

Where It All Began

An Inductive Study of Genesis

Review of Genesis 1 – 7, Fall/Winter Semester 2006-2007

Week One

Last week in class, we started a review of the first seven chapters of Genesis, and managed to cover the first three days of creation. The class noted that

1) the text does not directly address the problem of the Philosophers, but starts with God "dividing" (the root meaning of the Hebrew word translated as "create") Heaven from Earth, with no direct resolution of what existed before Heaven and Earth, and whether it was eternal and part of God, or eternal and not part of God. Though later Jewish theology, probably under influence from Hellenism, decided that God created it all from "nothing", and Christianity adopted this position wholesale, it can hardly be said to answer the question, which remains paradoxical.

2) Creation, through a series of "separations" becomes increasingly complex, and independent.

3) As Creation gains in complexity, it also gains in freedom. To wit: by Day Three, the role of God in creation is lessened as He instructs the earth to bring forth grass. In Hebrew, God literally tells the grass to grass itself (tadshe deshe). However, God repeats the instructions about limitations "according to its own kind " three times, as if for emphasis.

Week two

4) The class was told to note the parallelism of days 1, 2, and 3, with 4, 5, and 6. For example, the theme of days 1 and 4 is light, etc., etc.

5) Days 4, 5, and 6 continue the theme of the increasing complexity and freedom of creation, which culminates in the creation of man, or rather mankind, male and female.

6) Day 6 has the statement that we are created in "God's image". The Hebrew words mean this literally, not figuratively, despite what you were told in Sunday School. Perhaps it stretches your imagination to say that we look physically "exactly" like God. But perhaps this literalness points towards the Great Paradox of Genesis One: of all of God's creation, man is clearly the most free and undetermined. But what does it mean to be free in such an orderly Creation, where everything seems to have such clear boundaries and job descriptions? In such a physically determined world, is even God free to make changes? After all, the text implies the perfection of Creation by having God rest on the 7th day. We must know. After all, if God is not free, then neither are we.