

## Genesis 1:1-5: *The Creator's Powerful Spirit and Word*

**Propositional Statement: God's Powerful Spirit and Word brings form to formlessness; brings light to the darkness; brings fullness to emptiness in the creation and in the re-creation of our lives.**

### Introduction

**Context:** Moses was leading Israel to “the land” promised by God to Abraham. From the very beginning, God has formed and filled the land as a place to be inhabited by his creatures. Despite the fall, God's graciousness and faithfulness to his people continues.

Moses has taught the Israelites in verse one that the Almighty God of Israel created absolutely all things (heaven and earth). All things both visible and invisible were the result of his creating into, or with time, out of, or into nothing! Now, Moses continues to teach them that this same God gives form and order to the creation - -just so that man can inhabit this place! This is God's great grace. All of the six days of creation, particularly verses 2-5, could be summed up *fiat and fulfillment*.

### I. God's Powerful Spirit- the Spirit of God hovered over the face of, or upon the surface of the waters...

#### A. Harmony of the Work of the Spirit and God's Word

- In verse 2, we see the work of God's Spirit in the creation. The power of God's Spirit is hovering, or moving on the face of the deep. What is interesting to note is that the same word used for the Spirit's *hovering* is the same word used in Deut. 32:9-11:

For the LORD's portion *is* His people; Jacob *is* the place of His inheritance. 10 "He found him in a desert land And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. 11 As an eagle stirs up its nest, Hovers over its young, Spreading out its wings, taking them up, Carrying them on its wings...

- Here, very early in Scripture we see the close relationship between God's Spirit and the redemption of his people! The Spirit's *hovering* over the face of the deep, taking the creation in its *formless and unfilled* stage after God created all things, and forming it as well as filling it! The same he did with Israel! He had redeemed them from Egypt by his strong and outstretched hand. He had hovered over them and led them through the howling wilderness (the formless, or uninhabitable place), in order to bring them safely to the land he had prepared for them in Canaan.
- There is a harmony between the Spirit and the Word operating here at creation. In the same way, this is what we still have even today. God works powerfully in our lives daily by his Spirit and his Word. He instructs us, guides us, directs us into paths of righteousness for his name's sake by his Spirit and Word.

#### B. “Redemption” in creation

- Even in creation then, we get a glimpse of a later redemption. The redemption of Israel from Egypt and the care that the Spirit gives to the people of God, but also the redemption of all of those who have believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ! God's Spirit and Word are still powerful to transform and change our lives in redemption.
- **Illustration:**

## II. **God's Powerful Word (Divine "Fiat)**

### A. From *chaos* to *cosmos* (from chaos to order, symmetry and beauty)

#### **IOW: From formlessness, emptiness, and darkness, God by his Spirit and Word brings form, fullness, and light!**

- There are three things that are described by Moses as needing God's utmost attention in Genesis 1:2-3: darkness needs light; formlessness needs form; and emptiness, needs filling. So the gracious Creator begins his work of *fiat and fulfillment*. This describes the bringing about of an orderly universe! From chaos to order, symmetry and beauty, to be inhabited by man- - this is God's gracious purpose!
  - This would have also instructed Israel that even though Adam sinned and was forced East of Eden to dwell outside of paradise, that God had prepared a land for them to inhabit. Many of the Israelites who were about to enter into the Promised Land, they knew of their father's before them that had sinned against the Lord and fell in the wilderness because of their disbelief. Israel knew it was by God's grace that he had not destroyed them all because of their sins. The Spirit of God was leading them from the wilderness now, that barren uninhabitable, formless land, into the Promised Land that was like paradise: flowing with milk and honey! God was teaching them in the creation that just as he formed and filled the earth for man's good and God's glory, so they were to inhabit the Promised Land that he had prepared for them.
- 1) **As the potter to the clay:** As the potter forms the clay, so the creation in the beginning is formless and empty. Like a clay flower pot we might make. We have lump of clay before us (we did not however create this *ex nihilo*, or out of nothing)- - then we begin forming it into a pot, then we fill it with dirt and the flower. Ultimately, we have a purpose in the forming and filling! It is to plant a gardenia or to display a beautiful Gerber Daisy to give light and life to the room.
  - 2) ***Tohu* and *Bohu*- formlessness and empty (without form and void)-**
    - *Tohu and bohu* does not describe a judgment between verses 1 and 2 as the Scofield Bible and other well-meaning evangelicals used to believe. I do not believe we can infer this from the text. The connection between verses 1 and 2 is the creation of all things is established, then the process

of the forming and filling of all things is explained. The explanation of the forming and filling is for the ultimate purpose of showing how God was preparing a place, a habitation for man.

