

Amazing Truths from the Pentateuch (1)
Creation with a Purpose - The Anticipatory Love of God
(Genesis 1:1-2:3)

Introduction:-

One theory about the creation of the world and universe that we know, is that at one point there was absolutely nothing in existence (if logically this can be comprehended by the human mind), and then quite out of the blue there was a "big bang", which not only brought our present planet earth into existence, but also brought our universe into existence with its myriads of stars and galaxies beyond that. But one major problem with this line of thinking, is that if this "big bang" involved both sudden explosive heat and power of major proportions, then how do we account for the fact that this earth on which we live was formed out of water and by water through the Word of God, according to 2 Peter 3:5, supported by verse 2 in the opening chapter of Genesis 1? Well, if this is so, how might we begin to account for this amazing truth, and what really lies behind this fact? To find a clue, we now come to Genesis chapter one for an answer.

1. Clearing the Deck

Before we begin to look at the opening chapter of Genesis, what kind of a statement is being made here about Creation? First of all, it is important to note that the words of the Bible are not "scientific" in terms of the language and way in which modern science operates today through experiment and verifiable observation. Rather, the language of the Bible operates on the basis of "faith" as Hebrews 11:3 puts it, when it says: "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what is visible." The importance of this statement relates to the fact that the language of the Bible is understood to be the revealed Word of God given to those who wrote the Bible, inspired by the Spirit, and sealed by "faith." And so the language of the Bible is "theological" in the sense as both coming from God, and about God, in terms of His character and actions. And this way of looking at things, can only be received and appropriated by "faith." And so, in Genesis 1, as with the rest of the Bible, we are handling "faith" statements, that we believe have been revealed by God to those who wrote each of the Biblical Books. Finally, one further point is worth mentioning here. I was brought up to believe that these early stories of Creation in Genesis 1-2 were written to tell us about the "why" of creation (in order to answer the "theological" question), and not about the "how" of creation (in order to answer the scientific question). The truth is, that both questions were equally important to the ancient writer of Genesis, for these opening chapters of Genesis can be regarded as "Pre-Scientific", operating fully within the scientific framework of the day and age in which they were written.

2. The Structure and Language of Genesis 1:1-2:3

This opening chapter of the Bible is a grand and dignified statement about the fact that only one God created the Heavens and the Earth in contrast to the many gods who feature in the Ancient Near Eastern Myths, often involved in competition and battle with each other. At this level, it is likely that Moses, whilst in Egypt, was refuting the polytheism of ancient Egyptian Creation texts in particular, whilst refuting other Ancient Near Eastern creation texts at a wider level. And as we look at the language of Genesis 1, we find a highly structured account of creation, in which verse 2 (order out of a watery chaos), provides the key for the way in which the six

days of creation follow, culminating with a seventh day of rest, as a model for human activity. Thus, throughout this chapter, we find that Ten divine commands ("Let there be" ... involving the personal will and plan of God), result in eight acts of creation over six days, so that there is a correspondence between days one to three (days of "forming"), and days four to six (days of "filling"). On day one, God created "light", and on day four, "lights" (sun, moon, and stars); On day two God created the "sky" and "sea", and on day five, the dwellers in the sky and sea (birds and fish); On day three God created the land and vegetation, and on day six, the dwellers in the land (animals and mankind), giving them plants to eat; Finally, on the seventh day (the Sabbath), God rested (At this point we may note Exodus 20:8-11, which reflects the pattern and creation story of Genesis 1:1-2:3, which indicates that this account would have been known to Moses!). The works of creation then move to a climax or apex with the creation of mankind in two sexes, made in the "image" or "likeness" of God, as the crowning feat of God's creation emphasized by the lengthy comments on their creation and role (1:26-29), which are much fuller than those about any other creature. Indeed, the works of the five preceding days seem to focus on creating a home for mankind. Further, those aspects of creation that most affect human existence (e.g. plant and animal life, and the sun and moon), are described more fully than the creation of light, land, or seas, which are less significant. God's concern for humanity is made explicit in the provision of plants for food. Also, throughout these provisions, a kind of priestly benediction of "good" and finally "very good" is pronounced upon all that is created for man, as if God was only concerned in providing the very best for the humans which he created in his image.

3. Finally, what is this saying about the Character of God and His desire for Humankind?

The fact that God throughout this chapter is systematically and painstakingly preparing something for humankind before he finally creates male and female in his own image, finally placing them in the home of creation, speaks of the "anticipatory love of God." I suspect that this is an aspect of God's character that we seldom reflect upon. But we do have illustrations of this in life, sometimes quite elaborate and costly, when people prepare loving surprises for each other, and can't wait to see the other's joy in response to such surprises. Where do we get this from? The answer is, from the God whose nature is love, who also created us in his image! We also see this in action when God finally brings Eve to Adam in Genesis chapter 2, after noting that Adam's loneliness was "not good" for him (Genesis 2:18). And so throughout God's creative activity, he does what is "good" or "beautiful" for us, as his royal people, reflecting his own character. Throughout, the created order speaks loudly of this truth, with the "forming" and "filling" pattern, and as his "image" bearers, we are first made for fellowship with God, in order that we might not only experience his anticipatory love to us in many ways, but also reflect and rule over God's creation in the same way.

Conclusion:-

Finally, if all of God's works in creation are carried out in "love", as John 3:16 reminds us, as also the highest expression of that love, finally centred in Christ (Colossians 1:15-20), then we will not be surprised to learn that the "anticipatory" love of God is found right throughout the Bible from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. Finally, Paul says: "No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has mind conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9; cf. John 14:1-4). The best is yet to come! How can we rejoice and give thanks to God for this amazing truth today? How can we also share this blessing with others? **Amen.**