

Genesis 1:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Analysis

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. This verse introduces God's creative method: His powerful word. The Hebrew vayomer Elohim (וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, "and God said") reveals that creation occurs through divine speech—effortless, sovereign decree. The immediate fulfillment ("and there was light") demonstrates the absolute authority and efficacy of God's word.

Light appears before the sun, moon, and stars (created on day four), indicating that light's ultimate source is God Himself, not celestial bodies. This light represents not only physical illumination but divine order, truth, and presence displacing chaos and darkness. Throughout Scripture, light symbolizes God's nature, truth, and salvation, while darkness represents sin, ignorance, and evil.

The New Testament reveals that Christ is the eternal Logos (Word) through whom all things were made (John 1:1-5), and He is the true Light that enlightens everyone (John 1:9). The connection between God's creative word and Christ the Word grounds creation in redemptive purpose. God's speaking also establishes the foundation for verbal revelation—the same God who spoke creation into existence has spoken to humanity through prophets and supremely through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2).

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

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

אָמַר יְהוָה יְמִינֵי אָמַר
said And God Let there be and there was light Let there be
H559 H430 H1961 H216 H1961

אָמַר:

and there was light

H216

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 4:6 (Light): For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

John 1:5 (Light): And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

Isaiah 45:7 (Light): I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

Isaiah 60:19 (Light): The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

1 John 1:5 (Light): This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Ephesians 5:8 (Light): For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

John 1:9 (Light): That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Psalms 33:6 (Parallel theme): By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

Psalms 148:5 (Parallel theme): Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.

John 3:19 (Light): And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

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