**Wednesday Morning Devotional On May 8, 2024**

**Passage: Genesis 1:3-19**

**"Why were the sun and moon created on the fourth day if there was already light, day, and night from the first day? Isn't that peculiar?"**

There are groups that dispute the historicity of creation, suggesting that the events should not be seen literally but as symbolic. They argue that inconsistencies in the order of creation, like the creation of light on day one and celestial bodies on day four, support their view.

From Genesis 1:3-5:

"And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day,' and the darkness he called 'night.' There was evening, and there was morning—the first day."

These critics argue that it's odd for God to establish day and night on the first day by creating and separating light and darkness, and yet again on the fourth day creating the sun, moon, and stars which also mark day and night.

Genesis 1:14-16 elaborates:

"God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars."

Here, although light and the concept of day and night were introduced on the first day, the sun, moon, and stars were created on the fourth day to serve as markers for times and seasons. Critics question why these luminaries were necessary if light already existed.

**Understanding this properly requires three perspectives: 1)biblical, 2)ancient Near Eastern mythological, and 3)scientific.**

**1. Biblical Perspective—-**

It is crucial to approach this issue from the perspective of the Bible itself:

The creation story in Genesis deals with events at the very beginning of the world. The phrase "In the beginning" used in Genesis 1:1 signifies the start of everything—time and space. Unlike prophecies that focus on what will happen and when, "In the beginning" points to the absolute start, a time when nothing yet existed.

Thus, Genesis chapter 1 speaks of God's creation out of nothing, marking the very first acts of creation. It is not a prophecy about the future but a narrative about beginnings, and therefore, any claims that reinterpret this narrative as a prophecy are mistaken.

The Hebrew verb used for "created" (בָּרָא, bara) is in the perfect tense, indicating that the creation acts described were completed in the past. Therefore, the Genesis account documents completed actions by God at the universe's outset.

"In the beginning, God" signifies that at the start, God alone existed. From this solitary presence, God initiated the creation of "heaven and earth"—a term that does not just refer to the sky and land but encompasses all entities within the universe.

God's creation of heaven and earth is affirmed multiple times in Scripture, underscoring that everything was made by Him alone. Some examples include:

* "It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:17).
* "Hezekiah prayed before the Lord: 'Lord God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth'" (2 Kings 19:15).

Furthermore, God established the natural laws, directions (north and south), and seasons:

* "You have set all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and winter" (Psalm 74:17).

God's creation extended beyond the spiritual to the physical:

* "For you created my inner being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb" (Psalm 139:13).
* "It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts" (Isaiah 45:12).

The Bible clearly declares that God created all things, set natural laws, and directly created humans.

Genesis reveals God's actions at the very start of the world:

From the outset, God created the fundamental elements for all creation, laying the groundwork for further acts of creation, detailed from verse 2 onward. The initial state of creation, described as "formless and empty" in verse 2, indicates that Genesis 1:1 speaks of God’s creation of the raw materials for the universe from nothing.

The concept of "creation" is crucial. It means bringing into existence something that did not previously exist, not remaking or reorganizing existing materials.

The original heaven and earth created "in the beginning" were made from nothing. In the eschatological vision, these will be replaced by a new heaven and new earth:

* "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband" (Revelation 21:1-2).

This marks the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of all things.

By focusing on these foundational elements of the Genesis account, we grasp the magnitude and nature of God's creative power and His sovereign role as the universe's ultimate architect.

**2. Ancient Near Eastern Mythological Perspective—-**

God's creation of light before the sun, moon, and stars serves to highlight His supremacy as the true Creator, superior to all other gods. Notably, Genesis does not specifically mention "sun" and "moon" but refers to them as "greater light" and "lesser light." This is an intentional choice to avoid giving these celestial bodies divine status, which was common in the surrounding cultures where they were often worshiped as gods.

Genesis 1:16-18 says:

"God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. God saw that it was good."

Why does Genesis use the terms "greater light" and "lesser light" instead of "sun" and "moon"? The text is deliberately avoiding the common names because these were often associated with deity in the ancient Near East. The words used for "sun" and "moon" in Hebrew were commonly linked to solar and lunar deities.

Genesis, traditionally attributed to Moses and written during a time when polytheism was the norm across all nations, emphasizes that there are no gods apart from the one true God. By not using the typical names for the sun and moon, Genesis ensures that these entities are understood not as gods but as creations made by God's command.

