

Genesis 1:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

Analysis

And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. 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 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
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

וְמַלְאֵת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ כַּאֲنַתְּלָתְךָ כִּי־בְּרַכְתָּךְ
blessed H853 And God H430 them saying H559 Be fruitful H6509 and multiply H7235 and fill H4390
H1288 H430 H559 H6509 H7235 H4390

בְּאָרֶץ: וְכַאֲנַתְּלָתְךָ כִּי־בְּרַכְתָּךְ
the waters H4325 in the seas H3220 and let fowl H5775 and multiply H7235 in the earth H776

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 8:17 (Parallel theme): Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.

Psalms 107:38 (Blessing): He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

Job 40:15 (Parallel theme): Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox.

Genesis 1:28 (Blessing): And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish 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 earth.

Job 42:12 (Blessing): So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

Genesis 9:1 (Blessing): And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

Psalms 107:31 (Parallel theme): Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

Psalms 128:3 (Parallel theme): Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

Proverbs 10:22 (Blessing): The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

Genesis 35:11 (References God): And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

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