

“Massively Fallen, But Fully Redeemable”

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28 January 2024

Texts: 1 Cor. 2:14; 3:1-3

14 But a natural (or unspiritual) man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised (examined).

Challenged to discover *the authority and power of God's word* in Genesis 1, I returned to that familiar text *with fresh eyes*—to examine Genesis 1 spiritually; that is, with spiritual eyes as a regenerate person. As Paul asserts the unspiritual, or natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit—he does not, he cannot and he will not. It turns out either that the Greeks are not the only ones who find the gospel, the things of God, matters of the kingdom, to **be foolishness**; or that a lot more of us are Greek than we ever imagined! Of course, it might be more charitable to simply say, we are all born both blind and deaf—our spiritual “sensory apparatus” has been installed, but neither the sight, nor the hearing are turned on. When we assert that man is **born dead in his trespasses and sins**, the natural man responds with perplexity—especially if he is both sighted and hearing! He sees but spiritual sight has not been activated and the same is true for his hearing. He doesn't see spiritual things, doesn't hear spiritual truth because he is in a spiritually inactivated state—as in dead. Yet he sees and hears naturally and thinks that that's all there is to it. To natural eyes the Bible is just a book and the world is full of books. But when one is born again, and spiritual sight is activated, revelation truth comes into view. Spiritual birth enhances our humanity, moves it to whole new level and, we might as well say it plainly, it moves it to a higher, better level! When we are spirit-filled, we are better for it; and because the only way to become spirit filled is to believe in Jesus, to trust in His finished work for your forgiveness and our salvation. We say, that a born-again person is **a new creature in Christ** Jesus but that isn't the half of it. No, the truth is that everything shifts for the Christian—his perspective is altered, his attitude, disposition, his whole being, indeed his whole existence is transformed. Nature hasn't changed he has; the natural world is now enfolded in God's creation and God's kingdom becomes a reality to be reckoned with. Jesus came to open the eyes of the blind—that would be us—and to unstop the ears of the deaf—which would, once again, be our very selves. The prophecy of God in Isaiah is realized in us!

So, having spiritual eyes and ears, let's journey forth into Genesis 1. **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.** This is the power of God manifest in creation. With power and authority God creates¹. This is the word of God, but God hasn't spoken a word! That happens in verse 3, **And God said, “Let there be light.”** **The Hebrew word *dabar* occurs here—meaning “the word that is the act.”** SO simultaneously with the command of God, light is created; it appears, is manifested. Now the next thing recorded is **And God saw the light that it was good.** God did not say it was good. God did not declare that it was good, He saw it. At this

¹ **With God all things are possible** or so the angel of the Lord declared to Mary: a word from God.

point we might just stop and assess matters. First, we note that God speaks—he speaks things into being, creates them verbally. His words express His sovereign will (that’s authority and power both). Secondly God sees. And His sight is both material (the light itself) and moral (the goodness of the light). Light is naturally good. Therefore, we note, fourthly, that God has discriminating power! **And God divided the light from the darkness** (v. 4). This division is basic, and primary—it preceded in order of creation all other divisions—and there are many divisions which follow! And, almost as if to seal the deal, **God called—He named the light Day and the darkness he called Night**. Naming is first of all a divine prerogative and naming is used to mark off the division that God imposed.

Before there was a sun or moon, let alone a rising and a setting of the sun, we have Day and Night. And we have **the evening and the morning were the first day**. **Day** as a category of time, a span of time was established from day one and needs must be the origin of chronology in measurable units, in days! Notice that God has not said very much: “**Let there be light**” . . . and “**Day**” and “**Night**.” Day and Night came into existence at the same instant; they were a division and this division is preserved in their very names and defined as to their nature. In English, and translation God’s speech had a minimum of six words, more or less.

On Day Two, God becomes much more loquacious/talkative: **Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters**. (v.6) This second division might be likened as God’s workshop and if we step into that workshop, the firmament **which is called Heaven**, we immediately, sense a project in the making. This is the second day.