Moreover, Genesis 1 also represents a critique of the powerful solar and lunar deities revered in the ancient Near East. The sequence of creation in Genesis presents three critical aspects that contradict the mythological thinking of the time:

Light existed before the creation of any celestial bodies (verses 3-5).

Plants and trees grew before the sun was created:Genesis 1:11-12 states:

"Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. The land produce vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good."

Day and night were established before the creation of the sun and moon (verses 5, 8, 13).

In ancient Near Eastern thought, a world without the sun was unimaginable. The sun was seen as a divine force that illuminated the world, promoted the growth of crops and fruits, and, along with the moon, established the daily cycle of morning and evening. In powerful empires like ancient Egypt, the sun god "Ra" or "Re" was particularly revered.

However, Genesis declares that God created a light surpassing the sun even before the sun existed, allowing plants to grow and establishing the cycle of day before the sun and moon were created. Thus, Genesis proclaims that it was God, not these celestial bodies, who was the true light and ruler of the world, establishing God as the sovereign ruler over all creation.

**3.** **Scientific Perspective—**

On the first day, the light God created was electromagnetic energy that illuminated the universe filled with deep darkness, before the existence of the sun's light. This light encompasses not only visible rays but also ultraviolet light, X-rays, infrared, radio waves, heat, electricity, magnetism, and molecular interactions—essential elements that activate all forms of matter in the created world.

According to the Big Bang theory, the universe began with an intense concentration of energy that exploded, producing light, heat, and numerous particles. As the explosion cooled, various luminous bodies and planets formed.

Thus, God's creation of light signifies that He produced the foundational light energy necessary for the existence of luminous bodies like the sun, moon, and stars before they were created. Light is the basis of all energy; without it, not only would the sun and other stars be unable to shine, they couldn’t exist at all. For example, the sun, composed of hydrogen and helium, requires the activation of these elements to emit light, and the fundamental energy that activates these elements is light itself.

There is a distinction between the light created on the first day and the luminous bodies formed on the fourth day. The light created on the first day (Hebrew, אור, or) refers to light itself. In contrast, the luminous bodies created on the fourth day (Hebrew, מְאֹורֹת, meorot) act as devices that receive and emit light. Therefore, on the first day, God created the foundational light that is the source of all energy, and on the fourth day, He made devices that utilize this energy to emit light.

However, the crucial point is not scientific validation, but the declaration in Genesis that there is no god besides God. No matter how powerful the sun may seem, it is merely a creation. Only God is the true deity.

This synthesis of biblical and scientific perspectives provides a more holistic understanding of the nature of light and its foundational role in the cosmos, reinforcing the omnipotence and creative sovereignty of God.

**From the fourth day when God created the sun, the moon, and the stars, He established day and night, making the days and years. How could the dates be counted before that?**

God created the sun, the moon, and the stars on the fourth day, and it was from this time that day and night were distinctly marked by these celestial bodies, setting signs, seasons, days, and years in place. Then what were the day and night that God created on the first day? Some heretics argue that the order of creation does not logically align, and therefore, these records should be seen as metaphorical.

According to current scientific understanding, for the concept of a day to exist, the Earth needs to rotate. In the midst of a world covered in chaos and emptiness, God created day and night, suggesting that the Earth began to rotate, formless and dark over the deep waters. Indeed, God made the Earth rotate, at a speed of about 800 miles per hour.

The fact that God established day and night before the creation of the sun shows that God had pre-calculated and prepared the speed of the Earth's rotation before creating the sun. God's focus was on the Earth before the sun and moon.

**In other words, we can see that He created the entire universe for us. Realizing that we are so loved, we should live daily praising God, the Creator who made the universe and us for our sake just as we recite “the Apostles Creed”.**

**May we all live in such a way, blessed in the name of the Lord!**

**Prayer to Start a Day:**

*Heavenly Father, as I(My Family) welcome a new day, I pause to marvel at Your creation and the order You have lovingly established in our world. With the sunrise, I am reminded of Your faithfulness and the fresh mercies that each morning brings.*

*Lord, You who separated light from darkness and set the sun and moon in their places, illuminate our paths today. Give me the wisdom to see Your hand at work in every detail of our lives and the strength to walk in the light of Your truth.*

*As I begin this day, fill my hearts with gratitude for Your unending love and the beauty of Your creation. Help me to reflect Your light in all my interactions and to serve You faithfully in every task I undertake. May this day be a testimony to Your glory and grace.*

*In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray, Amen.*