It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; "and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; **the waters shall never again** become a flood to destroy all flesh. "The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Genesis 9:13-17 (NKJV)

The expression "never again" would indicate that the flood in the time of Noah was not the only judgement by water that the Lord made. I will add more on this at the end (in case we don't get that far)

THE POETIC PART Verses 3-31

There a a number of poetic parallelisms in this passage. I shall start with "Day One" as an illustration.

God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.
Genesis 1:3-5 (NKJV)

At the start of the study I asked, "Who created the Earth?" The answer was Christ. Thus you can take this passage by enlarging it a bit.

God the Father said, "Let there be light"; and there was light produced by God the Son. And God the Holy Spirit saw the light and declared that it was good;

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV)

It is the Holy Spirit that is concerned with approving what is right, of watching over the creation and over Christians. So it is natural that the Holy Spirit would be the one to declare the light "good."

Before continuing on the major theme of the poetic nature of this chapter, there is one thing which must be dealt with.

So the evening and the morning were the first day. There has always been an argument whether these are twenty four hour days (or twelve hour days) or each "day" was an eon of time. Which is it? Neither!

They could not possibly be eons of time or man would have been here for much much longer than he has. I do not believe they were days in our sense of the word. Let me just say that each was a "poetic term" of undetermined time. I don't believe it is necessary to know exactly how long the days where because we are speaking poetically. but a short time (weeks, months, or several years). Since

this is poetic (in my estimation) there is no need for literal interpretation. I will, however ask one question.

Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. God did not make it possible to "tell time" by the sun and the moon until the FOURTH day. So how were the first three determined. I know there are many explanations for this and I just point it out for completeness.

Now, to get to the Parallism!

This account may be divided into two parallel triplets.

one	formation of light	four	specific details of the light source
two	formation of seas and atmosphere	five	life for the seas and atmosphere
three	formation of land and plant life	six	life to populate the land and to eat the plants

Let us now expand this.

(God the Father) Then God said, "Let there be light";

(God the Son) There was light.
(God the Son) God divided the light from the darkness.

(Holy Spirit) God saw the light, that it was good and called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night.

(e) So the evening and the morning were the first day.

(F) Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth";

(S) It was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness.

(H) God saw that it was good.

(e) So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

(God the Father) Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters."

(God the Son) Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so

(Holy Spirit) And God called the firmament Heaven.

(e) So the evening and the morning were the second day.

(God the Father) Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear";

(God the Son) it was so.

(Holy Spirit) God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

(God the Father) Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth";

(F) Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens."

(S) So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind.

(H) God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

(e) So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

(F) Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind";

(S) it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind.

(H) And God saw that it was good.

(F) Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

(God the Son) and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind.

(Holy Spirit) And God saw that it was good.

(e) So the evening and the morning were the third day.

(S) So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

(Holy Spirit) Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. "Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so.

(All) Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

There are (probably) two things you may have missed above. First, on days 3 and 6 there were two actions recorded. The first was similar in form to the previous days. These second, however has an added section which is not in the others and this is associated with a pronoun. God said "Let **US** make man . . ." So the designation (F), (S), and (Holy Spirit) are somewhat meaningless because man was a special creation brought about by the entire God head. Note that God gave man the plants, the animals and (presumably) the birds for food

There is one further very important point. How many things were created in Chapter one? The Hebrew word for "create" is ברא (bara) and is found only in verse 1 and verse 27 - *So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* Nothing else in Chapter 1 was "created." If I have an empty table and I say "Presto" and wave my wands and a vase appear on the table, I "created" something. If I have a potters wheel and a lump of clay and, after working it for a while I have a vase, I have "formed" something.

I pray that this might present Genesis One in a more meaningful, spiritual manner rather than the argumentative studies I have seen through the years

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 1:2 (NKJV)

The earth was without form, and void;

We looked at this part of verse 2 before. The two terms used to describe it are:

- 1) תוהו (tohu) BDB reads: *formlessness, confusion, unreality, emptiness (primary meaning difficult to seize)*
- 2) בוהו (BOHU) This word is used only three times: here, in Jeremiah where Jeremiah describes the earth in this condition, and In the following: *and the stones of **emptiness***. Isaiah 34:11. From what follows, it would be a sphere covered with water. We know that this is a possibility because it happened with Noah.

The rest of the verse describes two important aspects of the earth at this time.

darkness was on the face of the deep

The text says “deep,” but deep what?

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of **the great deep** were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

Genesis 7:11 (NKJV)

Are You not the One who dried up the sea, The waters **of the great deep**; That made the depths of the sea a road For the redeemed to cross over?

Isaiah 51:10 (NKJV)

"For thus says the Lord GOD: 'When I make you a desolate city, like cities that are not inhabited, when I bring the deep upon you, and great waters cover you,

Ezekiel 26:19 (NKJV)

Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, the Lord GOD called for conflict by fire, and it consumed the great deep and devoured the territory.

Amos 7:4 (NKJV)

The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; **The deep closed around me**; Weeds were wrapped around my head.

Jonah 2:5 (NKJV)

The mountains saw You and quaked; The downpour of waters swept by. **The deep uttered forth its voice**, It lifted high its hands.

Habakkuk 3:10 (NASB)

The text says that “Darkness” was upon the surface of this subterranean water. This “darkness” is significant. חֹשֶׁק (hōshek)

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

Exodus 10:21-23 (NKJV)

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Isaiah 5:20 (NKJV)

Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was **darkness over all the earth** until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last.

Luke 23:44-46 (NKJV)

In the passage in Luke, the word is σκότος (skotos), the same that is found in Genesis 1:2 in the Septuagint. Darkness is a symbol of evil and judgement. What was under this darkness was the subject of God's judgement. But what was above this?

the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters

The waters above the deep darkness also had a covering over them. This covering is described as the רוח (ruah) of God. The word may mean breath, breeze, etc. and it may also mean "spirit" and when connected with God as here, it must be the Spirit of God - the Holy Spirit. What is significant is what the Spirit was doing. The Spirit was "hovering" over the waters. The only other place this word is found is shown below.

As an eagle stirs up its nest, **Hovers over its young**, Spreading out its wings, taking them up, Carrying them on its wings,

Deuteronomy 32:11 (NKJV)

The "darkness" was like a manhole cover covering the deep and keeping its contents penned in. The Spirit, on the other hand was like a mother hen brooding over her eggs or, after they've hatched, their young.

While this completes chapter one, it does not complete the subject.

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Genesis 2:1-3 (NKJV)

I sure wish God had rested on the fourth day - only three work days each week! Let us go a little way

into Chapter Two for completeness (in more ways than one!)

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Genesis 2:1-3 (NKJV)