Let the waters under heaven be gathered together unto one place (the oceans?), **and let the dry Land/Earth appear**. **And it was so**. Another division, between **Earth and the Seas** occurs. They are divided and named and again it is written **God saw that it was good**. The consistent goodness of God’s creation is a notable feature of the creation account. God says, **Let the earth bring forth grass and herb yielding seed, and the fruit trees yielding fruit after *their* kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth, and it was so.**” We are at approximately 66 words of divine speech, in our English translation, which is a significant increase in three days—and I am done counting words. God sees that it was all good and we come to the close of Day Three. Note that the solar system as we conceive it is still in the wings and as we formerly zoomed in, we are about to zoom out and take in the creation of various celestial bodies: the sun and moon and the stars. Situating the origin of the planetary universe, as we would know it observationally, in Day Four—we assert “the sovereign free will of God” to do as He wishes with what is entirely of His making, and entirely His!. However, **The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, because they are *spiritually discerned***. C H Spurgeon’s conclusion on this situation is:

“These things (the creation of **lights in the firmament to divide the day from night . . . for signs, and for seasons, for days and years**. (v. 14)) **which are so important**, that you should neglect everything else to attend to them, are thought by you (O natural man) to be folly; **these eternal realities**, compared

with which the world's highest interests are only as unsubstantial shadows, you pass by as being idle dreams and doubtless they are dreams to you, because you, still being in your natural state, do not, cannot, and will not receive the things of the Spirit of God."

But to those who are spiritual these creative acts of God are not folly, not idle dreams nor insubstantial shadows; they are **eternal realities**. We would do well to ask for a clarification of "the world's highest interests." They would include science, technology, the arts, culture—astrophysics and microbiology—the law, government and linguistics. Yes, all things philosophical, abstract and theoretical which make up the sum total of human inventiveness and ingenuity. On a much less lofty level, financial matters, stock and bonds, cattle, livestock and farming/ ranching—Jesus designates this absorption with things "temporal and transient" with the excuses: of purchasing real estate, a pair of oxen and getting married which represent worldliness—both realistic, practical—and addressed by reason, common sense and experience.

Conjecture as to the cosmic ordering of things based on this theory, or that and constructed on various assumptions—or presuppositions?—is the best that natural understanding can muster. This is certainly the case with assertions outside the realm of testable and verifiable experimentation/and scientific analysis/observation as creation itself most assuredly is.

Lights in the firmament are created to give light to the earth fall under the category of divine speech. **And it was so.** The geocentric emphasis is striking. So is the underscoring of the division of Day and Night: **the greater light to rule the day** (that would be the sun) **and the lesser light** (the moon) **to rule the Night**. Both sun and moon are enlighteners in the Hebrew! Thus governance/regulation is built into the very structure of the universe as viewed from the earth's perspective, or point of view (as seen from the earth). Matthew Poole writes:

To rule the day; either,

1. To influence the earth and its fruits with heat or moisture, and to govern men's actions and affairs, which commonly are transacted by day; for the word "day" is sometimes put metonymically for the events of the day, as [Proverbs 27:1](#) [1 Corinthians 3:13](#). [John Gill adds on this verse: to rule the day, to preside over it, to make it, give light in it, and continue it to its proper length.]

Or, 2. Poole continues: To regulate and manage the day; by its rise to begin it, by its gradual progress to carry it on, even to the mid-day, and by its declination and setting to impair and end it. Which seems most probable, because the moon is in like manner said **to rule the night**, which is meant of the time, and not of the actions or events of the night.

And then Gill adds this thoughtful comment:

"On the fourth day the luminaries came into existence. Since God has foreknowledge, he understood the nonsense of the foolish philosophers who were going to say that the things produced on earth came from the stars, so

that they might set God aside. In order therefore that ***the truth might be demonstrated, plants and seeds, reproducing orderly, after their kind, came into existence before stars***. For what comes into existence later cannot cause what is prior to it."