- In other words, *tobu and bobu* describes the condition of the land before God made it “good”. What is good here? From the perspective of purpose - -the creation was made for man, so God *forms* what he has created out of nothing so that man may enjoy for God’s glory. This described in verse 2 is the “not-yet state” of the creation! Ultimately, verse 2 describes the land as uninhabitable, and so Moses teaches through the remainder of chapter one, how God prepares the land as the place for human dwelling.

As Isaiah says:

18 For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain [*tobu*],  
Who formed it to be inhabited: "I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other.

In fact, many years after Israel entered the Promised Land, they were sent into Exile because of their sins. Jeremiah describes the exile this way:

- Jer. 4:23-26- *tobu and bobu* in other contexts of Scripture:  
 22 "For My people *are* foolish, They have not known Me. They *are* silly children, And they have no understanding. They *are* wise to do evil, But to do good they have no knowledge." 23 I beheld the earth, and indeed *it was* without form, and void; And the heavens, they *had* no light. 24 I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, And all the hills moved back and forth. 25 I beheld, and indeed *there was* no man, And all the birds of the heavens had fled. 26 I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land *was* a wilderness, And all its cities were broken down At the presence of the LORD, By His fierce anger.

Jeremiah describes the exile as a *creation-reversal* if you will.

Remember, earlier in Deut. 32, Israel was led by the Spirit in the howling and barren desert of the wilderness before they entered the *good* land, that is the Promised Land. They disobeyed and the curses came upon them that God had promised against them if they were disobedient to his Law. When Israel disobeyed, God sent them into exile and Jeremiah again describes the land as *without form and void* (*tobu and bobu*)- - and even without light! Moses teaches us in Genesis how God can bring order out of chaos, form from formlessness, light in the darkness, fullness from emptiness. By contrast, Jeremiah teaches how God, because of our sins and disobedience, can change order into chaos, form to formlessness, darkness instead of light, and emptiness rather than fullness!

- Ultimately the terms *tobu and bobu* are to teach us the uninhabitable state of the creation *before* God works to make it habitable for man- -the apex of his creation. The imagery used in Job 38:8-9 is not that this early form

of the earth was *chaos* or a form of *evil*, but the imagery of the darkness is of a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes:

8 "Or *nbo* shut in the sea with doors, When it burst forth *and* issued from the womb; 9 When I made the clouds its garment, And thick darkness its swaddling band...

- *Swaddling band* in the Greek translation of the OT is translated as the wrap of baby clothes. The *first state or stage* of life is in swaddling clothes. In the same way, the infant state of the creation was in darkness. The darkness was the *first state, or stage* -- not a secondary *state or stage* due to some evil forces. I believe Milton has had too much influence upon us with his *Paradise Lost*.

## B. God's creating light in the darkness (*Divine Fiat*- from Latin Vulgate, we get the phrase *Deus fiat lux*)

### 1) Absence of light- - presence of light

- God says "Let there be light" and there was light, in verse 3. This is the sheer act of his powerful will. God speaks, and it is done. This is the executive decree spoken of in Heb. 11:3 and John 1:3:  
By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible...All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.
- God has the power to separate the light from the darkness. He is the Light that gives light to the darkness and shows that there is a true difference between the two.
- Now some have concerned themselves with the fact that God does not make the sun until verse 16. So, they say, how can this first so-called day be 24 hours? Verse 3 has been taken to mean that God created light before the sun in verse 16, however we must remember that the sun, moon, and stars are all included in verse one: "In the beginning God created the heavens and earth"- -all things! These celestial bodies were created in verse 1, verses 2ff are explaining how God orderly arranged all that he had created.
- We want to remember that in Rev. 21, the consummation, or the renewal of all things, God himself will be the light. God is light and in him is no darkness at all 1 John 1:5 teaches us! In Rev. 21 we read of the future:

