

Dr. Meredith Kline, Kingdom Prologue, Lecture 5

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Proverbs 8 as an interpretation of Genesis 1:1

Wisdom was there before these developments took place. Wisdom was there during that total process as well. Then tucked into this account that she was there during that time she tells us that she was present there as the master builder, as the architect. Let's read it: "The Lord possessed me." Now there were a lot of individual points of exegesis and translation that are interesting and difficult. I'm not going to try to sort that out now, I just have an NIV. I'm just reading the NIV version and it will serve our purposes. "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work." Now see we're trying to discover what does "in the beginning" mean. Does it mean something, as I said back there, before these over developments, or does "in the beginning" mean something coextensive with the whole period of creation?

"The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, before his deeds of old." She here is describing the creator and his creative acts. "In the beginning" is said to be something that was before the Lord engaged in these works of old, these creative acts. So "in the beginning" in Proverbs 8, I would say you have an inspired exegesis of Genesis 1:1. The Lord is telling us then that it came to pass before the rest of these things happened. The next verse says virtually the same thing: "I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning [*bereshit*] before the world began." So "in the beginning," as I said in that article it's sort of on the interface there between pre-creation and the creation itself. How can we describe God's existence apart from time and space and the beginning? It's all very difficult. So you have to use that kind of language. But, "in the beginning" is right there at that interface of eternity and this space-time continuum. That's what was from eternity, from the beginning before the world began.

"When there were no oceans." Now think of the development of the

narrative in Genesis 1:1. Where do you read about the oceans being the dominant thing? Because Wisdom's telling us she was there before the earth's development. Of course, right away from day one it's water, water everywhere, isn't it? It's the deep and the darkness. So she's saying that before things began to be described in Genesis 1 on day 1 and 2 and so on. "I was there in the beginning when there were no oceans, I was given birth; when there were no streams abounding in water."

Then she moves on now as you move along on through the first triad of days there in Genesis 1. These were the kingdoms and you had all the sea and the watery things there. Then you move along and you come to the third day and you have the land and the mountains and so on. That's where we have proceeded now we have moved along and Wisdom is telling us. "I was there before this, I was there before that, I was there before the other things" and she has moved through the first three days of Genesis 1.

"Before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth. Before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world" that all seems to be describing very well what is described as day three in Genesis, the creation of the land and so forth.

Now an interesting thing happens, instead of moving along in a straight line from there someplace, she backs up to the situation at the beginning again and moves through it again just as on the framework interpretation. You would move back to the beginning. Now, "I was there," she goes on to say, "when he set the heavens in place." She was not only there before all these things happened with theme one, "I was there before that, I was there at the beginning." Then she goes on to say, "I was there during the process, I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep." When did God do that? When did God set the heavens in place and mark out on the horizon on the face of the deep? Well that's day 2 very firmly when God established the *raqia*, the heavens up there, separating the heavens above and the waters below and established the sweep of the earth; the sea below. She was there during that period,

day 2.

“When he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep.” That is more clearly day 2, isn’t it? On day 2 what happened? That night *raqia* was set up there the waters that were under the heavens were separated from the waters that were above the heavens. That’s day 2. She’s back at that point, she’s gone up to the mountains, that was day 3 and now she’s back here come up to day 2.

Incidentally what are the waters that are above the heavens? Well I think here’s your inspired interpretation that it’s the clouds. So one shouldn’t be trying to speculate about some bodies of water out there in space somewhere. Sensible reformed exegetes have actually tried to do that, but it’s just describing the clouds that are up there.

Now let’s go on to verse 29. Here we find ourselves moving once again from day 2 once again back to day 3. “When he gave to the sea its boundary, so the waters would not overstep his command. And when he marked out the foundations of the earth.” Now that is when God bounded the waters horizontally by the emergence of the dry land. He set boundaries to the sea and the dry land emerged. So we are back on day 3 when he marked out the foundations of the earth.

