

On Day 6 God Made the Land Animals

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And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:24-26

The sixth day of the creation week is the most significant. Moses communicates the importance of God’s creative work on this day by writing more about this day and providing numerous details. On Day 6 God creates both the land animals and mankind. The apex of the creation account is God’s creation of man.

Man will be the crown of God's creative handiwork. Man will be God's "grand finale." (Williams, 1999, pp. 38-42) Before God creative work reaches its peak, He makes the land animals.

Why does God create land animals on the sixth day? Some have speculated that God created animals on this day because certain mammals are closest in similarity to mankind. I am not impressed with Donald Gowan's explanation which involves him referring to humans as animals: "On the sixth day all the land creatures are made, including human beings, as a way of acknowledging what people have in common with the other animals." (Gowan, 1988, pp. 26-31) When Gowan uses the language of "other" when referring to the animals, he implies that humans are animals. This is not a biblical idea. The Bible nowhere refers to human beings who are made in the image of God as animals. "No matter how intelligent some animals may appear to be, or how much they are taught, animals are not endowed with the "image of God" as are humans." (Wiersbe, 1998, pp. 29-32)

The Earth Brings Forth Land Animals

God creates land animals out of the earth. God says: "Let the *earth bring forth* living creatures according to their kinds" (Genesis 1:24). This expression is parallel to what we read about the plants on day 3. Matthews explains: "As with the creation of vegetation, the land mediates the command of God to produce land creatures." (Mathews, 1996, pp. 159-176) The main idea is not that God calls the land animals out of the earth because the earth is "the place where these creatures are to live." (Reyburn, 1998, pp. 48-54) But it is true that it is fitting for God to call land animals who will live on planet earth from the ground. God will also make the land-dwelling man out of the earth.

Claus Westermann, a commentator who advocates for the documentary hypothesis, plays down the role that the earth played in the formation of man. Notice how he uses the letter “P” to refer to a fictional “Priestly” source:

When P says “Let the earth bring forth” in v. 24, then that cannot mean a direct participation of the earth in the creation of the animals—there is no sign of this in the action-account—but only that the animals belong to the earth. (Westermann, 1994, p. 142)

It is good for Christians to be aware of the language that higher critics use. They claim that there are “P” and “J” sources who wrote different parts of Genesis. They claim that P and J are using earlier traditions from which they are copying and pasting. Many higher critics believe that they borrowed ideas from Babylonian creation myths or from other pagan sources. Westermann is true when he says that the Bible is not teaching that the earth itself creates the animals—but the text is saying that God caused the animals to come into existence from the ground.

James McKeown writes that “The role given to land, “to produce” actively, involves it in the process of creation, whereas the sky is simply a place where the birds fly and the water is merely the place where the fish swim.” (McKeown, 2008) He thinks that God’s language points to the “unique productive powers” God gives to the earth. “However, the earth is not deified and its productive powers are bestowed by God.” (McKeown, 2008, pp. 25-27)

Kissling also finds it “remarkable that land animals are said to have been produced from the “land’ or literally the “earth.”” (Kissling, 2004, pp. 117-133) He wonders whether the creation of land animals from the earth speaks “to the natural environment of these creatures?” (Kissling, 2004, pp. 117-133) The earth contributes the substance for the land animals: “Once again the creation itself is called upon to participate in the creative process.” (Kissling, 2004, pp. 117-133) John Calvin speaks of the earth being a secondary cause of the origin of the land animals with

God being the first cause. God does not create the animals *ex nihilo*. He creates them out of already existing earth. Eveson explains that this statement “does not mean that the animals sprouted like plants, but that God made them from the ground.” (Eveson, 2001, p. 38)

John Calvin explains what is involved in God creating the land animals out of the earth:

But whence has a dead element life? Therefore, there is in this respect a miracle as great as if God had begun to create out of nothing those things which he commanded to proceed from the earth. And he does not take his material from the earth, because he needed it, but that he might the better combine the separate parts of the world with the universe itself. (Calvin, Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis, vol. 1, 2010, pp. 90-100)

Since animals were created out of the earth, it is not surprising that the bodies of “animals go back to the dust after death.” (Wiersbe, 1998, pp. 29-32)

God Created Three Sorts of Land Animals

The land animals are categorized into three divisions: “livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds” (Genesis 1:24). The first type of land animal mentioned is “livestock.” The KJV translates the word “livestock” as “cattle” because the word is later used for domesticated animals like cows, oxen, and sheep. These animals could be trained for agricultural use, or like the donkey, camel, and horse could be tamed for transport. The second type of land animal mentioned are “creeping things.” They refer to animals that walk close to the ground. They include not only insects, mice, lizards, and turtles but four-footed small animals that walk or crawl low to the ground. They are creeping and crawling land animals. These might have such short legs that they almost look like they are walking on their bellies. The third type of land animal are “beasts of the earth.” This word was later used to refer to untamed wild animals that were not domesticated for farming. This

latter type of animal would include dinosaurs, lions, baboons, and elephants. These are the ancestors of the many larger land animals that you see when you visit a zoo. Today we call these animals “wild animals.” Williams thinks that God created these animals as “instinctively wild.” (Williams, 1999, pp. 38-42) At the time of creation, these wild animals did not pose a threat to Adam and Eve. Our first father and mother initially had a blessed dominion over these animals.

God is preparing animals to serve Adam and Eve. God is setting the table. The last thing he needs to do before He creates mankind, is to make the land animals over which Adam and Eve can have dominion.

According to Their Kind

God calls these land animals into existence “according to their kinds.” The Hebrew word for “kind” is “min.” Matthew writes that these “kinds” provided “reproductive parameters”: “God set reproductive parameters (“according to their kinds”) for these creatures.” (Mathews, 1996, pp. 159-176)

John Calvin explains why Moses wrote about the animals being created according to their kind.

Moses declares animals were created ‘according to their species:’ for this distribution carried with it something stable. It may even hence be inferred, that the offspring of animals was included. For to what purpose do distinct species exist, unless that individuals, by their several kinds, may be multiplied? (Calvin, Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis, vol. 1, 2010, pp. 90-100)

God Gives Plants as Food

God did not originally intend for the animals to be carnivores. His original intention is that they would be herbivores. But God also designed them so that they would be equipped with the necessary teeth and claws to function in a post-Fall world. God grants plant life as food for the land animals: “And to every beast of

the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every *green plant for food*” (Genesis 1:30).

Adam and Eve not Created as Carnivores

God did not originally create the animals as food for Adam and Eve. God created a diet of plant food for them: “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food” (Genesis 1:29).

God allowed Noah and his descendants to become carnivores. After the Flood, God allowed humans to eat animal flesh, although He still forbid the eating or drinking of animal blood. God told Noah: “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood” (Genesis 9:3-4).

Animals Living Together in Peace with Each Other and Mankind

The prophets envision this blessedness in the creation regained in the new world: “The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,” says the LORD (Isaiah 65:25).

The Sixth Day Concluded

The word “day” that is used at the conclusion of the first five days is a noun. Moses uses an adjective to refer to the sixth day. John Currid explains how the reference to the sixth day is different from how the first five days were described at the end of each creative day:

The way in which the numbering of this day is announced is unique among the six days of creation. The adjective ‘sixth’ has a definite article prefixed to it, and it is preceded by the noun ‘day’, which is indefinite. The adjectives relating to the first five days carry no article. (Currid, pp. 83-90)

Currid provides the explanation for this difference: “The reason for this is probably to set apart the sixth day as something special, a culmination of physical creation that reaches its climax in the formation of mankind.” (Currid, pp. 83-90)