

O.T. LESSON #2  
**the creation**  
by Ted L. Gibbons

**INTRODUCTION:** I spend a lot of time on the computer, and I do all right until I have to figure out how it was put together and what makes it work. The truth is, I can't tell a hard drive from a happy meal. When I have to install instal stuff or hook up stuff or figure out stuff, I find myself in serious distress. But there are those for whom the whole process is simple. Fortunately, two of them belong to my family. I don't use my brain to make computers work; I use it to remember the numbers of people who know how to make computers work.

With regard to the creation, I suspect this is also true. We are most assuredly incapable of understanding the process by which this earth came into being. Even with the accumulated intellect of the brightest minds on the planet working on the problem, mankind is still light years away from making a world or understanding precisely how God made this one.

Just determining the *time* involved in producing this *testing center* has proved an insurmountable obstacle. People cannot agree on the production schedule, the producer, or even the purpose of the whole thing. On the matter of the age of the earth, for example, Brigham Young taught:

I know that a great many of the scientific men of the world philosophize upon this, that and the other thing. Geologists will tell us the earth has stood so many millions of years. Why? Because the Valley of Western Colorado, here, could not have washed out without taking such a length of time. What do they know about it? Nothing in comparison. They also reason about the age of the world by the marvelous specimens of petrification that are sometimes discovered. Now we can show them plenty of places where there are trees, perfect stone, running into the solid rock, and perhaps the rock is forty, fifty, or a hundred feet above the tree. Yet it is a perfect tree. There is the bark, there is the heart, and there is the outer-coating between the heart and the bark, all perfect rock. How long did it take to make this tree into rock? We do not know. I can tell them, simply this--when the Lord Almighty brings forth the power of his chemistry he can combine the elements and make a tree into rock in one night or one day, if he

chooses, or he can let it lie until it pulverises and blows to the four winds, without petrifying, just as he pleases. He brings together these elements as he sees proper, for he is the greatest chemist there is. He knows more about chemistry and about the formation of the earth and about dividing the earth, and more about the mountains, valleys, rocks, hills, plains, and the sands than all the scientific men that we have. This we can say of a truth. Well, if it takes a million years to make a perfect rock of one kind of a tree, say a cedar tree, how long would it take to make a perfect rock of a cottonwood tree? Let the chemists tell this, if they can, but they can not tell it. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Vol.15, p.125-127, August 11, 1872)

To understand this idea, determine the time it took Christ to make wine at the wedding feast at Cana. Good wine is a product of good ingredients and age. But the six waterpots of wine Christ made were created in an instant. Your friendly neighborhood chemist, however, if charged to determine the age of the liquid, would certainly have arrived at an age of several years, for the governor of the feast said it was “good wine.” (John 2:10)

The message is clear enough. President Young’s meaning is that we will not discover the mysteries of the matter until the Lord wants us to discover them. Until then, we must be satisfied (and we must rejoice) in what the Lord has taught us.

## **THE WORD ON THE CREATION**

This lesson will not follow the outline in the Teacher’s Manual for Gospel Doctrine lessons. If you are teaching, that is the place you must go for direction. The thoughts below are my thoughts, and are only intended to give background and additional insights. My hope is that your understanding of the creation will be enhanced by a reflection on the meaning of the high-lighted words below:

**1. HEREWITH:** We must begin here, for this word gives the critical insight into the purpose of this earth. God, in his explanation to Abraham, told him that one “like unto God” had said to others,

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; And we will prove them *herewith*, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them . . . (Abr. 3:24,25,

emphasis added)

The word *herewith* as employed here means *with this earth*. Thus the earth was created as a testing center—a place where we could be proved and tested. Elder Robert E. Wells said,

One of the principal purposes of this life is to find out if the Lord can trust us . . . We are destined to be tried, tested, and proven during our sojourn on earth to see if we are trustworthy.

The Prophet Joseph Smith indicated that to attain the highest blessing of this life, we will first be tested and proved thoroughly until the Lord is certain that he can trust us in all things, regardless of the personal hazard or sacrifice involved. (Robert E. Wells, “The Cs of Spirituality,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 24)

**2. BEGINNING::** Where exactly does our account of the work of God begin? *In the beginning of what?* we might ask. Only a divine, eternal being could see it all.

I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease.

Wherefore, no man can behold all my works, except he behold all my glory; and no man can behold all my glory, and afterwards remain in the flesh on the earth. (Moses 1:4,5)

The Lord said to Moses:

But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them. (Moses 1:35)

Why give only an account of this earth? Why not the whole picture?

And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine. (Moses 1:37)

That was good enough for Moses.

And it came to pass that Moses spake unto the Lord, saying: Be merciful unto thy servant, O God, and tell me concerning this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, and also the heavens, and then thy servant will be content. (Moses 1:36)

### **3. CREATED:**

You ask the learned doctors why they say the world was made out of nothing, and they will answer, “Doesn’t the Bible say he created the world?” And they infer, from the word create, that it must have been made out of nothing. 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, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time He had. The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed; they may be organized and re-organized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning and can have no end. (Joseph Smith Jr., “The King Follett Sermon,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1971, 17)

In a comparable but less dramatic illustration, I might say that my wife created a wonderful meal yesterday. No one would infer from that statement that she grew the rutabagas or eggplant, or refined the sugar or bottled the soy sauce and froze the peas.