So this is my point. There are these two themes: wisdom was there before these things happened and then you go back to the beginning and wisdom was there during this whole process. Now we come to the punch line as we said: what was she doing there? Why should we follow Wisdom? What commends her not just because she was an old timer and was here when those things were happening but what role did she play then? So it goes on to say, “I was there as the master builder.” I hope that’s how they’ve translated it here. It’s “craftsman.” “Then I was the craftsman at his side.” I think that is the point not just the builder but the master builder who conceived it. She conceived the plan herself, the architectonic concept. She conceived the plan and as the process went along day by day there

was the announcement of pleasure that the architectonic plan was being followed that's what it means each day when "God looked and he saw and it was good!" That's not a moral statement. Some of the things didn't even have moral natures. When Genesis 1 says that, "God saw it was good" it means it matched the design. The building process has been true to the architect's plan. Wisdom sees her plan coming in to effect and she felt delighted --it's good, it's good. The sixth day is the climactic "very good." The climactic thing brings you to the Sabbath.

"Then, I was master builder on God's side and I was filled with delight day after day." It's personified the thing, God looking at his work taking pleasure in it--this is good. Here is Wisdom taking delight in the accomplishment. What was she especially delighted in? What was the greatest achievement of the 6 days? It was the image of God type creature there, man had been created. So she says, "rejoicing all who were in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world but especially delighting in mankind." So isn't it a wonderful, poetic retelling of Genesis 1? It is done in such a way that stylistically it shows us how to understand Genesis 1. So that all of that is useful in Proverbs 8 but also then, coming back to where we were, it tells us that "in the beginning" is before all of these other developments that took place back there with God in his heaven at the outset.

Genesis 1:1 the creation of the upper register—the invisible heaven

Alright, Genesis 1:1 "in the beginning" is the upper register, heaven is the upper register and if you let me read this a little bit more precisely then Genesis 1:1 confirms is that God created, not just the special dimensions immediately accessible to man down here that we can see, but he created the heavens too, that is, he created the invisible realm of the divine glory and angelic beings.

This interpretation of the heavens, the word "heavens" in Genesis 1:1 is referring to the invisible heavens. This interpretation is reflected in the apostle Paul's exposition of Genesis 1:1 in terms of Christ and his role, his christological exposition, when Paul declares the "*son* created all things that are in heaven and that are on earth; visible and invisible whether they be thrones or dominions or

principalities or powers” (Col. 1:16). So here Paul is trying to do justice to the role of the son who is the *logos*. When Paul’s trying to rephrase what he finds in Genesis 1:1 and attributes it to the son, he emphasizes that along with the visible, the son created the invisible things. In fact, these are the things he emphasizes: the thrones, dominions, principalities and powers are the very ones you should find in Genesis 1:1.

Likewise Nehemiah in chapter 9 if you read Nehemiah’s prayer there in Nehemiah 9:6. Nehemiah, reflecting on the Genesis creation account, finds a reference there to the invisible heaven and the angels in the only possible reference is the heavens in Genesis 1:1. There is another line of argument that we won’t take time for it now.

Genesis 1:2: endoxation of the Spirit

Alright, so Genesis 1:1 “in the beginning the heavens” both point to the upper register. Let’s move on to the second verse and again we’re looking for upper and lower register. Genesis 1:2 now tells us that “the spirit of God was hovering over the deep and the darkness.” We’re going to do a lot more now with this reference to the Spirit, not tonight we won’t have time it, for especially when we’re dealing with subjects as man being made in the image of God and other points when we are talking about this very line we’re using now.

We’re talking about the way in which heaven gets reproduced here on earth. We are going to try to develop the evidence to show that the denominator down here in the history of Israel as a theophany where God appears on the earth in the cloud of glory that hovers above Israel and leads them through the wilderness and so on. It enters into the tabernacle and it fills, it enters into the temple and fills it and is enthroned there. That phenomena of the glory which is the manifestation of God’s visual presence here on earth is the Spirit.

