

## God as Creator, Maker, Former, and Builder

God is revealed as the Creator in the four main verbs associated with creation—*create*, *make*, *form*, and *build*—as well as associated words that indicate three key elements in creation, the heavens, the earth, and man with his spirit. In these actions of creation the three of the Triune God operate. The Triune God is unveiled in the steps of the restoration of creation and further creation, consummating in humankind as the center, or focus, of creation. The purpose of creation is to have corporate humanity in the image of God express the invisible God and represent Him as the Body of Christ, the organism of the Triune God. All things testify of God and His economy so that God and man could meet together, and God can impart Himself into human beings through their eating, digesting, and assimilating God, thus building Himself into corporate humanity to fulfill His purpose in creating humanity.

### Verbs in Creation

Four main verbs associated with the notion “create” are *bara'* “create,” *asah* “make, do,” *yatsar* “form,” and *bana'* “build.” They all occur in Genesis 1 and 2 and are associated with the restoration of the earth and the producing of life upon it.

The main Hebrew verb translated “create” is *bara'*. It occurs around 50 times in the Bible. God the uncreated, the self-existent, and ever-existent One as the Creator is the subject of every occurrence of *bara'*. *Bara'* has been associated with creation out of nothing, or *ex nihilo*; for example, in Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Hebrews 11:3 seems to confirm this: “By faith we understand that the universe has been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not come into being out of things which appear.” God is the One who “calls the things not being as being” (Rom. 4:17). Jehovah commanded, and the heavens, heights, angels, hosts, sun, moon, and stars were created (Psa. 148:1-5; cf. Isa. 40:26; 42:5; 45:18). However, *bara'* does not always necessarily have this sense. It can also have the sense of creating or bringing something new into being from preexisting matter. For example, God also created sea creatures and birds to fill the sea and the atmosphere (Gen. 1:21; Psa. 104:30), and He created humankind (Adam and Eve) as the focus of His creation to fill and multiply on the earth (Gen. 1:27-28; 5:1-2; 6:7; Psa.

89:47; Deut. 4:32). In the creation of humanity something new is created in God’s image when God’s breath is combined with the preexisting dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). *Bara'* can also indicate the creation of new conditions and circumstances, such as righteousness and salvation (Isa. 45:8), darkness and evil (v. 7), the fruit of the lips (57:19); the creation of a new thing—a woman encompassing a man (Jer. 31:22), the swallowing up of the Korahites (Num. 16:30), a cloud and flame over Zion (Isa. 4:5); or of transformations, such as, a clean heart (Psa. 51:10), new heaven and earth in place of the old (Isa. 65:17), the transformation of nature with trees in the desert (41:19-20), and the transformation of Jerusalem into rejoicing (65:18). In the New Testament the Greek word for *create* (κτίζω) is also used for the creation of something new, the church as the masterpiece of God, the one new man (Eph. 2:10, 15), as part of the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). God is the Creator, indicated by the participle *bore'* at least seven times. Our Creator is to be remembered in the days of our youth (Eccl. 12:1). The eternal God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint or grow weary (Isa. 40:28), and Jehovah the holy One of Israel is the Creator of Israel and is their King (43:15). In the New Testament God as the Creator, rather than the creation, is to be worshipped and served (Rom. 1:25), and those also who suffer according to the will of God should commit their souls in well-doing to a faithful Creator (1 Pet. 4:19).

*Asah* “make” is a very common verb occurring more than 2600 times in the Hebrew Bible. It is a more general word than *bara'* and may include the notions of “create”; for example, the Septuagint translators of Genesis translate *bara'* with ποιέω “make,” but *make* is not synonymous with *create*. In the context of creation *asah* can have the sense of making something out of existing material. The participle of *asah* is used of God as Maker at least 17 times. He is the Maker of individual humans (Job 4:17; 35:10), Israel (Psa. 149:2; Isa. 44:2; 54:5;<sup>1</sup> Hosea 8:14), heaven and earth (Psa. 115:15), the old pool in Jerusalem (Isa. 22:11), and the behemoth (hippopotamus?—Job 40:15, 19). Although some consider *make* synonymous with *create*, both verbs occur in the same context.<sup>2</sup> Genesis 2:3 says that “God rested from all His work which God had created and made.” Verse 4 says, “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when

they were created. When Jehovah God made earth and heaven...<sup>3</sup> The order in which *created* and *made* appear in both verses follows the order at the beginning of Genesis—created (1:1) and made (v. 7). In the first part of 2:4 *the heavens* appears before *the earth*; however, the order is reversed in the latter part of this verse, with *earth* appearing before *heaven*, perhaps indicating that God's restoration and making primarily affected and took place on the earth. It is interesting that Exodus 20:11 (and 31:17) says that in six days Jehovah made (rather than *bara'* "created") heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, perhaps indicating that the work of six days was primarily a work of restoration and making things from preexisting material, such as the expanse (Gen. 1:7), the sun, moon, and stars (v. 16),<sup>4</sup> all the land creatures (v. 25), and mankind in the image of God (v. 26).