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,  
11 having the glory of God. Her light *was* like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal...22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light. 24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there)...Rev. 22:5 There shall be no night there: They need no

lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

- God creates *secondary means* such as the sun and the moon and the stars for our enjoyment and his glory, but he does not depend on them to have light. In fact, in the LORD's speech to Job, he asks him what he knows about the light and the darkness. He implies in his question that the light exists without luminaries ultimately. Job 38:19-20:

19 " Where *is* the way *to* the dwelling of light? And darkness, where *is* its place, 20 That you may take it to its territory, That you may know the paths *to* its home? 21 Do you know *it*, because you were born then, Or *because* the number of your days *is* great?

- In Gen. 1:4, God *sees* that the light is good! He separates it from the darkness. The creation of light anticipates the creation of sunlight. Eventually, the task of separating the light from the darkness will be assigned to *secondary means*, or heavenly luminaries in verse 18. One commentator explains it this way:

"The Bible begins and ends by describing an untarnished world that is filled with light, but no sun (Rev. 22:5 above). Should not the One who is himself called "light" have at his disposal many sources by which he dispatches light into his creation?" Calvin says concerning this: "...the LORD, by the very order of creation, bears witness that he holds in his hands the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and the moon."

- In Gen. 1:5, Moses writes: "God called the **light** Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day. *Literally:* "Evening and morning- - first day, or *one day*. *Application:* This teaches the Israelites then, and us today to meditate upon the works and the Word of God both day and night! Notice that when God says: "Let there be light" in the darkness, he does not entirely *eliminate* the darkness. The phenomenon of daylight was introduced to alternate with darkness to bring the order of *Day and Night, Morning and Evening*, that God proclaimed as "good"!
- We work during the day, we rest at night to the glory of God! But we are to be like the Israelites were commanded by God: to meditate upon the LORD's Law and commands both day and night. Psalm 1 says this:

1:1 Blessed *is* the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

- What we can learn about the Lord's works of creation, particularly *how* he describes the works through his servant Moses, we can learn the importance of meditating on God's Law both day and night, the pattern for our lives revolving around the Lord's Day (rather than the other way

around), serving God wholeheartedly in our callings because we are reminded each day that each day has enough trouble of its own...therefore, as our Lord teaches us: Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. The creation sets the pattern for our lives both in the *way* we live observing the Lord's Day and anticipating the coming of our Great King and Savior, as well as *how* we should live in light of God's good creation and providence to us!

[Note: Moses is describing for us here a *forming* and *filling* by God. These should be understood as literal, successive, chronological, 24-hour, calendar days (*you jest?!*) Like other seminarians, I was tempted to see something else than *plain meaning* of these days. I was tempted to try and twist the meaning of the Hebrew word *yom* in order to sound more scientific, theologically alert, and intellectually astute! However, by God's grace, I just saw that these verses mean to teach us about days, as we and every other created person knows and understands *days*.

Remember: Be careful about being seduced by so-called scientific claims. Trust the Lord and how he has revealed himself. Be patient and kind to other brothers who might disagree, listen to them, learn from them, but do not try to wrest the *plain meaning* of Genesis one from its purpose. Any theology that weds science in one generation, is a theological widow in the next!

We acknowledge as those who deny the literal 24-hour day view, that Genesis one is a beautiful, literary masterpiece. There are literary qualities to be noticed such as that days one through three, God forms what he has made, and days four through six, God fills what he has made. But we want to be careful that our *literary analysis* does not cause us to take away from what the content of Genesis one purports to teach to us!

Literal Days Argument: *Argument for six, literal, 24-hour calendar days-*

- (a) In its primary meaning, the Hebrew word for 'day' - *yom*, denotes a natural day. Rule of Exegesis: Do not depart from primary meaning *unless* required by context. Context of Genesis one teaches an orderly, chronological account.
- (b) The phrase *and there was evening and there was morning...* would hardly be applied to thousands of years if this is what Moses wanted to communicate. Besides there are other good Hebrew terms for *ages* if this was Mose's intention in Genesis one.
- (c) The "clincher": Ex. 20:9-11 says:

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. 11 For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea,

and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

God teaches the *theology* of the creation account, as well as the *application* of what God did: labor six days and rest on the seventh. The Sabbath rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> day was a literal day- - the presumption is that the other days are as well.]

