

**Lesson 2: September 9, 2018**  
**God Created Plants and Animals**  
**Bible Background • GENESIS 1:14–25**  
**Printed Text • GENESIS 1:14–25 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 136:1–9**

People's life experiences sometimes lead them to question whether the universe is ordered or unpredictably chaotic. How do the diverse parts of nature work together? God brought order to the universe God made, establishing the heavenly bodies and filling the sea, sky, and land with diverse and abundant life.

**Words You Should Know**

- A. Heaven shamayim (Heb.)—The place of stars, sun, and moon, and of the birds, plus the abode of God.
- B. Signs 'oth (Heb.)—Omens or miraculous signs to people.

**Aim for Change**

By the end of the lesson, we will: EXPLORE the Bible's description of God creating light and life; CONSIDER the order and connection of all of God's creation; and RECOGNIZE the diversity and breadth of God's creation.

**In Focus**

Felicia tucked her granddaughter Ayesha into her bed. As usual, Ayesha had a question to delay bedtime. "G-ma, why does it get dark outside?" Felicia hesitated for a second. "Well, the sun goes down, and we have to rest." Ayesha looked puzzled. "But G-ma, we still stay up after the sun goes down. The new baby stays up after it has been dark for a long time!" Felicia responded, "Yes, that's true, but everything that lives has to rest sometime. The birds outside, the class hamster at your at daycare, even your little brother. He sleeps during the day when you're learning and your mom is at work. Although you're right. I wish he slept more at night!" They giggled. Felicia explained further, "God created both night and day. We can learn and work and play during the day, but at night we can rest just like all the other creatures." "Does that mean I have to go to sleep?" Ayesha asked. "Yes, baby. You are God's creation, too. And you also have to sleep sometime. But before you to sleep, let me show you one of my favorite things about the night." Felicia pulled back the curtain from the window by Ayesha's bed. "Look at the moon and stars from your window. See how bright and beautiful they are!"

Why do you think God creates a separation between day and night? Is it important? Why or why not?

**Keep in Mind**

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:1–2, KJV).

## Focal Verses

**KJV** Genesis 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

21 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.

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

23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

25 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.

**NLT** Genesis 1:14 Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years.

15 Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened.

16 God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars.

17 God set these lights in the sky to light the earth,

18 to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

19 And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

20 Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind."

21 So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

22 Then God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."

23 And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

24 Then God said, "Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals." And that is what happened.

25 God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

## **People, Places, and Times and Background**

Heaven. In the ancient Near Eastern understanding of the world, Heaven referred to the firmament, or the massive transparent dome that covers the earth. The blue color of the sky was attributed to the chaotic waters that the firmament separated from the earth (Genesis 1:7). The earth was thus surrounded by “waters” above and below (Deuteronomy 5:8). The firmament was thought to be substantial; when the windows of the firmament were opened, rain fell (Genesis 7:11–12). In Hebrew, the word for “heaven” is always plural. Similarly, the Greek word for “heaven” in the New Testament also frequently appears in the plural. The use of the plural probably does not mean that the ancient Hebrews conceived of more than one heaven. Heaven is the place of the stars, sun, moon, and birds. It is also the abode of God (Deuteronomy 26:15) and where God is enthroned (Psalm 11:4).

## **Background**

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## **At a Glance and In Depth**

### **At-A-Glance**

1. The Creation of Celestial Bodies (Genesis 1:14–19)
2. The Creation of Sea Creatures (vv. 20–23)
3. The Creation of Land Creatures (vv. 24–25)

## In Depth

### 1. God Creates the Celestial Bodies (Genesis 1:14–19)

God speaks the sun, the moon, and the stars into existence, specifically for the telling of time. When one remembers that the sun is so huge that more than 1.3 million Earths could fit inside of it and that staring into it can quickly damage one's eyes, it is no surprise that many cultures throughout human history have attributed supernatural power to the sun. But Genesis tells us that each of these great bodies is created for the good of the rest of creation, specifically humans, the only ones to whom days, years, signs, and seasons each have lasting and significant meaning. Notable in this text is the fact that the sun and moon are not even named, instead referred to as the greater and lesser lights. This characterization further emphasizes that though these great bodies in the sky appear physically imposing, they were created by God for His glory and for our good—not as powerful apart from God.