**T**he verb *yatsar* "form" or "fashion" occurs about 60 times, indicating that what is made is formed by design. It implies a greater personal involvement of the agent in the action than *create* or *make*. *Yatsar* is used of a potter forming or fashioning a lump of clay with his hands into a pot or vessel. Indeed, the participle form of the verb—*yotser*—is the technical term for potter in the Bible. *Yatsar* is used in the forming of humanity from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7-8). The Bible even refers to God as a Potter and humanity as a clay vessel (Isa. 64:8; 29:16; 45:9; Jer. 18:6; Rom. 9:21). The earth and humanity with its constituent parts (from the same source) are formed and fashioned. Jehovah formed the earth (Isa. 45:18; Jer. 33:2), the dry land with His hands (Psa. 95:5), and the pool of Siloam (Isa. 22:11). Humankind was formed by Jehovah from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7; Isa. 43:7; Job 33:6). People are formed by Jehovah from the womb (Isa. 44:24; 49:5; Jer. 1:5). Jehovah's people Israel were formed by Him (Isa. 43:1, 21; 44:21; 45:11). Jehovah fashions the hearts of the inhabitants of the earth (Psa. 33:15), and He also forms the spirit of man within him (Zech. 12:1). Jehovah planted the ear but formed the eye (Psa. 94:9).<sup>5</sup> Jehovah also formed from the ground every animal of the field and every bird of heaven (Gen. 2:19). Jehovah's hands are also used with other words. He made and fashioned (*konen*) us with His hands (Psa. 119:73), and shaped (*'atsab*) and made us altogether (Job 10:8). Creation (Psa. 8:6; 92:4), the heavens and the expanse (19:1; 102:25), humankind (Isa. 64:8; Job 14:15; 34:19), and His people (Isa. 29:23; 45:11) are all the work[s] of His hand[s]. Jehovah also made the heavens and the earth as well as the people and the animals by His great power and by His outstretched arm (Jer. 27:5; 32:17). However, the arm emphasizes power more than skill.

The fourth verb, *banah* "build," reveals the goal of God's creation. It is used when preexisting material is constructed into a building with even more skill than making or forming. *Banah* is used in the creation account when Eve is

built from a rib out of Adam's side. This verb is linked to God's buildings both in the Old Testament (the tabernacle and the temple) and in the New Testament (the church) (Matt. 16:18). God's building work is not done by Himself alone but requires our cooperation (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10; 14:4; Eph. 4:12, 16). While the building of Eve was done by God, human elements were also involved. Adam was put to sleep, and the rib that was extracted from his side to be built into his counterpart was the same as him: bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh (Gen. 2:20-23). Christ was crucified, and His side was pierced and out came blood (for redemption) and water (signifying His life) to be imparted into the church as His counterpart and His mystical organic Body. Both the tabernacle and the temple and their furnishings were not created by God but were built by human beings using materials created by God, according to God's pattern and instructions (Exo. 25:9, 40; 1 Chron. 28:12); these materials needed to be refined, fashioned, and constructed together into a complex structure consisting of acacia wood boards and bars, gold, silver, bronze, linen, skins of animals, etc. These buildings typify God's building Himself into humanity in the church and ultimately as the consummation of God's building, the New Jerusalem. As Isaiah 66:1-2 states,

Thus says Jehovah, / Heaven is My throne, / And the earth the footstool for My feet. / Where then is the house that you will build for Me, / And where is the place of My rest? / For all these things My hand has made, / And so all these things have come into being, declares Jehovah. / But to this kind of man will I look, to him who is poor / And of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

**T**hese verses indicate that the focus of God's building work is not a physical, material building but that God wants to build Himself into humanity. As Witness Lee states,

God did not consider either heaven or earth His dwelling place, nor did He consider the physical house, the temple, built for Him by the children of Israel the place of His rest. In the Old Testament both the tabernacle and the temple were only symbols of God's union with the children of Israel, whom God considered His actual house (Heb. 3:6 and note). God was united with the children of Israel and became one entity with them, and this one entity was a spiritual house in which both God and the godly people in Israel dwelt (Psa. 27:4; 84:10; 90:1; cf. 1 Pet. 2:5a). According to v. 2 and 57:15, the dwelling place God desires to have is a group of people into whom He can enter. God intends to have a dwelling place in the universe that is the mingling of God and man, in which God is built into man and man is built into God, so that God and man, man and God, can be a mutual abode to each other (John 14:2, 20, 23; 15:4; 1 John 4:13). In the New Testament this dwelling place, this house, is the

church, which is God's habitation in the believers' spirit (Eph. 2:22 and note 4; 1 Tim. 3:15 and note 2). The ultimate manifestation of this universal building, this universal house, is the New Jerusalem. In this city God is in man, taking man as His dwelling place, and man is in God, taking God as His habitation, (Rev. 21:3, 22). (Recovery Version, Isa. 66:1, note 1)