If we were to recast this somewhat, we might observe that first, the plants were created and subsequently the lights in the greenhouse of this world were turned on! This is precisely the reverse order of what we would assume to be natural!

to rule [מְמַשֵּׁלֶת or *le-mem-še-let*/ H 4475e—NASB occurrences: authority (1), domain (1), dominion (9), forces (1), govern (2), rule (4).] This expression assigns to the sun and moon a kind of quasi-personal dominion over the realms of day and night. Cf. **Job 38:33**, "Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens? Canst thou establish the dominion thereof in the earth?" Possibly the expression "rule" may be a survival of an earlier stage in the Hebrew cosmogony (the branch of science that deals with the origin of the universe, especially the solar system), in which the sun and moon received some kind of personification. At least, the word is noticeable in a context singularly free from metaphor². (From the Cambridge Bible Commentary) *Mimshal*, meaning dominion, or ruler, is introduced here—the sun and moon and stars anticipating the charge to Adam (by God) to rule over creation! And the concept of *ruling* in verse 16 is reiterated in verse 18 and vitally linked to the dividing of light/darkness, Day and Night!

Animal life succeeds plant life—first we have vegetation then we have animate, moving creatures in the Sea. **Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures**. *The inanimate precedes the animate in the cosmic ordering of creation*. Then birds/fowl are created that **fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven**. (v. 20) The abundance is first mentioned here; it was not connected with the emergence of vegetation on Day Three and yet the dependence of living creatures on the vegetable order will emerge which it is designated as food. (v. 30) Then, beginning with **great whales** (great sea creatures), Scripture enumerates the creation of the animal kingdom in the Sea. All reproducing **after their kind** and all standing (preserved?) in their uniqueness as they were created by God—demonstrating both

² Brown-Driver-Briggs

מְמַשֵּׁלֶת **noun feminine rule, dominion, realm** (compare Dr^{Jphil.} xi. 1882, 215); — absolute מ' **Micah 4:8**; construct מְמַשֵּׁלֶת **Psalms 136:8** (before ב' Ges^s 130, 1 Kōⁱⁱ. 182), **Jeremiah 34:1** 2t.; suffix מְמַשֵּׁלֶתָּה **Isaiah 22:21**; **Psalms 145:13**; מְמַשֵּׁלֶתוֹ **1 Kings 9:19** 6t.; plural construct מְמַשֵּׁלֹת **Psalms 136:9**; suffix מְמַשֵּׁלֹתָיו **Psalms 114:2**; —

1 rule, dominion (human) **Isaiah 22:21**; **Micah 4:8**; וְכָל מְמַשֵּׁלֹתָיו **2Chronicles 32:9** and all his imperial might with him (i.e. display of might — soldiers, court, luxury, etc.; of Sennach.); מְמַשֵּׁלֹתָיו אֶרֶץ כַּל **1 Kings 9:19** **2Chronicles 8:6**; **Jeremiah 51:28**, מְמַשֵּׁלֶת אֶרֶץ מַמְלָכֹת, **Jeremiah 34:1**; hence מ' alone = *relam*, *domian* **2 Kings 20:13** = **Isaiah 39:2**; **Daniel 11:5**.

2 rule of heavenly bodies הַיּוֹם לְמַשׁ **Genesis 1:16** the sun *for the rule of the day*, compare **Genesis 1:16**; also followed by ב' **Psalms 136:8**; **Psalms 136:9**.

3 God's rule dominion: **Psalms 145:13** ("") מְמַשֵּׁלֹתוֹ כְּלִמְקֻמוֹת, **Psalms 103:22**; plural = *realm* הַיְּהוּדָה הַיְּהוּדָה **Psalms 114:2**. : מְמַשֵּׁלֹתָיו יִשְׂרָאֵל לְקִדְשׁוֹ

their genetic orderliness, or perpetual regulation by God. Life is therefore governed, directed from the beginning.

Then, in verse 22, something unique transpires: God blesses the living creatures, saying, **Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters of the Sea, and let the fowl multiply in the earth.** Note that dominion is absent from the blessing list—that is intentional because dominion is reserved to the sun, moon and stars with regard to time and to man as God’s co-regent in creation. This blessing appears to replace the saying **God saw that it was good** at the conclusion of Day Five. That phrase returns at the end of Day Six perhaps to bracket in one grand, moral assessment all of created animate life.

