

Genesis 1:9-13

After Day One of Creation the earth was anything but an inviting domicile for man, dark and covered in surging water and a shroud of fog or mist. On Day Two of Creation God did something important that set the stage for what would follow: He took the first step in creating an atmosphere for the planet, thus establishing an environment in which plants and beasts, and eventually man could thrive.

So God's methodical, logical piecing together of His Creation continues apace. There had to be rain for the growing things, so in vv6-8 He established the first heaven: an expanse separating moisture above from moisture on the surface; now there would be clouds from which rain would fall to sustain vegetation.

It would do no good to create Man before the growing things, for then he would have nothing to eat. So on Day Three God sets the stage for this by revealing (or creating) dry land. He then wastes no time at all in creating grass, and plants, and fruit trees—all in their mature state, bearing mature fruit and seed for the continuation of each species. ➡

Along with raising the clouds above the earth, by the creation of the expanse during Day Two, so that rain could now fall upon the earth, the expanse was necessary to permit sunlight to fall upon the earth, beginning in Day Four, to sustain the growing things created in Day Three. ➡

Read Genesis 1:9-13.

v9

Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.

The beginning of v9 is straight-forward and easily understandable: the "waters below the heavens" are the surging waters still upon the surface of the earth. On the previous day God had separated from *these* waters the waters—the vapors, or mists—that would become earth's clouds. The rest of the verse, however, is a bit more of a challenge to nail down.

mature fruit and seed

There is an important distinction. God is not planting the seeds of Creation. Whether mountains and streams, growing things, animals, or man, He is speaking mature, developed earth components and inhabitants into full existence. And He is accomplishing this in days—not in years or millennia.

rain could now fall upon the earth

In a moment we are going to be looking at Genesis 2:6; when we do I will be adding some thoughts on this business of falling rain during Creation.

Let the waters...be gathered into one place,

We could interpret “into one place” as meaning that all the water on the earth was removed to dwell in only one (singular) place—although the congress of commentators all seem to agree that the better interpretation would be that this means that the water was shifted to *one place*, and the dry land shifted to *another place*—“that is, evidently, into a place apart from that designed for the land” (Albert Barnes). They all also seem to agree that this refers not just to what we would term the “oceans,” but *all* water, including rivers and lakes and streams, etc.

So once again God is “separating”—first light from darkness (v4), then creating the expanse to separate the waters (v6), now separating the waters of the earth from the dry land (v9).

and let the dry land appear

I have previously mentioned that we cannot say with certainty whether this means that in this moment God *creates* the dry land, or that the land that has always been beneath the waters now rises to reveal itself. If I were forced to choose, I would say the latter to be the case. This verse seems to suggest it; it could have said something like, *Then God said, Let there be dry land*, but instead it says “let the dry land appear.” There is more evidence for this found in the Psalms.

Read Psalm 104:5-8.

This would seem to confirm that the dry land had been beneath the waves all the time—but that this is found in *poetic* Scripture, which cannot always be interpreted as stating cold fact, means we must be cautious with it. Nonetheless it describes not just an *emerging* of dry land, but a convulsive reordering of the earth’s surface. And this would help explain the supposed “aging” of the earth we discussed earlier.


Leupold: Surely, in the course of these gigantic upheavals, not catastrophic in nature because they involve organization rather than disruption, there was a tremendous amount of geologic formation. In fact, it would be perfectly safe to assume that all basic and all regular formations were disposed of in this day’s work. As a result, indeed, no record of the rapidity with which, certain formations took place is written upon the various formations, for vast as these formations were, they were controlled by the orderly operations of divine omnipotence and by these potentialities, no doubt, which the Spirit “hovering over the face of the waters” had implanted.

v10

And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.

Once more God names what He has just created. That which has just been exposed, that which will become the foundation for growing things, He names “earth”—a Hebrew word which, similar to *samayim* (heaven) is flexible enough to mean anything from the globe, to a country on that globe, down to soil and even dust. The word is *eres* (AIR-ets). In contrast now to the dry land, God names the contained waters, “seas”—the plural Hebrew *yamim* (the root means “to roar”). And after naming these two earthly components, God sees that they are “good.” Step by step God is bringing order to His Creation.

v11

It will be necessary, from time to time as we proceed through Chapter One, to harmonize portions of it with portions of Chapter Two—specifically, here, 2:5-6. 

Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so.

Chapter Two, beginning with v4, can be interpreted as being not a reiteration of Chapter One, but as filling in some of the missing details. At the same time, however, it does not follow the strict, day-by-day timeline of Chapter One; as such it is difficult (if not foolhardy) to draw explicit time-marks between the two chapters. In a general sense we can say that Chapter Two supplements Chapter One, but it also lays the groundwork for the events of Chapter Three—as Leupold expresses:

Leupold: The truth of the matter, however, is simply this: the account of chapter two does not aim to present a complete creation story, nor is the time sequence followed by the author, Moses. Rather, those supplementary facts, essential to the right evaluation of chapter three, are given in a sequence which is entirely logical... The stage is being set for the tragic drama of the next chapter. The things enumerated by the author as appearing on the stage, as it were, need not be listed in the order in which they were placed there.

Man will not be created until Day Six. So those plants created for the brand new soil of earth in Day Three (in Chapter One) will be on their own for a few days; it must be vegetation that does not require human intervention and husbandry. And we can see that when we dig beneath the surface of the text.