Other verbs associated with the creation of the heavens and the earth indicate how God accomplished creation, and in particular, the three key elements of creation—the heavens, the earth, and humankind. God Jehovah created the heavens and stretched them out, spread forth the earth and what springs up from it, and gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk on it (Isa. 42:5; cf. Zech. 12:1).

To create the heavens Jehovah God stretched them forth. The verb *natah* “stretch forth” is used a number of times with the heavens, which are said to be stretched forth like a tent or like curtains (Psa. 104:2; Isa. 40:22). God stretches out the north over a void and hangs or suspends (*toleh*) the earth upon nothing (Job 26:7). In these five verses mentioned above and in an additional three verses, *natah* in association with the noun *heavens* is in the form of an active participle with durative aspect, implying an ongoing action, which may confirm that the universe is continually being stretched and thus is expanding, as confirmed by scientific observation and the big bang theory (Job 9:8; Isa. 44:24; 51:13).<sup>6</sup> *Raqa'* “spread out” is used once to indicate the spreading out of the skies (Job 37:18). *Raqa'* is also the root of the word *raqia'*, translated “expanse,” or “firmament,” which was regarded as solid, supporting waters above it (Gen. 1:6) and is considered the work of God's hands (Psa. 19:1).

The earth is spread forth (*raqa'* Isa. 42:5; 44:24) or spread out upon the waters (Psa. 136:6). The verb *raqa'* conveys the sense of the surface of the earth being beaten and hammered. Jehovah also lays the earth's foundations (*yasad* Zech. 12:1; Isa. 51:13; cf. Job 38:4). God also makes (*'oseh*) the earth (Jer. 10:12; 51:15) and all things (Isa. 44:24). Jehovah also establishes (*konen*) the world (*tebel*), which refers to the continents with the relief of mountains and lowlands or the inhabited earth (Jer. 10:12).<sup>7</sup> These verbs are active participles, perhaps confirming the ongoing forces operating on the earth's surface to transform it, such as plate tectonics (driven by convection currents in the mantle and mid-ocean spreading ridges), gravitational tides, and geomorphological processes

of weathering. It is interesting that the earth has foundations, indicating a solid, firm base, but its surface also spreads and is shaped, indicating some kind of plasticity, motion, and changeableness. Psalm 90:2 uses language of child-bearing to refer to the acts of creation: the mountains were brought forth and God gave birth to the earth and world, or inhabited earth. The language is parallel to Deuteronomy 32:18, where God is the Rock who begot Israel and the God who travailed with them. The figure of paternal generation and maternal birth of both the mountains, earth, and Israel indicates that God's creation of the earth is a begetting and bringing forth with a view to life coming forth from the earth. This is seen clearly in God's breath animating man's body made from the dust of the ground, making him a living soul (Gen. 2:7). This may also be confirmed in Genesis 2:4 in the expression *these are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created*, using the word *generations*, which comes from the verb *yalad* (or *walad*) “beget.”

God gives (*noten*) breath and spirit to those who walk on the earth (Isa. 42:5) and forms (*yotser*) the spirit of man within him (Zech. 12:1). These participle forms could indicate Jehovah's ongoing sustaining of human life and His working on human beings to transform them from natural to spiritual beings (1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:5-6; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:44).

*God's building work requires our cooperation. Adam was put to sleep, and the rib that was extracted from his side to be built into his counterpart was the same as him: bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.*

### The Triune God's Operations in Creation

God's creation is accomplished through the operations of His Divine Trinity. The entire Triune God is involved in creation. The Triune God is implied in the first verse of the Bible: “In the beginning God (*Elohim*) created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). *Elohim* is the plural form of the noun *El/Eloah* “mighty, powerful, faithful One,” with *-im* being the standard masculine plural ending in Hebrew. The plural noun, at least implies, if not allows for, the notion of the Trinity. However, the fact that the verb *bara'* “create” is singular (thus creating grammatical disagreement) confirms the way the Triune God functions—there is one action, carried out in a way of plurality—in the one action all three of the Trinity operate.