### **God's Words are life-giving- -but they also give light and His Words are re-creating! [Harmony between the Spirit and the Word]**

Deut. 30:15-19:

5 " See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, 16 "in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess... 19 "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; 20 "that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

### **III. God's Powerful Re-creating Power (God's power over our hearts as his creatures)**

#### **A. God's Spirit and Word in our *regeneration* (Ephesians 2)**

- Because of Adam's sin and his representing us as our covenant or federal head, we are all born into sin. We are born *dead in trespasses and sins* as Ephesians 2 teaches to us. By God's powerful and gracious Spirit working with the Word, he resurrects our dead hearts and gives to them life! He *sends forth his Spirit* and we are recreated- -we are renewed! Because of the completed work of Christ in his life, death, resurrection and ascension, he sends forth his Spirit so that we might have the Law written upon the tablets of our hearts and say: "O, How I love thy Law, O LORD my God!"

There is a very close relationship between God's Spirit and his Word. The Spirit brings to mind the Word and teaches us to walk in God's ways revealed in the commandments! God takes our fallen and chaotic lives, the lives he created for his own glory, but the life we live for our own glory. He takes our chaotic lives and brings order. He brings light from the darkness, form and order to the *barren waste*, the *formlessness*; he resurrects our hearts from the dead and from the barrenness, he brings fullness of life! As the Apostle John says:

4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

- Because of the mighty work of God's Spirit and Word in our lives, the Apostle Paul calls us *children of light*. We are to trust and depend upon God's Spirit and Word in our lives today. In Ephesians 4-5, Paul teaches the Ephesian Christians the importance of understanding ourselves as new

creations in Christ. He explains that we live *in the light* and not longer *in the darkness*:

Eph. 4:22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness...Eph.5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now *you are light* in the Lord. Walk as **children of light** 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the **light**, for whatever makes manifest is **light**. 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you **light**."

**God has truly said "Let there be light" in our lives- - and now there is light!**

### 1) Compare with "regeneration in creation"- Matthew 19

- Jesus also speaks of the New Heavens and the New Earth as a *regeneration of all things*. In Matthew 19:25-28:
 

25 [The Apostle's asked Jesus]:..."Who then can be saved?" 26 But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." 27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" 28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
  
- It is important to note that this *regeneration* that Jesus speaks of, is the recreation of all things - -the renewal of all things – the NEW CREATION. It is the same word used of our regeneration as individuals. It shows the very close relationship between the work of God's Spirit and Word. This is why the Apostle Paul will describe our new life in Christ as a *New Creation* in 2 Cor. 5. As well as why he teaches us about the re-creation that happened in our regeneration, when we were born again by the powerful Spirit working with the Word [2 Cor. 4:1-6]:
 

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**B. God's Spirit and Word in our *sanctification* (Romans 12)- "toward a renewal of the creation order".**

- And God continues by his grace to bring us to fullness of life by the Spirit and Word. Paul teaches in Romans 12 that Christians are to be *transformed* by the renewing of their minds so that they might know the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God for our lives! Give yourself to the hearing and the reading of the word of God that has been made known, and of which the Spirit gives his illuminating power for change in our lives!
- **He who began a good work will continue it until the Day of Christ Jesus!**

**Conclusion**

Next week, Lord willing, we will begin to consider the days of creation. By God's grace, we will learn in awe of the Majestic Creator and how he teaches us *fiat* and *fulfillment*. Let us remember what Louis Berkhof says concerning this: "...the work of creation [is] a definite gradation, the work of each day leads up to and prepares for the work of the next [day], the whole of it culminating in the creation of man, the crown of God's handiwork, entrusted with the important task of making the whole creation subservient to the glory of God."

An important perspective we do not want to miss is that Genesis one is a theological history that is concerned with explaining God's graciousness to his people in preparing a habitation for man, the apex and glory of his creation! Let us not lose sight of this perspective. God is building his Kingdom, so man might *be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it*, ruling as God's prince over all creation. This perspective will set the stage for the horrendous fall of man, and the terrible consequences that will follow! Only with this perspective can we see how heinous and devastating was the disobedience of man in paradise! Adam was nothing more than a prince of a gracious King, who rebelled against his Sovereign!