There is a lot of evidence that equates this form of God’s self manifestation with the third person of the trinity. So in the case of the second person of the trinity as he manifests himself in the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament and

in the incarnation of the New Testament. But you usually don't think of the Holy Spirit as having such a form of manifestation. But the Bible identifies this glory cloud with the Spirit. One of its features is that it hovers over creatively. It hovers over Mary creatively so that that holy seed which is conceived in her is the son of God. It hovers over Jesus at his baptism, at the transfiguration the cloud--this glory cloud feature. I'll try to develop the evidence that the Bible does identify the third person of the trinity present on earth. So I'll just say that now and try to make the exegetical discussion of it later.

So here we are in Genesis 1:2 now. Here is the Spirit and the Hebrew there is *merahepheth* he is hovering over. It is bird imagery. It is avian imagery. Here's the first metaphor for God in the Bible. It is the bird, the one that spreads its wings over and shelters. In fact, in Deuteronomy 32: 9-10 Moses makes use of this language here in Gen 1:2 of the Spirit hovering over creation, the deep and the darkness to bring it into structured form. Moses later on will describe the glory cloud of the Lord as hovering over the Israelites in the chaotic wilderness and then led them along. There is also all of the beautiful imagery that we have "under the shadow of his wings" and so on in Psalms. That all is related to this. So that is the picture here. It is the glory of God. This is a manifestation of God's glory.

In fact, I won't try to develop it now, but I'm developing this thought in such a way that the third person of the trinity does not simply appear in this temporary form time to time in this shekinah glory form on earth but actually right from the beginning there was a permanent, if you will, embodying the person of the trinity in the glory that constitutes heaven itself. Now that's a big subject in itself but what it comes down to is that third person of the trinity just as the second person has its incarnation in the flesh so that he took on a permanent form that he will have forever. It is just so although not recognized the third person at the creation of the world is embodied that isn't the right word because it is not a body as in the case of Jesus, but what kind of language can we use? The third person of the trinity takes on a form of manifestation currently is visible only in heaven. At

last we will be able to perceive it and that is a permanent embodiment of the Spirit for which I have coined a word to try to go with incarnation. You've seen the word *doxa* which means "glory"—*endoxation*. So I think there is in our development of the doctrine of the trinity a place for the development of this concept that comes along with the idea of the incarnation of the son. There is the manifestation of the third system of the permanent layer of the glory that is the heavenly temple itself. It is something that we will be discussing quite a bit I hope before we're done.

But meanwhile there is this Spirit, there is this glory of God, which is heaven--heaven and earth. Spirit is the equivalent of heaven and down below the deep and the darkness. But of course, down in this realm below that glory Spirit is going to be replicating his heavenly nature his heavenly sphere, his heavenly temple. Down on earth in the Garden of Eden you have the glory of heaven; you have the heavenly temple replicated.

What is the Garden of Eden? The Garden of Eden is the mountain of God, which is crowned by the presence of the glory Spirit, by the glory of God. I'm trying to go by the evidence in Ezekiel and elsewhere what he thought about the Garden of Eden and he speaks about the mountain of God there. So the heavenly reality is reproduced there in the Garden of Eden. That was a little reproduction from heaven on earth. Just as later the land of Canaan with its temple and so on is a reproduction of the heavenly reality. Moses has to go up the mountain to get the design. The design is the heavenly reality. Then the tabernacle, and later on the temple reflects that. But all through history from before the fall on heaven has been reproducing itself in this prototypical way to lead us on throughout all of our history until at last we get unto the real heaven where we rest again with God. So these are the big pictures that are emerging.

Day 6 and the creation of humankind

So now, beyond the second verse, we have days 1-6. These too are divided into upper and lower register scenes. "And God said let there be." Now what do

you picture when you hear that. There's God up on his throne. Right from the beginning he's been up there in heaven and from that place he issues his sovereign commands. Then down on earth there is the fulfillment. So fiat, "Let there be" and fulfillment, that's what is going on these particular days.