### The Father God as the Source

In the Trinity, God the Father is the source in creation. Out from (ἐκ) Him come all things (1 Cor. 8:6; Rom. 11:36). He is the primary agent of creation. This is seen in a number of verses, for example, “the Angel [Christ]... swore by (ἐν) Him who lives forever and ever, who created

heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it” (Rev. 10:5-6; cf. 4:11; Isa. 45:18; see also Exo. 20:11; Neh. 9:6; Acts 14:15; Rev. 14:7, which have Jehovah God as the subject of the verb *made*).

### *The Son as the Means*

The Son is the means of creation or the secondary agent of creation.<sup>8</sup> This is often indicated by the preposition *through* (Gk. διὰ + genitive case). Through the Son, God made the universe (αἰῶνας or ages—Heb. 1:2). God the Son is the expression of God the Father. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not one thing came into being which has come into being (John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Rom. 11:36).

**T**he Son is the effulgence of God’s glory and the express image of His substance (Heb. 1:3). He is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15). This indicates that creation expresses different aspects of God in Christ. As the Firstborn of all creation, He is the first item, or the preeminent item, in creation.<sup>9</sup> He is also called the beginning of the creation of God (Rev. 3:14). He is intrinsically related to creation. In Him all things were created (Col. 1:16), and all things cohere or are held together in Him (v. 17). He is the holding center of everything, even at a subatomic level. As a man, He is a creature; but as God, He is the Creator.

Three prepositions are used in Colossians 1:16, “Because in (ἐν) Him all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through (διὰ) Him and unto (εἰς) Him.”

*In Him* here means in the power of Christ’s person. All things were created in the power of what Christ is. All creation bears the characteristics of Christ’s intrinsic power. *Through Him* indicates that Christ is the active instrument through which the creation of all things was accomplished in sequence. [Unto] or, for Him. This indicates that Christ is the end of all creation. All things were created unto Him for His possession. *In, through, and unto* indicate that creation is subjectively related to Christ. The creation was created in Him, through Him, and unto Him. (Lee, Recovery Version, notes 1, 4, and 5)

God’s wisdom is also a means of creation and is displayed in creation, especially in His new creation (Eph. 3:10). Proverbs 8 particularly shows the antiquity of and involvement of personified wisdom (Christ) in creation. Jehovah possessed wisdom from the beginning of His way before His works of old. Wisdom was set up from eternity, from the beginning, from before the earth was, with its depths, fountains, mountains, hills, fields, and dust (vv. 22-26).

Wisdom was also involved in creation, in the establishing of the heavens, the inscribing of a circle on the earth, making firm the skies, setting the boundary of the sea, marking out the foundations of the earth. Wisdom was Jehovah’s master workman, daily His delight, rejoicing continually before Him, rejoicing in His habitable earth, and His delight being in the sons of men (vv. 27-31) All of Jehovah’s works were made in wisdom (Psa. 104:24). By understanding He made the heavens (136:5).

The five questions in Proverbs 30:4, on the one hand, indicate our inadequacy and smallness in knowing the Creator (cf. Isa. 40; Job 38); on the other hand, they point to the Father and Son and their involvement in creation.

If the inhabitant of the earth looks up to the blue heavens streaming in the golden sunlight, or sown with the stars of night; if he considers the interchange of the seasons, and feels the sudden rising of the wind; if he sees the upper waters clothed in fleecy clouds, and yet held fast within them floating over him; if he lets his eye sweep the horizon all around him to the ends of the earth, built up upon nothing in the open world-space (Job xxvi.7): the conclusion comes to him that he has before him in the whole the work of an everywhere present Being, of an all-wise omnipotent Worker—it is the Being whom he has just named as לָא, the absolute Power, and as the אֱלֹהִים, exalted above all created beings, with their troubles and limitations. (Delitzsch 6: 275)

“What is His name, and what is His Son’s?” can be considered as the “N.T. doctrine of the Son of God announcing itself from afar” (Delitzsch 6: 276). Referring to

the Son of God as a servant in the creation of the world; the same might which in [Prov. 8] is called Wisdom, and is described as God’s beloved Son. But with the name after which inquiry is made, the relation is as with the “more excellent name than the angels,” Heb. 1:4...The inquirer would know God, the creator of the world, and His Son, the mediator in the creation of the world, according to their natures. (Delitzsch 6: 277)

**I**t is through the word of God that the Creator is revealed. Two kinds of word are involved in God’s creation: the logos Word and the rhema word. Through the logos Word, the definition, explanation, and expression of God, all things came into being, and the thought or concept of God was expressed in creation (John 1:1-3). Through God’s speaking, all things came into existence. This is seen repeatedly in Genesis 1: “And God said...; and it was so” (v. 3 ff). This is reiterated elsewhere in the Scriptures, “[God] spoke, and it was; / He commanded, and it stood” (Psa. 33:9; cf. 148:5). According to Hebrews 11:3, the universe has been framed by the rhema word of God, so that what is seen has not come into being out of things which appear. Christ also



upholds and bears all things by the rhema word of His power (1:3). The rhema word, or instant spoken word, is closely related to the Spirit; as the Lord Jesus said, “The [rhema] words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (John 6:63).