In v11 we have the words

vegetation = *dese* = grass, moss

plants = *eseb* = herbs, grass, weeds

fruit trees = *pri-es* = trees that bear offspring

harmonizing

Even though a cursory comparison of the two chapters seems to present a contradiction, or at least a quandary, it is not difficult to harmonize the two; but one does need to burrow beneath the surface of our translations to do so.

In other words, with the possible exception of the “fruit trees” the vegetation created in Day Three was of a sort that was what we would term “wild,” or at least uncultivated.

Now turn to Chapter Two. Verse 4 describes the state of Creation prior to Day Three. The NIV, alone in our common versions, offers a misleading picture in v5, with

Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up,

The rest of our versions do a better job translating the text. Here is v5 in the LSB:

Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet grown, for Yahweh God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. ☞

Here the operative words are different from v11 in Chapter One:

shrub of the field = *siach hassadheh* = field shrub or bush
plant of the field = *esebh hassadheh* = field plants, herb,
or grass

That is, none of these—*cultivated* vegetation of the prepared and planted field—had yet been created because they required regular rain from the clouds and man to tend the field of crops. But the wild, uncultivated vegetation described in v11 in Chapter One had. The difference between Chapter One and Chapter two, then, is the difference between vegetation that occurs in the wild and that which occurs by reason of man’s cultivation—the former “the widespread plain of the earth, the broad expanse of land,” the latter “a field of arable land, soil fit for cultivation, which forms only a part of the ‘earth’ or ‘ground’... the ‘shrub of the field’ consists of such shrubs and tree-like productions of the cultivated land as man raises for the sake of their fruit, and the ‘herb of the field,’ all seed-producing plants, both corn and vegetables, which serve as food for man and beast” (K&D).

Verse 5, then, of Chapter Two adds a little more information to the setting in vv11-12 of Chapter One—that is, Day Three.

Verse 6 in Chapter Two explains how the earliest vegetation survived without rain or tending by man:

But a stream would rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

It is difficult to say whether v6 speaks of the vegetation in Chapter One or that in Chapter Two. Even so, it speaks of a time when the full atmospheric infrastructure was not yet in place and man was not yet on the scene. Because of that I would lean toward it applying to Chapter One, vv11-12.

rain falling upon the earth

There is a school of thought that declares that rain did not fall upon the earth until the flood. One proponent of this is John C. Whitcomb (*The Genesis Flood*). The evidence many give for this position is that it was after the flood God created the first rainbow—i.e., no rainbow, no rain. Well, I’m from the Midwest, where it rains quite often without the producing of a rainbow.

Especially in matters so ancient and mysterious as the earliest days of Creation, I am loathe to be dogmatic, insisting that my interpretation is the only true one—and here I will take that path. (When it comes to Bible Study one never knows what one—especially a layman—will discover tomorrow that one does not know today.)

Even so, I am not alone in my interpretation regarding rain earlier than the Flood. Peter Lange and K&D, for just two examples, both agree that not only was this period when there was no “rain upon the earth” momentary, but (citing Job 36:27) what *could* be described here is an account of ground mist ascending to then fall as rain.

In any case, my position is that rain indeed did fall upon the earth, especially after Man was created to tend the crops.

But it is important to remember that Moses' agenda, as it were, in Chapter Two is much different from Chapter One. In Chapter One he is setting forth the *timeline* of Creation: this happened, then this happened, etc. In Chapter Two he is setting the stage for Man's tragic fall—even the subsequent flooding of the earth. The focus in One is the physical Creation; the focus in Two is on Man.

But back to our text. The word translated “stream” or “mist,” depending on your version, in v6 is *edh*. David Guzik seems to associate this with the vaporous mists that blanketed the earth before the creation of the “expanse” (v1:6), but that cannot be, since vegetation was not created until *after* the expanse was created and the clouds were lifted off the earth. In both instances we must remember that what God is establishing is a fully developed system of vegetation for the earth.

K&D: Moreover, we must not picture the work of creation as consisting of the production of the first tender germs which were gradually developed into herbs, shrubs, and trees; on the contrary, we must regard it as one element in the miracle of creation itself, that at the word of God not only tender grasses, but herbs, shrubs, and trees, sprang out of the earth, each ripe for the formation of blossom and the bearing of seed and fruit, without the necessity of waiting for years before the vegetation created was ready to blossom and bear fruit. Even if the earth was employed as a medium in the creation of the plants, since it was God who caused it to bring them forth, they were not the product of the powers of nature, *generatio aequivoca* ❏ in the ordinary sense of the word, but a work of divine omnipotence, by which the trees came into existence before their seed, and their fruit was produced in full development, without expanding gradually under the influence of sunshine and rain.

generatio aequivoca

equivocal generation:
spontaneous generation
involving the origination of a
living organism from a living
organism of a different species.

This reference to mists or streams watering the land is difficult to place in the timeline of the first chapter, so we are probably better off not trying to force it into one place or another. Back to Chapter One.

v12

With nominal rephrasing, v12 confirms, that what was spoken in v11 was indeed accomplished—and it was good.

And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.

Thus Day Three of Creation draws to a close in v13.

SESSION 9

Day Three: First Life
Genesis 1:9-13

Mature Fruit and Seed

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The Appearance of Land

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Harmonizing Chapters One and Two

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