"Let us make man"

Out of them all let's just come up to the sixth day when God says, "let us make man." That's one of the other fiats "let there be, let there be." Now he says, "let us make man" and that "let us" is very eloquent. That points once again that we are dealing with the upper register. That of course, is a question that has been discussed: Why does God say "let **us** make man"? Of course, the traditional view of that is that this is reflecting the communication among the persons of the trinity "let us do this." That is the Trinitarian traditional view, but I don't think it is the right one at all.

The view that is taking over more and more no matter what one's theological point of view is rather the one that recognizes this is language that reflects a certain aspect of heaven that the Bible emphasizes very strongly, namely, that as God sits there enthroned, the picture is of a courtroom or palace. He sits enthroned in the midst of his whole court of angels and that they are pictured as a council that he consults with. That's another thing that when we talk about man being made in the image of God I'll stop and go through those verses with you that show that whenever you get this language of "let us" from the mouth of God, the explanation of it is always right there in reference to angels. There are always angels around the scene when God says, "let us." In Isaiah 6, just to take one of them while we're at it. Remember the call of Isaiah? "God says, 'now whom shall I send and who shall go for us.'" But before you come to that the whole story has been about God on his throne with heavenly beings all around him "holy, holy, holy." The whole scene is full of the members of God's heavenly retinue-- his council. So that when he says, "who will go for us?" there is simply no misunderstanding. He's referring now to the angels as part of the divine

council. It's the heavenly scene where you hear this kind of "let us." God is consulting with his angels.

"Let us make man in our own image" when we come to it I'll be saying, yes man is made in the image of God. Man is made in the image of angels as well as because the angels are also made in his image. They also are the "sons" of God. How often do you hear that man is the only being made in the image of God. Not so. The angels are also the sons of God. The Bible also speaks about the angels using the term *elohim* as used in Psalm 82 for God who takes his stand in the midst of the *elohim*, who are the angels, who enter into judgment with humankind on earth, who are judging, who are also *elohim* as the passage Jesus quotes. But the biblical evidence is it is not just God and man in this kind of relationship but the angels are called the "the sons of God." The concepts of "image of God" and "sons of God" are, of course, overlapping. So that's another big story.

So right here, "let us make man in our image" tells us once again that it's God up there in heaven consulting with angels at this point. Not that he needs their advice, but in his condescension he lets them get in on it. "Let us" do that. There's the archetype. The reference I think especially in "let us make man in our image" is to God as he is manifest in that glory Spirit that we have been talking about. So we'll try to tie those two things together. So upper register, the lower register and the relationship between the two.

The lower register is the copy but in human language and literature, the copy down here becomes the language used to describe what is going on up there. When you want to talk about who God is like you have to use human anthropomorphic language. What is going down here is used to describe the reality of what's going on up there. So it is with the days. When it comes to describing the time factor in the creation of world across these seven days, you use the language of human experience and the ordinance of the Sabbath down here. You use that as a metaphor, as a parable, as a figure of speech to describe what is beyond all of that, the existence of God himself. That's pretty much the argument I

would make for taking the days of Genesis figuratively rather than literally.

Days of Genesis narrative sequence is not sequential

I'm not really done, I think some of the best evidence now has to do with demonstrating that the narrative sequence is not sequential. And, of course, if you can demonstrate that the sequence of the narrative is not intended to correspond with the actual chronological sequence, then you can demonstrate that it is figurative not literal. So to show that it is not sequential is to show it is figurative. There are a couple of arguments I want to mention but I think it is time for a break.

I want to make a little faster time with these last couple of points. So what we've tried to do is argue that the days are to be understood figuratively. Now I've tried to demonstrate the account is also to be understood as not intending to reflect a chronological sequence. These are really just further arguments that it is figurative because it is non-sequential.

What indicates then that the author has arranged things thematically rather than in a straight forward chronological order is that the themes are so conspicuous. As we've said, the kingdoms and kings three days for each. It is obvious what is going on. It shows a strong interest in the development of themes which elsewhere in his book is accomplished in the contradiction of chronological order. That sets up a probability even if you didn't have any other evidence, the strong thematic interest would suggest that something other than straight forward chronology is on his mind. But then there are some other features that nail it down for us.