### *The Spirit as the Life-giving and Sustaining Factor*

The Spirit’s primary function is in giving life to and sustaining creation or its restoration, as seen in Genesis 1:2, where the Spirit of God is brooding, or hovering, over the surface of the death waters, like a bird broods over her eggs in order to produce little birds. This means that He was preparing to generate life. The Spirit of God, or His breath (as indicated by the Hebrew words *ruah* and *neshamah*), is the life-giving, or animating, factor in the creation, or making, of humankind (Gen. 2:7; Job 12:10; 33:4) and of all living creatures (Acts 17:25; Gen. 7:22; Eccl. 3:19, 21). According to Psalms, Jehovah’s Spirit is sent forth, and living things are created (104:30). All the host of the heavens were made by the breath (*ruah*) of Jehovah’s mouth (33:6). Job states that by God’s Spirit the heavens became beauty (Job 26:13).

### **The Steps of the Restoration and Continuation of Creation**

The steps of creation and its restoration can be seen in Genesis 1 and are supplemented in Genesis 2. In the beginning of time God created the heavens and the earth (1:1). Included in this creation were the angels, who rejoiced at the laying of the foundations of the earth (Job 38:4-7); as verse 7 says, “The morning stars sang together / And all the sons of God shouted for joy.”<sup>10</sup> We do not know how long ago this initial creation took place. Perhaps it began billions of years ago, if scientific calculations of the age of the universe are correct. Something transpired in the time period between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, which begins, “But the earth became waste and emptiness and darkness was on the surface of the deep.” The Hebrew words translated “waste” and “emptiness”—*tohu* and *bohu*—can indicate desolateness, which may be a result of judgment (Isa. 24:1; 34:11; Jer. 4:23; cf. Isa. 24:1). Darkness may also be a sign of God’s judgment (Exo. 10:21-22; Rev. 16:10). Although some use Genesis 1:2 to try to prove that God’s creation began out of chaos, Isaiah 45:18 says explicitly that Jehovah did not create the earth waste (*tohu*). Genesis 1:2 indicates God’s judgment on the preadamic universe, following Satan’s rebellion, which is revealed in Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-19.<sup>11</sup> Satan’s judgment by God included the judgment on the earth seen in Genesis 1:2:

This cataclysmic event was God’s judgment on the preadamic universe following Satan’s rebellion. This judgment was executed on Satan, on the angels and the preadamic creatures living on the earth who joined Satan in his rebellion, and on the heavens and the earth themselves. (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 2, note 1)

After this judgment we see the various steps in the process of God’s restoration accomplished over six days (presented as literal days, with evening and morning) and further creation beginning with the Spirit of God brooding over the darkness and the waters of death.

A number of scholars have observed a pattern between the first three days of the restoration of creation and the second three days. The six days “can be viewed as the positive counterpart of the twin negatives ‘without form and void’ [Gen. 1:2], matching them with form and fullness” (Kidner 45-46). The first three days are concerned with the form produced through three separations—light from darkness to produce light and dark (vv. 3-5; Job 26:10; 2 Cor. 4:6); waters above and below to produce the sea and the sky (expanse) (Gen. 1:6-8; Job 26:10; Prov. 8:28); and waters below the expanse separated into seas and dry land (Gen. 1:9-10; cf. Psa. 104:5-7; 136:6; 95:5; Prov. 8:29; Job 38:8) to produce the fertile earth bringing forth vegetation (Gen. 1:11-

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13). The next three days are concerned with the fullness of these areas. The fourth day manifests the light-bearers, which fill the expanse with the lights of the day and night—the sun, moon, and stars to shine upon the earth (vv. 14-19; Psa. 104:19; 136:7-9).<sup>12</sup> The fifth day fills the sea and the sky with the creatures of water and air (Gen. 1:20-23), and the sixth day fills the land with the creatures of the land—all kinds of animals (vv. 24-25) and humankind. God’s creation of humanity is the climax of God’s creation, bearing God’s image to have dominion over the earth and all things in it (vv. 26-31).

### **The Purpose of Creation**

The purpose of creation is to have humankind in the image of God, expressing God, with all things to sustain man’s existence and testify to humankind concerning God’s will, or purpose, and of our need for God. As Revelation 4:11 states, our Lord and God created all things, and because of His will they were, and were created. God’s will, or purpose, is to have corporate humanity built with Him as a mutual dwelling place.

