

Genesis 1:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

Analysis

And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth ... This verse is part of the creation account that establishes God's sovereign power and purposeful design. The structured pattern of the seven days reveals divine order, intentionality, and progressive development from formless void to a world prepared for human habitation.

The recurring phrases "And God said," "and it was so," "And God saw that it was good" create a liturgical rhythm emphasizing:

1. creation by divine decree
2. immediate fulfillment of God's word,
3. divine evaluation of creation's goodness.

This pattern refutes both polytheistic chaos-and-conflict creation myths and modern materialistic chance-based origins.

Each stage builds toward the climax of human creation in God's image. The theological themes include divine transcendence and immanence, purposeful design, creation's inherent goodness, and humanity's unique role as God's image-bearers and stewards. The creation account provides the foundation for understanding work and rest (Sabbath), male and female relationships (marriage),

human dominion (stewardship), and moral accountability to the Creator. These opening chapters establish the worldview framework for all subsequent biblical revelation.

Historical Context

Genesis 1 stands in stark contrast to ancient Near Eastern creation accounts like the Babylonian Enuma Elish, Egyptian creation myths, and Ugaritic texts. While these portrayed creation resulting from conflicts between deities or sexual generation of gods, Genesis presents a sovereign monotheistic God who creates effortlessly by divine decree. This would have been revolutionary to ancient readers accustomed to polytheistic cosmogonies.

The Hebrew text's literary structure (seven days, recurring formulas) suggests careful composition as theological proclamation rather than primitive mythology. Archaeological discoveries of creation tablets from Mesopotamia (2000-1500 BCE) reveal that Genesis addresses similar questions but provides radically different answers about the nature of God, humanity, and the cosmos. The absence of theogony (origin of gods) and theomachy (conflict between gods) distinguishes Genesis from its ancient Near Eastern context.

For Israelites emerging from Egyptian bondage or later facing Babylonian captivity, this truth that Yahweh created everything would have been profoundly liberating and countercultural. The gods of Egypt and Babylon were mere creations, not creators. Genesis 1 establishes that Israel's God alone is supreme, rendering pagan deities powerless and their worship futile.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּבְרָא	אֶלֹהֵי יָם	אֶת	הַתַּיִּימִן	יָם	הַגָּדֹל	וְאֵת	כָּל	נֶפֶשׁ
created	And God		whales		great			creature
H1254	H430	H853	H8577		H1419	H853	H3605	H5315
וְכָל	הַחַיִּי הַיָּם	הָרֹמֵשׁ	שָׁמַיְמָה	אֲשֶׁר	בָּרָא	וְהַמַּיִם		
and every living	that moveth				brought forth abundantly	which the waters		
H2416	H7430		H834		H8317	H4325		
אֲחֵרֵי	מִיֵּשֶׁב	הָאָרֶץ	וְאֵת	כָּל	עוֹף	הַשָּׁמַיִם	וְאֵת	כָּל
after his kind					fowl	and every winged	after his kind	saw
H4327			H853	H3605	H5775	H3671	H4327	H7200
וַיַּרְא	כִּי	טוֹב:						
And God		that it was good						
H430	H3588	H2896						

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 1:25 (Creation): And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 8:19 (Parallel theme): Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.