This one could take forever. But I'll refer you to that article of mine for all the details. I'm referring now to days 1 and 4. The fact that when you've gone through days 1, 2 and 3 and you come to 4 you find yourself back where you were. Day one tells you that you haven't proceeded chronologically. Read the text itself without being profound about this. God produced the light so that he gave light on the earth and he separated the light from the darkness. That had the effect then of

setting up the cycle of light and darkness setting up day and night. Those were the results that were produced on day 1. The presence of light and the structuring of light in such a way as to produce the well-known phenomena of the cycling series of light and darkness, day and night. That's the kingdom of light that was made.

Now according to thematic structure he's going to deal with the king of that realm in each case. The kings of day 5 rules over the realm of day 2 and day 6 rules over the realm of day 3. Here, day 4 God created the luminaries--the sun, moon and stars. He made them and set them in their place. For what purpose? To accomplish the things that have already been said to be accomplished here on day 1, to give light on the earth and to divide the light and darkness and to set up the cycle of day and night. Exactly the same products are attributed to day 4 as had already been attributed to day 1. The only difference is the perspective. Here is the result and here is the cause. So that as a matter of fact if you wanted some sequence, day 4 is before day 1 at least logically. Here is the cause that produces that result and so on.

Now, this is the point where the so called literalist are anything but literal. They're squirming here because this overthrows their whole literal approach as it is not sequential. In my article I go through all of the wiggles and squirming trying to avoid the obvious and I won't stop to do that now. But, they try to make it out so that nothing really happened here that God didn't make the luminaries at this point at all but that they just appeared. They were there all along. Now all day 4 says is that they appeared. So that's the way they would get out of it. But this is not what the text says. All the language which everywhere else is used to describe actual creation that he made them, and he put them there and so on. All that language is used for the creation of the sun, moon, and stars at this particular point. So we are no longer dealing with the chronological sequence. We are following themes we have now gotten on to the theme of kings. So that is one decisive argument that is supportive of the figurative view. That is the end of the sequentialist view.

The shift from creation to providence

The other argument now is the one that I wrote in that article back in the May, 1958 in the *Westminster Journal*. I called it “Because it had not rained” and in a minute you’ll see why I used that. The same argument I sort of refurbished at the end of this other article “Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony.” Let’s just see if we can just quickly see what the point of this is.

So the question we have to ask is this: During this period of creation, however long it actually was, it was a fixed closed time. It is a definite period of time and it is closed with the end of the sixth day. God continued with the seventh day but the block of the sixth day of creative action closed. Within it all the variety of things of significant created stuff God had created were all he created in that block of time. Were there acts of absolute origination in absolute supernatural acts of creation? Of course there were. And X marks the spot. Here is where God zaps the situation supernaturally. There was nothing and God creates the heavens and the earth. He creates the heavens, the invisible realms, already populated with the angels. That’s different than the creation of the earth where the population of the earth is a visible sphere. It has to develop as Adam and Eve multiply. So the heaven reality is that amazing first act of God, “the big bang” was also the epiphanic flash. The invisible part of it was this glory flash that produced the glory of heaven. That was pure *ex nihilo* supernatural creation.

Are there any more X’s, any more zaps along the line? Certainly when Adam was created. There is no room in the Bible for the concept macro-evolution including creation of the body of man. That is a direct supernatural act. No man as to his body is a biological continuum as if he were produced by some advanced hominid form by a biological process. Here there is a definite act of God supernaturally creating Adam. There is a definite supernatural act creating Eve from the body of Adam. Here’s a couple more X’s. How many more do you want? How many more do we need at the creation of the life, each kind of fauna and flora, I don’t know. All I want to say is I’m ready to accept a thousand or a

million acts of supernatural production on God's part. There is no problem with that.

Now however a separate question is this. Once God has created anything now providence comes in. If there is a period of creation and after the period of creation is over then the period of providence begins. Providence is simply describing the relation of God to the thing produced as he relates to it as its governor and its preserver and sustainer especially when thinking of life forms. That's what providence has to do.