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### *Humankind—the Center and Focus of God's Creation*

The creation of humankind gives us clues as to the purpose, or goal, of humanity's creation and how this purpose is to be accomplished. These clues are seen in Genesis 1:26-27 with the verbs used with God as the subject. The Triune God made ('*asah* 1. pl.) humanity in a particular way—in the image of God ("Our image") and according to the likeness of God ("Our likeness") just like a glove is made in the image of a hand, to express God, that they (pl.) would have dominion to represent God (v. 26); the Triune God created (*bara'*) him in God's (sing.) image, as a corporate being—male and female (v. 27). Humanity was created to be corporate (Adam and Eve and their descendants), especially to represent God ("let them have dominion"). We see later in the Bible that this corporate humanity is the one new man (Eph. 2:15), consisting of Christ and the church as the Head and the Body (Col. 1:18) and as the Husband and the wife (Eph. 5:23). In Genesis 2 we see more details concerning God's creation of humanity. God formed (*yatsar*) our body from the dust of the ground to be a vessel to contain God (v. 7).

**W**hen God breathed the breath of life into humanity, humanity became a living soul. The breath of God animated the human soul, making him a tripartite being—body, soul, and spirit (1 Thes. 5:23). Here an entirely new entity was created, made in the image of the invisible God—Christ, the second of the Divine Trinity (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4)—and formed as a vessel to contain Him for His corporate expression (Col. 3:10). In the taking of the rib from Adam's side to build (*banah*) Eve as his counterpart, God also produced a new entity (Gen. 2:21-24), one that would be a corporate person to be fruitful and multiply (expressing God's fruitful and abundant life) and subdue the earth (representing God in His dominion over all things, especially His enemy) (Gen. 1:26, 28).

### *All Things—Testifying of the Invisible God and Bringing Humankind to God for God's Building*

The purpose of all things in creation is to express and testify of the invisible God in His attributes and virtues. God created all things not just to sustain humankind for life on earth but also to testify concerning God, His attributes, and His economy. Psalm 19:1 states, "The heavens declare the glory of God, / And the expanse proclaims the work of His hands." Creation testifies to the vastness, beauty, order, goodness, righteousness, holiness, and glory of God. Psalms 50:6 and 97:6 state that the heavens declare His righteousness, and Psalm 150:1 states that the expanse manifests His power.

The book of Romans connects creation with the goal of creation, God's building, in the experience of Israel

meeting God in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. In the Holy of Holies there was the Ark, containing the tablets of the law, and its cover, the expiation cover, overshadowed by the cherubim of glory. This testifies of God's attributes of righteousness (indicated by the law), holiness (indicated by the Holy of Holies—absolute separation to God), and glory (indicated by the cherubim of glory). In Romans 3:23 Paul indicates that all humans have sinned against God's law, which is even written in their conscience (2:14-15) and have come short of the glory of God, or God's expression, which is testified in creation with its beauty, order, etc. (1:19-20). So we have creation without and conscience within testifying to the existence of God and to His attributes. As Witness Lee remarks,

Man can perceive the invisible things of God by observing the visible things created by Him. Both the eternal power of God and the divine characteristics that express God's intrinsic nature are manifested in God's creation. For example, the abundance of light in the universe shows that light is a divine characteristic, a divine attribute of the divine nature (James 1:17). The same is true of beauty and life. (Recovery Version, Rom. 1:20, note 2)

Man's conscience corresponds with the God-created human nature and enables man to know what God justifies and what He condemns. (Recovery Version, 2:15, note 1)

**G**od's goal through the testimony of creation and the tabernacle of the Old Testament is to bring humanity to contact Him, to meet with Him on the place of expiation, which signifies Christ as the propitiation cover (Exo. 25:22; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:5). There human beings "meet with the righteous, holy, and glorious God and hear His word, thereby being infused with God as grace and receiving vision, revelation, and instruction from Him" (Lee, Recovery Version, Exo. 25:22, note 1). Within the Ark were two items that are related to food—the hidden manna and the budding rod with ripe almonds. Connected to (made of the same material and being of the same height) the Ark is the table of the bread of the Presence, with twelve loaves of bread set on it (v. 23; Lev. 24:6; Num. 4:7). The fact that food is associated with the meeting place of God and humanity and with God's presence indicates that God desires that we would partake of Him as food when we meet with Him (cf. John 6:51, 53).

God's creation also testifies of the need of human beings to eat (Gen. 2:9, 16). Indeed, the only command issued to humankind in Genesis concerned eating (2:16-17). Eating requires dependence, taking something outside of us into ourselves to sustain us so that we live because of it. The elements that we take in work metabolically to reconstitute us. The presence of the tree of life in the midst of the garden "indicates that God wanted man to receive Him as man's life by eating Him organically and

assimilating Him metabolically, that God might become the very constituent of man's being" (Lee, Recovery Version, Gen. 2:9, note 2).