*In what situation in your life was it difficult to see how God could possibly work things out for His glory and your good?*

### 2. The Creation of Sea Creatures (vv. 20–23)

God continues with His creation by calling forth sea creatures and birds. The objects of Day 5 of Creation are the first to be blessed and commanded. Here we see a hint that this is the beginning of history where creatures are concerned, as God does not fill the Earth instantly but rather commands and enables His animal creations to partner with Him in that work. God, by His power, infuses them with life and the means to reproduce according to their kind, or species.

God also creates “the great whales,” or sea monsters, a staple of ancient mythology that are often depicted as at odds with the gods. Instead, there is no competition here. Power lies firmly in the hands of the Creator.

*What are the “sea monsters” of our culture— things that war with God for control of the lives of those around us?*

### 3. The Creation of Land Creatures (vv. 24–25)

Day 6 is the last day of creation and the climax of it. On this day, God creates the beasts of the field in the same manner that He created the birds and reptiles. His command here is not to the sea, however, but to the earth, commanding it to produce life, a work that is only possible through the matchless power of the Word of God. We know through experience and experimentation that death and non-life do not naturally produce life, so it may appear as though God is commanding the impossible. But that ignores the sheer creative power of the Word of God, which commands and, by virtue of that command, makes things so. The combination of that command to the Earth and the term “beast of the earth” show us that what may appear to be animals coming up from the dirt is truly a miracle wrought by a magnificent God.

*Are there any elements of your life that have grown routine but, upon further examination, are actually miraculous works of God?*

## **Search the Scriptures and Discuss the Meaning**

### **Search the Scriptures**

1. Why do you think the stars get so little attention in the text? How does that relate to a Christian understanding of astrology?
2. What do you think it meant for God to “bless” the animals, keeping in mind He did not bless inanimate objects nor plants?

### **Discuss the Meaning**

1. What impact does God calling animals forth from the earth have on how we perceive the natural world?
2. How does our belief in God as Creator of the material universe—plants, trees, birds, and animals—affect our attitudes toward the preservation of our forests and endangered species?

## **Lesson in Our Society and Make it Happen**

### **Liberating Lesson**

God created the universe not out of any loneliness or necessity, but rather as a display of His power and grace. Such principles extend to His creation of living things. We must not forget that no matter how physically imposing His creation may be—whether we consider the vastness of space, the depths of the ocean, the immensity of a blue whale, or the ferocity of a lion—there is one who is above and in control of all of them. This logic applies to the intricacies of our life situations. We are tempted daily to look to creation for comfort and stability instead of the Creator who gave those things the life and influence they exert. Let our view of Creation constantly lead our thoughts and gaze upward to God, the Eternal Craftsman.

### **Application for Activation**

When you see the birds of the air, reptiles, or other animals, thank God for His creation and for the joys of life. Remember that the world around you is not a random, naturalistic combination of pre-existent matter but rather the meticulous work of a loving, sovereign God. Let the taste of a good meal, the joy and beauty of a sunrise or sunset, and the aroma of a sweet-smelling bouquet conduct your joy upward to the God who created them and to Christ, who died so that your joy might be full. As we look forward to the new heaven and new earth, we must remember that it will not be merely a spiritual reality but an embodied one. Take time this week to enjoy something in nature, and consider how it glorifies God. Let each day be filled with joy and gratitude that God would adorn His creation with such splendid glory.