The work itself was supervised by the Savior. (Abr. 4:1) Moses recorded

And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth. 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 1:32,33)

For a further insight on this matter, consider the entries in the Topical Guide under **Jesus Christ, Creator**.

**4. LIGHT/LIGHTS:** On the first day God said, “Let there be light.” On the fourth day he said, “Let there be lights.” (Moses 2:3,14) Abraham tells us that on the first

day the Gods said, “Let there be light” but on the fourth day the Gods “organized the lights in the expanse of heaven . . .” (Abr. 4:14). I have wondered about this from time to time. Often my reflections take me back to D&C 88:6-13. Perhaps that first light is the light of Christ—the light and truth of intelligence (see D&C 93:30,36)

**5. DAY:** This is the word that has caused at least some of the difficulty in preparing a timeline for the creation. The word as used here has been interpreted in three different ways: (1) 24 hours; (2) 1000 years, based on the explanation of figure 1 of Facsimile #2 in Abraham, and on Abraham 5:13; (3) an unspecified length of time. As is indicated by the quote from Brigham Young in the introduction, God can do about what he wants in the time he wants. But it might be interesting to note in your scriptures that the word translated “day” in Genesis 1:5 (Moses 2:5) is the same word that was translated “season” in Genesis 40:4 and “process of time” in Judges 11:4. If the word *day* means “an unspecified length of time” most of the arguments against biblical creationism disappear.

**6. OBEYED:** The pattern of the creation seems to follow basic laws of genetics. The phrase “after his kind” in Moses 2:11,12 and Genesis 1:11,12 suggest an uninterrupted continuation of species. But in addition to that observation, Abraham tells us this:

And the Gods organized the earth to bring forth grass from its own seed, and the herb to bring forth herb from its own seed, yielding seed after his kind; and the earth to bring forth the tree from its own seed, yielding fruit, whose seed could only bring forth the same in itself, after his kind; and *the Gods saw that they were obeyed.* (Abr. 4:11,12, emphasis added)

The Gods created plant life to yield “after his kind” and they saw that “they were obeyed.”

**6. MULTIPLY AND REPLENISH:** We live in a world where family sizes steadily decrease in the more advanced countries. Fear of over-population has been a continuing concern for decades. In D&C 104:17,18, the Lord tells us that the Lord at the time of the creation insured that there would be enough for all of his children. Any father who could certainly would. God said that

the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all

things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves. Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.

The problems come from distribution, not availability.

**7. COMMANDMENTS:** Actually there were at least three of them given to our first parents. The two we speak of most are

1. And I, God, blessed them, and said unto them: 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. (Moses 2:28)
2. And I, the Lord God, commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Moses 3:16,17)

The third is found in Moses 4:

3. And the man said: The woman thou gavest me, and commandest that she should remain with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree and I did eat. (Moses 4:18)

God's command that Adam and Eve should stay together may help us understand Adam's decision to eat the forbidden fruit with his wife.

**8. LIVING SOUL:** We are told in the text that men, animals, and trees all became living souls (see Moses 3:7,9,19). Moses 6:59 may explain the process by which this happened to Adam and Eve:

Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children, saying: That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so

became of dust a living soul . . . (Moses 6:58,59)

The following from Brigham Young is interesting:

Here let me state to all philosophers of every class upon the earth, When you tell me that father Adam was made as we make adobies from the earth, you tell me what I deem an idle tale. When you tell me that the beasts of the field were produced in that manner, you are speaking idle worlds devoid of meaning. There is no such thing in all the eternities where the Gods dwell. Mankind are here because they are the offspring of parents who were first brought here from another planet, and power was given them to propagate their species, and they were commanded to multiply and replenish the earth. (Journal of Discourses, Vol.7, p.285 - p.286, October 9, 1859)

## **CONCLUSION:**

**VERY GOOD:** Many years ago as a part of a Master's Program at Arizona State University I prepared a sound and slide presentation on the Creation. The images showed a young girl hearing the voice of the Father as he recounted the creative periods and showed her his works on each of the "days" of creation. I took hundreds and hundreds of slides for the three-screen, three projector display and found recordings of appropriate music to accompany the images. I still remember the first time I sat and watched the show by myself when it was finished.

I was stunned by the beauty and the variety of the creative splendor of God's handiwork. I had photos of frogs as large as house cats, and others small enough to hide behind golf balls. My first photo of a spider web, perfect in symmetry and bedecked with matching pearls of dew, touched me deeply. I rejoiced over pictures of clouds and sunsets and mountains and marshlands. I was astounded at the sizes and colors and shapes and varieties of fish. I laughed at warthogs and monkeys and delighted in the luminous diversity of butterflies and hummingbirds, and the artistic genius of flowers. Well, you get the message. When slide shows were still popular, I showed the presentation a hundred times to groups all over the United States, and people always approached me at the end to tell me how good it was. My response never varied. Anyone can learn to point and focus a camera and snap a shutter. I took pictures of snakes and salamanders. But God *made* snakes and salamanders and sunsets. What I had made was an exercise in photographic expertise. What God had done was an exercise in Godhood. And I came to know in the course of

making that presentation what I still know. The thing God said when he reviewed his creation was true:

**“BEHOLD, ALL THINGS WHICH I HAD MADE WERE VERY GOOD . . .”**

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