The place where God and redeemed humanity met, the Holy of Holies, is a type of the spirit of man, the focus of creation (cf. Zech. 12:1, which puts our human spirit on the same level as the heavens and the earth). As indicated above, God's working with human beings, which is ongoing, is to transform them from natural to spiritual beings (1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:5-6; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:44).<sup>13</sup> This transformation takes place primarily through a metabolic process of eating and digestion. In this way God constitutes, or builds, Himself into us to make us the same as He is, as members of His Body and His bride, which consummate in the New Jerusalem as the fulfilment of God's building work and the ultimate goal of His creation (Gen. 2:23; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:17).

### Conclusion

God as the Creator carries out His work by using actions described by four main verbs. He both creates from nothing and creates new entities from existing materials. He also makes things from existing materials, and forms or fashions them with skill. The consummation of creation is reflected when God builds, which is carried out in cooperation with humanity. Creation is the work of the Triune God—the Father is the source, the Son is the means, and the Spirit carries out vital life-giving and sustaining functions in creation. After Satan's rebellion and judgment, the Triune God restored the proper function of the heavens and the judged earth, and then continued His work with the creation of tripartite humanity. The whole creation together with the tabernacle testifies of God and His economy to bring us to meet with Him and to partake of Him so that God can build Himself into humanity and humanity into Him. Thus, corporate humanity becomes the same as He is in life and nature, to express Him and represent Him, as the one new man, the Body of Christ, and the bride of Christ, which consummate in the New Jerusalem, the ultimate consummation of God's building and the goal of God's creation work.

by Roger Good

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Isaiah 54:5 reveals that the Triune God, the Maker of Israel, is also their Husband. Two plural verb forms are used to refer to God (lit., your Makers are your Husbands; cf. the plural

verb *make* and the plural pronouns in Genesis 1:26). Three other times the verb '*asah*' is used as a plural referring to God as the subject (Job 35:10; Psa. 149:2; Isa. 22:11).

<sup>2</sup>To reinforce the distinction between the three words *create*, *make*, and *form*, there are a number of contexts in which two or three of these verbs occur in close proximity. Jehovah created the heavens; He made, formed, and established the earth. He did not create the earth waste but formed it to be inhabited (Isa. 45:18). Jehovah creates but also makes the new heavens and the new earth (65:17; 66:22). Jehovah made the earth and formed it to establish it (Jer. 33:2). Humankind was created, formed, and made for God's glory (Isa. 43:7; cf. Gen. 1:27; 2:7; 1:26). Jehovah also created and formed (Isa. 43:1) and made and formed the people of Israel (27:11; 29:16; 44:2). Jehovah forms light, creates darkness, makes peace and creates evil (45:7). Jehovah forms the mountains and creates the wind (Amos 4:13).

<sup>3</sup>'*Asah*' "make" occurs a number of times with the heavens and the earth (Psa. 121:2; 2 Kings 19:15; Jer. 32:17), perhaps emphasizing God's making and restoring them, rather than their initial creation, as in Exodus 20:11.

*The breath of God animated the human soul, making him a tripartite being. An entirely new entity was created, made in the image of the invisible God and formed as a vessel to contain Him for His corporate expression.*

<sup>4</sup>The sun, moon, and the stars, the greater and lesser lights, may have already been created (Isa. 40:26), but they were "made" in the sense that they were made to appear, to function by shining in a particular way on the earth to designate signs, seasons, days and years (cf. Collins, 56-58). The land was also made suitable "for human habitation" (Sailhamer 108).

<sup>5</sup>He also made both the hearing ear and the seeing eye (Prov. 20:12). It is interesting that the Bible singles out the eye as the body part that God formed (*yatsar*). Brown University biology professor Kenneth Miller, quoted in Behe, calls the eye a "paragon," or perfect example, "of intelligent design," especially when considering "the neural wiring of its light-sensing units" (222).

<sup>6</sup>In addition to these occurrences, the verb *natah* occurs as a perfect form three times, focusing more on the act of stretching forth as a whole or the creation of the heavens prior to the making and establishing of the earth and the world (Isa. 45:12; Jer. 10:12; 51:15).

<sup>7</sup>The verbs '*asah*' (Isa. 45:12), *yasad* (Psa. 78:69; 89:11; 102:25; 104:5; Prov. 3:19; Isa. 48:13), and *konen* (Psa. 93:1; 96:10; 119:90; Prov. 3:19; Isa. 45:18) also occur as perfect forms or preterite (simple past) forms with the nouns *earth* and *world*.