Day Six records the creation of terrestrial life: Let the earth bring forth the living creature after their kind, cattle and creeping things and beast of the earth after their kind, and it was so. This sounds like spontaneous generation of the animal kingdom on earth—in one act of divine creation, just as God had spoken it. God saw its goodness. At this point in time, at the apex of creation, or as a climax to all that went before, we come to the creation of man: **Let us make man in our image/likeness** and this signal and unique intention distinguishes man from all other living creatures! And man is set over, giving dominion over all living creatures! Man is not brought forth from either Sea, or Earth (!); he is created, in one penultimate/supreme division, **male and female made He them.**

Male and female is right up there with Heaven and Earth, firmament and waters, light and darkness, Day and Night, Sea and Dry Land, vegetation and animate life—as defining and differentiated entities. They are neither the same, nor are they interchangeable. And after their kind includes this normal binary condition: men and women reproduce men and women. This division is pertinent in the created world order as it is but, we are assured, in the age to come it will pass away and not be remembered any more.

And God blessed them and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply (which God spake also to the animals) **and replenish** (or fill) **the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air. And over every living thing that moveth upon the face of the earth.** This being our commission, also known as our creation mandate—it is direction, and guidance, spelling out our purposes as creatures on the biological plane. Our soulish, or redemptive purposes, coming in later on, are matters of another dimension—they belong to salvation history and deal with matters arising after the original goodness of creation had been ruined by an invasion of evil and sin.

Genesis 1 concludes with the designation of vegetation as our **food**. And one final **observational** blessing: **God saw** every thing he had made, and behold, **it was very good**—all of it. Indeed it was perfectly good *as created by Him!* That state, or condition is our beginning, our staging area is in goodness. The Seventh Day, the Sabbath, which occurs after the work of forming and filling were completed, is the subject of Genesis 2. God rests in delight, in contentment and entire satisfaction—in fullness of strength and vigor, not weariness and fatigue. His “rest” is not about

exhaustion because God is inexhaustible! Omni-competent, fully capable and omnipotent. Rest is not a necessity for God—as it is for us as created beings. It is the *sovereign effortless*ness of God in creation that astonishes and amazes us! We train, discipline ourselves and perfect our performances (in the arts, in sports), but God performs perfectly—never missteps, never misses, never fails. There are no mistakes, or errors in His mastery of all things and that is what evokes our praise and worship!

That brings us full circle.

What does all of this have to do with: **14 But a natural (or unspiritual) man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised (examined).** Or with, 1 Cor. 3:1-3: **And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual persons, but as unto carnal/natural, even as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with meat: for hitherto you were not able *to bear it/digest, process, ingest it*, and neither now are you able. For you are yet carnal/natural and worldly for whereas there is among you envying, and strife and division, are you not carnal and walk as men/mere naturals, unregenerate as unbelievers. Paul observes that he had to speak with as mere babes because they were not walking in the Spirit, or by the Spirit! Yes, and yet he calls them brethren! He speaks as an equal, meaning as one of the brethren to other brethren and calls them out for their lack of brotherliness! Mature, spiritual brothers have put **envying, strife and division** well behind them—they love one another! May the Lord, even now, open our spiritual eyes. May our capacity to **accept the things of the Spirit of God** be enlarged. Yes, to the point of detecting carnality, or worldliness lingering in our hearts. How so? By envying, strife and division? Yes, of course. But given what we have learned of the authoritative word of God in Genesis we are warned to be thoroughly spiritual. Ask for the Spirit to heal our sight and our hearing! May we **see** the goodness of creation (actual and essential), knowing that God sees it that way. May we observe the enduring divisiveness of God deployed as God uses it: the waters above versus the waters below; the firmament and the earth, the earth and the sea, the dominion of the sun and moon (awakened in their regulatory and governing roles), creatures yielded up by the Sea versus creatures yielded up by the earth each reproducing after their own kind and our being **made by God in the divine image, male versus female—all at the quickening command/or word of God.****

If you can accept these truths, if you can affirm the creation narrative as revealed in Scripture, thanks be to God—this is *prima facie* evidence that you are born again, that you are truly regenerate, that the Spirit of the living God is living in you. For apart from that having occurred you could not see, hear, or affirm any of it—it would be **foolishness** to you. Yes, it would be nonsense, a fiction, fable or fantasy. And if you are truly born again, pray that the gift of the Spirit might be given to others so that they might hear and see and believe the things of God.

Amen.