Now this is the question that all of us have to think about and see if the Bible gives us an answer. During these six days, however long, what was the *modus operandi* of the divine providence? Did God act in terms of preserving life in the world according to procedures that are in things we would today analyze and recognize as natural law, or was his providence as supernatural as his acts of creation?

Genesis 2:5 contra the sequential view

In each of these views that we are talking about we have to accommodate. My contention is that no view whether the literalist or the day age view, no view that says the narrative sequence is the historical sequence can accommodate the answer to the question given in Gen 2:5 and following. Maybe once again you could turn to your Bibles. Gen 2:5 and following simply assumes an answer that it takes for granted. The answer it takes for granted is: of course, God was not acting in a providential way. Of course, he was following natural procedure when it came to special creation of vegetation or preserving plants or life, God didn't resort to supernaturalism to keep these things alive once he made them. He didn't make them in fact until he had an environment which they could exist in a normal way. That's what Genesis 2:5 tells us.

Let's look at it. "And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground." That's what I'm saying

is in Gen 2:5. So it takes us back to a point again.

By the way, Genesis 2 verses 4 and following are not a second account of creation. In almost every book you pick up they'll tell you that there are two accounts of creation, Genesis 1 is the first one and then Genesis 2:4 and following is the second one. In fact, in the history of modern higher criticism these things were seized upon as two different creation accounts which came from two different documents and their differences were played up to show they were contradictory. But, this is actually not a second account of creation. It has the heading over it that appears ten times in the book of Genesis and wherever it appears it describes not the origin, the ancestry of the person, but the subsequent history of that person. Here the thing named is the "heaven and the earth." But "these are the generations of the heavens and the earth" that heading tells us that what follows is not an account of where the heavens and earth came from as though this were a second creation story. So here's the heavens and the earth now what happened to the heavens and the earth. This tells us of the earthlings made in the image of God and what they did. So it's not a second account of creation.

Nevertheless as it starts out here it does dip back to the creation period. Just as the beginning of the next sections in Genesis 5:1. Before it goes on to give the whole history of Adam's followers it dips back into creation that Adam was made in the image of God. So here in 2:5 it dips back into the creation account to some point along the line when there were "no shrubs in the field and no plants have sprung up."

So there's our first point in verse 5--no vegetation. Why no vegetation? Simple, un-assumed, un-argued, "because the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth." The explanation for no vegetation was there was no rain. Further explanation for lack of vegetation, taking account of the fact that even where there is no rain, there was no humans cultivation to dig canals from the river and so on. Mankind can make up for a lack of rain by doing this, that and the other thing but here there was no man either. No natural supply of water, no irrigation ditches as a

product of human technology. Of course, my whole point is involved in that. But we'll come back to it.

Genesis 2:6

Meanwhile the text goes on in verse 6 and here's where there's lots of translation problems. Again I refer to my article for the details of the linguistics of the thing.

This particular version says, "but streams came up and watered the whole surface of the ground." Point one is that this makes it look like a contradiction of the preceding verses say there is no supply of water that was necessary for the plants to grow. Then verse 6 is translated in a way that seems to be saying that when there was no supply of water there was a terrific supply watering all these things. So that won't do. The first thing you have to do is translate the verb tense correctly. This particular Hebrew verb can be translated in what we call the inceptive way--it begins to do something. So however you translate the noun translated "streams," the verb is going to have to be that was the situation when there was no water. Now we're coming to the solution, God's solution to the problem. The solution is now he begins to provide a supply water that had been not referred to because there had been no rain.

So what is his solution? Well the word that is translated here "streams" is the Hebrew word *ed* and the best evidence now that we have is it refers to "rain clouds." Then the rain clouds began the whole cycle of the distillation of the water and the rain clouds went up and provided the rain. So answering to the fact that there hadn't been any rain now we come to the solution to the problem. Then the rain clouds God produced and they watered the whole surface of the ground. Then man, verse 6 refers to 5b there and then it goes on in verse 7 and it picks up the fact that it has said that there is no man there. Now it tells us of the creation of man.

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