<sup>8</sup>This matter of a primary and secondary agent can be seen clearly in verses like Romans 2:16: "In the day when God judges the secrets of men according to my gospel *through* Jesus Christ" (emphasis added). God is the primary agent, the subject of the



main verb *judge*, but He does this through a secondary agent, Jesus Christ.

<sup>9</sup>His being the Firstborn (πρωτό-τοκος, first born, or produced) is not so much in terms of time but in terms of pre-eminence, since as a creature He was born, or produced, 2000 years ago, at the time of His incarnation. However, God's appearing as a man to Old Testament saints, such as Abraham, indicates that God is not restricted to time even in this matter (cf. John 8:56-58).

<sup>10</sup>Sometime after this time all the kingdoms of the world were given to Satan, the devil (in the pre-Adamic age). Satan offered these to the Lord Jesus as part of his temptation (Matt. 4:8-9; Luke 4:5-6):

When God anointed the archangel to be the head of the pre-Adamic age (Ezek. 28:13-14), the authority and glory of the kingdom of the earth must have been given to him. The Lord's word in John 12:31 [the ruler of this world is cast out] confirms this. After he rebelled against God and became God's enemy, Satan, he was judged by God (Isa. 14:12-15), but the full execution of God's judgment upon him will not be completed until the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:7-10). Hence, until that time he has authority over the kingdoms of the earth. (Lee, Recovery Version, Luke 4:6, note 1)

<sup>11</sup>God's judgment may also be indicated by the Greek word καταβολή "foundation" (from καταβάλλω, meaning "throw down, cast down" in 2 Cor. 4:9; Rev. 12:10). There are two Greek words translated "foundation"—θεμελιόω, used in "You in the beginning, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth" (Heb. 1:10; cf. Isa. 40:21 LXX), and καταβολή, used in "the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8) and "names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life" (17:8). Καταβολή occurs over ten times and can have a literal sense of throw down or lay down, perhaps a foundation, but perhaps an overthrow of a state of affairs in judgment. As E. W. Bullinger states,

*Katnballō* and *katabolē* are not the proper terms for founding and foundation, but the correct meaning is *casting down*, or *overthrow*...The remarkable thing is that in all occurrences (except Heb. 11.11) the word is connected with "the world" (Gr. *kosmos*. Ap.129.1), and therefore the expression should be rendered "the disruption (or ruin) of the world", clearly referring to the condition indicated in Gen. 1.2, and described in 2 Pet. 3.5, 6. For the earth was not *created tobū* (Isa. 45:18), but *became* so, as stated in the Hebrew of Gen. 1.2 and confirmed by 2 Pet. 3.5, 6... "The disruption of the world" is an event forming a great dividing line in the dispensations of the ages. In Gen. 1.1 we have the *founding* of the world (Heb. 1.10=*themelioō*), but in Gen. 1.2 we have its *overthrow*. (Appendix 146)

Before the foundation of the world the Father loved the Son, foreknew Him as Christ, and chose us in Him (John 17:24;

1 Pet. 1:20; Eph. 1:4). From the foundation of the world the Lord uttered parables that had been hidden (Matt. 13:35), the earthly part of the millennial kingdom has been prepared for the sheep nations (25:34), the blood of the prophets has been poured out (Luke 11:50), and the Lamb of God was slain (Rev. 13:8). He was slain from the foundation of the world, since redemption was necessary only after the creation of mankind and was not for the pre-Adamic creatures who perished in the cataclysmic judgment indicated in Genesis 1:2. Regardless of whether we take καταβολή as "overthrow" or "foundation," the time period is about the same.

<sup>12</sup>C. John Collins considers that the language of the first day and the fourth day related to light

[does] not *require* that we take them as describing the *creation* of the lights (if by "creation" we mean the beginning of their being)—though it is true that the words allow such a reading... "Let there be...and there was," do not of themselves imply creation. If God created the universe (1:1) and then at some unspecified time afterward the first day began (1:2-3), then we should read "let there be light" as...God calling for the "dawn" of the first day and [in verse 14] appointing the heavenly lights [light-bearers—*me'orot*] to their function in service of mankind on the fourth day. God's activity may be supernatural, but that is not the same as *creation*. (57-58)

<sup>13</sup>An interesting verse that indicates how much God desires mankind in the fulfilment of His purpose, is Job 34:14, which says, "If He were to consider Himself only, / He would gather back to Himself His spirit and His breath" (cf. 27:3; 32:8; 33:4; Isa. 42:5). In other words, if God were to consider just Himself and forget about His purpose with creation, perhaps because of His frustration at how mankind with the exercise of his free will after the fall is occupied with God's creation and has neglected Him as the Creator, He would gather back to Himself His spirit and His breath.

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