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LESSON 1

THE OLD AND NEW CREATION

Genesis 1

You have to have faith to read this chapter right; for the record goes back beyond human history; and for its statements we have the authority neither of testimony nor experience, but the plain word of God (Heb. 11:3). These pre-historic annals of earth are in the region of faith, quite as much as those post-historic annals given in the book of Revelation. It is by faith that we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; for faith has to do with the unseen both behind and before us. This chapter contains the substance of our creed concerning God, as THE CREATOR.

1. THE CREATION.

It comprises the whole of what we call the universe, and all that it contains, visible or invisible, "the heavens and the earth." This universe was created; it did not create itself, nor did chance create it, nor did it exist eternally. Its Creator was God, not a god; but the one living and true God, who calls himself El and Elohim, and God. Its Creator was the Word of God, the Son of God, the second person of the Elohim or Godhead (John 1:2; Col. 1:16). This was "in the beginning;" that is, the indefinite past, the far past. Then the things which are now seen were made, not out of pre-existing materials, or "things which do appear," but out of nothing.

2. THE CHAOS.

It was shapeless and unfilled up, without form and void. It was not properly "the earth" or "the world;" and "the fullness thereof" had not yet come. Whether this chaos was the first state or an after condition, that of fall and punishment, in connection with the apostasy of angels, we do not know. Here, however, earth lies before us in chaos; how long we cannot say. This chaos was one of "darkness," which covered the whole face of the abyss or deep. How this could be, other than in connection with a sinning race, is not easily seen; for "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

3. THE LIFE.

The Spirit of God moved upon (or brooded like a dove over) the face of the waters. These waters were everywhere; the globe was fluid, but the waters were dead: the fluid mass had no vitality in it; it was like the lifeless bodies of the valley. The Holy Spirit came upon them, and the power of the highest overshadowed them; life was imparted; the deep was quickened, or as Milton writes, "made pregnant." This Spirit, then as now, came from Him "who has the seven spirits of God," the Son of God, the Creator, for "in him was life." The quickening Spirit is with him. "The Life was manifested" (Psa. 104:30; 1 John 1:2).

4. THE LIGHT.

God spoke; the light came, following the life. For it is not first light then life, but first life then light. "The life was the light of men." Christ *the life the light* the world. It was God, the Son, who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness. It needed a word only; no more.

5. THE ORDER.

Sky and earth, light and darkness, air and water, are all commingled. Every needful element is there, but they are mixed up with each other, and so are useless. As to the air and earth and water, there must be division; the landmarks of each must be set; as to light and darkness, there must be alternation; day and night, sunrise and sunset. All must be perfect order; no one interfering with the other, but each left free to work its own work in the development of a glorious universe.

6. THE BEAUTY.

It is no longer "without form." It is now coming into shape in all its different features, and all is beautiful." By His spirit He hath garnished the heavens." It is by degrees or stages that this beauty is drawn out; yet it does come. The blue heavens, the translucent atmosphere, the sparkling stars, the bright sun, the waxing and waning moon, the green earth, the blossoming trees, the many-colored flowers, all beautiful; for He who formed them is Himself the fountainhead of all beauty, the perfection of perfection, the infinitely loveable One. We were made to love "the beautiful" in the creature, how

much more in the Creator! He has made everything beautiful in its season, and He has given us minds capable of appreciating and admiring it all; but it is He himself who is altogether excellent, the sum as well as source of all beauty. He claims admiration and love for himself, as the infinitely glorious One.

7. THE FRUITFULNESS.

Valley, plain, hill, and field are all fruitful; and they bring forth their shrubs and fruit trees, their corn, their abundance of everything that is good for food, as well as pleasant to the eye. It is a fruit-bearing earth. Barrenness is unknown. Man and beast are there, fish and birds are there; all kinds of life, intelligent or unintelligent. It is not mere beauty or order that satisfies God, but fruitfulness. It is fruitfulness He asks from us. We are ourselves part of His fruitful earth, as well as its lords, and in both aspects He asks for fruitfulness. He comes to us daily "seeking fruit."

8. THE GOODNESS.

He gazed on it, and pronounced it all very good. Each part of it was good; the whole "very good." It is good in every sense; good in the sense of beauty; good in the sense of subservient, beneficent and loving ends; earth and sea, hill and valley, river and forest, all mutually helping each other. All is goodness! Yes, a marvelous whole of unutterable goodness. Death is not here, nor cruelty, nor warfare. All is good, very good. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. God delights in His handiwork. And though much marred and defaced, it still exhibits its original excellence. But it will do so more gloriously in the times of the restitution of all things, when there shall be the new heavens and new earth wherein dwells righteousness. "Behold, I make all things new."