### **Follow the Spirit**

What God wants me to do:

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### **Remember Your Thoughts**

Special insights I have learned:

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## More Light On The Text

### Genesis 1:14–19

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: 15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. 16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. 17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, 18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. 19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

Although man didn't exist yet, God knew for whom His creation was planned, and He knew man would need not just the abundant and self-replicating supply of nourishment that he provided on Day 3, but also the sun, moon, and stars to give us light and help us keep track of time. These lights are given for three purposes: signs, seasons, and days/years. Signs (Heb. 'oth, OATH) means that God would sometimes use the lights to give miraculous signs or omens to people. There are many examples of this throughout the Old and New Testament: the plague of darkness in Egypt (Exodus 10:21), the sun standing still (Joshua 10:12–13), Magi's star over Bethlehem (Matthew 2:9), the darkness at the Crucifixion (Matthew 27:45). "Seasons" refers not so much to the four seasons we recognize today but to agricultural growing seasons, essential knowledge for agrarian societies. "Days and years" refers to using the sun, moon, and stars to calculate a calendar, essential for all societies to plan and function beyond a daily routine.

The creation of the sun, moon, and stars visible from Earth to specifically delight humanity and serve its needs continues the purposeful progression of God's custom-designed habitat for humanity. In the ancient context, other religions viewed the sun and moon as deities, but here they are objects designed by God to serve humanity. This can be viewed in direct contrast to other religions that speak robustly about stars in their astrology. In the biblical account of Creation, stars are a small but important component. God knew humans (whom He had not created yet) would need to keep track of time and be able to navigate the Earth. Having already created light, He made these particular elements of created light appear in the sky (the "firmament of heaven") and begin their appointed tasks (vv. 16–18).

It is interesting to note that the sun, moon, and stars appeared after God created light.

### Genesis 1:20

20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

Now that the structure of our habitat was complete, it was time for it to be occupied. By divine design the entire variety of both air and sea creatures came into being as complete, living, and unique organisms. This use of "firmament" (Heb. rāqiyā', raw-KEY-ah) underscores the use of the atmosphere as a place for birds to fly. In His wisdom, God not only provided for our initial and future needs, but also for the needs of all the creatures intended for an environment of sustainable survival and enjoyment.

### Genesis 1:21-23

21 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. 22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. 23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

Not only did God fill the earth's waters and skies with life, but by a separate command He caused them to procreate. Just as He knew humanity would need the earth's grain and fruit for nutrients and need to keep track of time, God also desired animals to be a productive part of the divinely ordered ecosystem. The use of the Hebrew word translated "whales" (tannim, tan-NEEM) says much about who God is and His place over His creation. Elsewhere this word is translated "dragons" or "sea monsters"; they are dangerous, powerful, and live in desolate places (Deuteronomy 32:33; Isaiah 34:13; Ezekiel 29:3). However, the reader of this text can see that God is more powerful than such a monster because He is the one who created it. Even creatures that seem only to cause destruction and disorder are under God's authority and worship Him (Psalm 148:7).

God's blessing was significant because it was His first. His second blessing would be on the first human male and female (Genesis 1:28)— also before a command to procreate. An almost duplicate blessing with the same procreative context would be bestowed on Noah and his family when they were told to replenish the population of the earth after the Flood (9:1, 7).

### **Genesis 1:24-25**

24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. 25 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.

From the Creation account, we see that God planned from the beginning for all natural life to be productive and sustainable. There were no recalls to redesign or reinvent; from the beginning God planned everything with perfection. There is again order and pattern, God created each type of animal for intentional diversity and with the ability to live and thrive in its environment. God declared land animals to be good.

"Good" (Heb. tov, TOVE) in regards to animal life also includes the meaning "satisfactory" or "delicious" as in food (Genesis 41:22). Prior to the fall of man and the Flood, humans didn't eat meat (Genesis 1:28–30). After the Fall, however, everything changed, and God actually ordained meat as food. Immediately after blessing Noah and telling him to replenish the earth's population, God said in Genesis 9:3: "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you" (from Genesis 9:3). The only injunction at the time was not to eat meat with lifeblood still in it (v. 4). (More rules were to come, but never again was meat banned from humanity's diet.) Although there are exceptions and everyone has individual tastes, by far the majority of food from plant and animal sources created by God is not only nutritious and necessary, but pleasurable to eat.

God was satisfied with His creation. What a loving and thoughtful God we serve! Indeed, all that God does is good!