

Lesson 2: Genesis 1–2; Moses 2–3; Abraham 4–5,
“In the Beginning God Created the Heaven and the Earth”

Introduction

With the restoration of the gospel we are blessed to have four witnesses to the creation of the earth, including The Book of Genesis, The Book of Moses, and The Book of Abraham. This is confirmation that it is essential that we have a testimony that God created the world for his purposes.

In April of 2000 Russell M. Nelson delivered a conference address titled “The Creation” in which he stress purpose of the creation and what we should learn from it. I would like to use his address as the basis of this lesson

The Creation Is Part of the Plan of Salvation

After Moses’ vision of the creation of the earth Moses asks why and how the Lord created it

Moses 1:27,30

27 And it came to pass, as the voice was still speaking, Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it; and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the Spirit of God.

30 And it came to pass that Moses called upon God, saying: Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them?

Regarding the questions “why these things are so” the Lord answers Moses:

Moses 1:39

For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

And to Abraham:

Abr 3:25

And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

President Nelson emphasizes that the creation is an essential part of the plan of salvation

Russell M. Nelson

“It is difficult for mortal minds to comprehend the majesty of the Creation.... The creation of man and woman was wondrous and great. So was the creation of the earth as their mortal dwelling place.

“The entire Creation was planned by God. A council in heaven was once convened in which we participated. There our Heavenly Father announced His divine plan. It is also called the plan of happiness, the plan of salvation, the plan of redemption, the plan of restoration, the plan of mercy, the plan of deliverance, and the everlasting gospel. The purpose of the plan is to provide opportunity for the spirit children of God to progress toward an eternal exaltation...

“Grand as it is, planet Earth is part of something even grander—that great plan of God. Simply summarized, the earth was created that families might be. Scripture explains that a husband and wife.” (CR, April 2000)

Why is the creation an essential part of the plan of salvation?

(Simply summarized, the earth was created that families might be. Scripture explains that a husband and wife)

The earth was created as a place for the children of our Heavenly Father to keep their second estate

Neal A. Maxwell

"Elsewhere, we read: 'And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten.' (Moses 1:33.)

"Why all this creating? Because the decreed and redemptive purpose of God the Father is to 'bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.' (Moses 1:39.) This was the very purpose for this planet about which Isaiah spoke: 'For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited.' (Isa. 45:18.)...

"Thus, this act of creation was an act of divine love, fulfilling God's purpose to provide for all of us the needed experience of mortality." ("Our Acceptance of Christ," Ensign, June 1984)

Christ Created This World

Russell M. Nelson

“This earth is but one of many creations over which God presides. ‘Worlds without number have I created,’ He said. ‘And I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten.’ (Moses 1:33.)...

“The Lord... who, under direction of the Father, had created the earth, subsequently came into mortality to do the will of His Father and to fulfill all prophecies of the Atonement. His Atonement would redeem every soul from the penalties of personal transgression, on conditions that He set.” (CR, April 2000)

Who created the earth?

Moses 2

1 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I reveal unto you concerning this heaven, and this earth; write the words which I speak. I am the Beginning and the End, the Almighty God; by mine Only Begotten I created these things; yea, in the beginning I created the heaven, and the earth upon which thou standest.

John 1:1-3

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

The Book of Abraham states:

Abr 4:1

And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.

Note the use of the plural: “Let us go down. And they went down”

Abr 3:24

And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

Who do you think that the Lord is referencing when He said, “WE will go down”?

Who worked with Christ on the creation?

Joseph Fielding Smith

"It is true that Adam helped to form this earth. He labored with our Savior Jesus Christ. I have a strong view or conviction that there were others also who assisted them. Perhaps Noah and Enoch; and why not Joseph Smith, and those who were appointed to be rulers before the earth was formed" (Doctrines of Salvation, 1:74-75)

Back to Abr 4:1

And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.

