

Day 4, Genesis 1:20-25

²⁰ Then God said, “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.” ²¹ God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³ There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

Here we come to the second use of the word “created” (*bara*) in Genesis 1. Again, this word is used for the bringing forth of that which did not exist before. Why then is it used here? It’s because it speaks of a new development in God’s created order: the emergence of the soul. The word for “creatures” in v. 20 is *nephesh*, which literally means “soul.” The origin of the soul, which consists of mind, will, and emotions, defies any naturalist explanation, and can be attributed only to God’s creative power.

The word for “sea monsters” in Gen.1:21 is *tannin*, which is also translated, “great creatures of the sea” (NIV) or “whales” (KJV). As was the case with plant life, these creatures and every “winged bird” were created with the ability to reproduce “after their kind.” Indeed, everything we observe in plant and animal life today (and in the past through the fossil record) confirms this basic truth: All living things reproduce only after their own kind (see comments on Gen. 1:11-13).

²⁴ Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind”; and it was so. ²⁵ God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

In v. 24, God says, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures....” This gives us further evidence that God’s work during the six days was to *fashion* what He originally created out of nothing. Later, on this same day, God “formed” the first man from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7),¹ and we have every reason to believe God “made” each of the creatures described here in this same way.

We see also how the land animals, whether cattle (representing domesticated animals), beasts (representing wild animals), or creeping things (representing all others) were made with the ability to reproduce, but only after their kind—as is the case with each of the previous expressions of life.

As we reflect on the emergence of the soul in these verses, our souls are left in utter awe. The mystery of how God could create the soul is as great as the mystery of how He could bring forth all things out of nothing (Gen. 1:1). And of all the creatures He brought forth, He created in us (the human race) with a soul that is utterly unique. Our souls possess a spiritual capacity, which gives us the ability to live in relationship with God, who is spirit (John 4:24). This is what makes us unique. Plant life has a living body, but no soul. Animal life possesses a living soul (mind, will, and emotions), but no spirit. The soul is that which “animates” the body. Only we possess a spirit by which we are able to live in relationship with a spiritual God (1 Thess. 5:23). To say this another way, we possess spiritual souls that are uniquely made for communion with God.

This being the case, should we not live in fellowship with Him through the unique soul He has placed within us? In Ps. 42:1 we read:

¹ Based on this pattern, we have every reason to believe the sea creatures and birds of the air were also fashioned out of the raw materials of the earth (Gen. 1:20).

As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul longs after You, O God.

God designed our souls for Himself—and even to thirst for Him. And nothing satisfies us more than praising Him with the souls He fashioned within us for Himself. In Luke 1:46, Mary, the mother of our Lord cries out:

...My soul glorifies the Lord.

And today, may we not do the same?

Today, even now, take the time to reflect on the miracle of the soul God created within you. Then, glorify the Lord with all your soul.