Phases of the Creation

First, we learn that everything was first created spiritually

Russell M. Nelson

“Each phase of the Creation was well planned before it was accomplished. Scripture tells us that ‘the Lord God, created all things ... spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth.’” (CR, April 2000)

Moses 3:5

And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth. For I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon the face of the earth. And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men; and not yet a man to till the ground; for in heaven created I them; and there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air;

Bruce R. McConkie

"Clearly he is speaking of the premortal existence of all things. This earth, all men, animals, fish, fowls, plants, all things—all lived first as spirit entities. Their home was heaven, and the earth was created to be the place where they could take upon themselves mortality. ("Christ and the Creation," Ensign, June 1982)

Russell M. Nelson

“The physical Creation itself was staged through ordered periods of time. In Genesis and Moses those periods are called days. But in the book of Abraham, each period is referred to as a time. Whether termed a day, a time, or an age, each phase was a period between two identifiable events—a division of eternity.” (CR, April 2000)

How long did it take to create the earth?

A day could be equal to a thousand years.

2 Peter 3:8

...one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Abr 3:4

...a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest. This is the reckoning of the Lord's time...

The Book of Abraham use the word “time” to separate the different phases of creation. For example:

Abr 4:18-19

18 And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed.

19 And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that it was night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that it was day; and it was the fourth time.

What timeframe was set for each period?

(until they obeyed)

Hugh Nibley

"In the 'fourth time,' we read, 'the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed.' That important word 'until' tells us... that they took all the time that was necessary, no matter how long it might have been, measuring the period in terms not of a terminal date but in terms of the requirements of the task... how long do you think that took? Again, the record is deliberately vague." (Old Testament and Related Studies, Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986, pg. 74)

The first three periods

Russell M. Nelson

“Period one included the creation of atmospheric heavens and physical earth, culminating in the emergence of light from darkness.

“In period two, the waters were divided between the surface of the earth and its atmospheric heavens. Provision was made for clouds and rain to give life to all that would later dwell upon the earth.

“In period three, plant life began. The earth was organized to bring forth grass, herbs, trees, and vegetation—each growing from its own seed.” (CR, April 2000)

Note that President Nelson state that “the earth was organized to bring forth... vegetation”. Abraham states that the earth was prepared to do this

Abr 4:11

11 And the Gods said: Let us prepare the earth to bring forth grass; the herb yielding seed; the fruit tree yielding fruit, after his kind, whose seed in itself yieldeth its own likeness upon the earth; and it was so, even as they ordered.

What does this teach us about the creation?

Parley P. Pratt

"A Royal Planter now descends from yonder world of older date, and bearing in his hand the choice seeds of the older Paradise, he plants them in

the virgin soil of our new-born earth. They grow and flourish there, and, bearing seed, replant themselves, and thus clothe the naked earth with scenes of beauty and the air with fragrant incense. Ripening fruits and herbs at length abound." ("Key to the Science of Theology", pg. 54)

Periods four and five

Russell M. Nelson

"Period four was a time of further development. Lights in the expanse of the heaven were organized so there could be seasons and other means of measuring time. During this period, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth were placed in proper relationship to one another. The sun, with its vast stores of hydrogen, was to serve as a giant furnace to provide light and heat for the earth and life upon it.

"In period five, fish, fowl, and "every living creature" were added. They were made fruitful and able to multiply—in the sea and on the earth—each after its own kind.

"In the sixth period, creation of life continued. The beasts of the earth were made after their kind, cattle after their kind, and everything which "creepeth upon the earth"—again, after its own kind." (CR, April 2000)

Period six

Russell M. Nelson

"Then the Gods counseled together and said: 'Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness.' ...

'So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them.' (Abr. 4:26–27.) Thus, Adam and Eve were formed. And they were blessed to 'be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.' (Gen. 1:28.)" (CR, April 2000)

Why do you think the Lord commands Adam and Eve to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"?

What do you think it means to subdue and have dominion over the living things of the earth?

Moses 3:7,18,21-24

7 And I, the Lord God, formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul, the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also; nevertheless, all things were before created; but spiritually were they created and made according to my word.

18 And I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten, that it was not good that the

man should be alone; wherefore, I will make an help meet for him.

21 And I, the Lord God, caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and he slept, and I took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in the stead thereof;

22 And the rib which I, the Lord God, had taken from man, made I a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said: This I know now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.

What can we learn about the importance of marriage from the creation of Adam and Eve?

Spencer W. Kimball

"And I, God said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning: Let us make man [not a separate man, but a complete man, which is husband and wife] in our image, after our likeness; and it was so.' What a beautiful partnership! Adam and Eve were married for eternity by the Lord. Such a marriage extends beyond the grave. All peoples should call for this kind of marriage....

"This is a partnership. Then when they had created them in the image of God, to them was given the eternal command, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it', and as they completed this magnificent creation, they looked it over and pronounced it 'good, very good' something that isn't to be improved upon by our modern intellectuals....

"And that's the way the Lord organized it. This wasn't an experiment. He knew what he was doing." ("The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood" Ensign, March 1976)

Period seven

Abr 5:1-3

1 And thus we will finish the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of them.

2 And the Gods said among themselves: On the seventh time we will end our work, which we have counseled; and we will rest on the seventh time from all our work which we have counseled.

3 And the Gods concluded upon the seventh time, because that on the seventh time they would rest from all their works which they (the Gods) counseled among themselves to form; and sanctified it. And thus were their decisions at the time that they counseled among themselves to form the heavens and the earth.

Why did the Lord sanctify the seventh day?

(because that on the seventh time they would rest from all their works which

they (the Gods) counseled among themselves to form)

Earl C. Tingey

"From the beginning, God has instructed prophets to teach the covenant people to honor the Sabbath day. God rested from His creative labors on the seventh day. This day was blessed and sanctified as a holy day....

"Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are a covenant people. We know we live in the world, but we are taught to not be of the world. Like ancient Israel, who also was a covenant people, we should encourage the proper observance of the Sabbath day.... Let this become a sign with our God by which we shall be known." (CR, April 1996)

The Creation Testifies of a Creator

Russell M. Nelson

"I testify that the earth and all life upon it are of divine origin. The Creation did not happen by chance. It did not come ex nihilo (out of nothing). And human minds and hands able to build buildings or create computers are not accidental. It is God who made us and not we ourselves. We are His people! The Creation itself testifies of a Creator. We cannot disregard the divine in the Creation. Without our grateful awareness of God's hand in the Creation, we would be just as oblivious to our provider as are goldfish swimming in a bowl. With deep gratitude, we echo the words of the Psalmist, who said, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." (Ps. 104:24.)" (CR, April 2000)

Alma also states that the wonders of the earth are a witness to us of the existence of God

Alma 30:44

But Alma said unto him: Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.

Did God "create" something out of nothing?

(The Creation did not happen by chance. It did not come ex nihilo (out of nothing))

Abr 4:1,31

1 And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and

the earth.

31 And the Gods said: We will do everything that we have said, and organize them; and behold, they shall be very obedient....

Joseph Smith

"Now, the word create came from the word baurau, which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship. Hence we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos—chaotic matter." (TPJS, pg. 350)

Additional Knowledge Will Be Made Known

We have been given strong evidence of a divine creation but we are not capable of comprehending majesty and power of God

Russell M. Nelson

“Though our understanding of the Creation is limited, we know enough to appreciate its supernal significance. And that store of knowledge will be augmented in the future. Scripture declares: ‘In that day when the Lord shall come [again], he shall reveal all things—

‘Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof—

‘Things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven.’ (D&C 101:32–34.)

“Yes, further light and knowledge will come. The Lord said, ‘If there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—

‘All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, ... and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times.’ (D&C 121:30–31.)” (CR, April 2000)

Conclusion

Russell M. Nelson

“The Creation, great as it is, is not an end in itself but a means to an end. We come to the earth for a brief period of time, endure our tests and trials, and prepare to move onward and upward to a glorious homecoming. Our thoughts and deeds while here will surely be more purposeful if we understand God’s plan and are thankful for and obedient to His commandments.” (CR, April 2000)