

*Genesis 1:20-23*

Verse 20 of our text begins a progressive creation of living beings. Note the order in which these beings are brought into existence.

**Read Genesis 1:20-23.**

First the water dwelling creatures, including reptiles, then those that fly in the expanse. After that, land animals are created, followed by human beings that will have dominion over all the other living beings.

**Read Genesis 1:24, 26-27.**

After setting the stage in the second to fourth days, in a span of two more days God (*Elohim*) will populate this globe. He now, in this fifth day creates the water-dwelling and sky-dwelling “living creatures” (souls) in advance of the land-dwelling animals and human beings in the sixth day.

Before digging into the text of this passage we should pause to note the subtle differences in the creative steps of our God. Before we do, let us affirm that no other being or thing—or accidental calamity—created anything, but the sovereign Godhead—Father, Son, Spirit—is responsible for it all. But, as we see and *will* see in the text, this sovereign Creation came about by various means. Let’s return for a moment to Day Three.

**Read Genesis 1:11.**

Note: “God **said**,” but then “**Let the earth** sprout vegetation...” Now look at two similar statements, the first in v20—

**Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth...”**

—and a similar statement in v24:

**Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind...”**

In these three, God commands something to occur, but seems to involve the elements of water or earth in the creative process.

Now back up to v12. Each of these creative acts are followed by a further reiterating comment. Verse 12 seems to emphasize the earth’s contribution with, “And the earth brought forth vegetation...,” while v21 and v25 reinforce God’s sovereign hand with “And God created,” and “God made,” respectively.

*Leupold:* God could have called forth these creatures by His mere word; instead He speaks the word that enables the earth to bring them forth.

v20

**Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the expanse of the heavens.”**

First, the KJV erroneously translates the beginning of this verse with “And God said, Let the waters **bring forth** abundantly the moving creature that hath life...,” as if it is, again, the water itself creating the living creatures. Our other translations correctly express the original text, which reads “Then God said, ‘Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures...’”

When God made humans, He made first a solitary male, then a companion female—hence, a couple, a reproducing pair from which the rest of humanity would spring. But with the beasties the text makes clear that God makes a “swarm” of “swarming things.” The verb *sharats* is a root meaning to teem:—breed abundantly(1), increased greatly(1), populate abundantly(1); the noun, *sherets*, is translated swarmers, swarming things:—insects(3), swarming things(5), swarms(1), teeming life(2), teeming things(1).

Likewise the birds were created in the same manner and in similar numbers. These—in the water and in the air—are life forms that love to move in “continual agitation through one another, like shoals of fish.” This instinct marks these creatures to this day. 📌

“Living creatures” translates *nephesh*, which means a soul, a breathing, living being—not “soul” as it is in humans, but here just affirming that these are living creatures as opposed to plants and rocks, etc. 📌 Here, the first time that *nephesh* (soul) is used, is regarded as nothing more than referring to “that which breathes” in any being.

Most commentators seem to agree that these two groups would include insects and reptiles, the latter sometimes referred to as “saurians,” which is a suborder (*Sauria*) of reptiles including the lizards and in older classifications the crocodiles and various extinct forms (such as the dinosaurs and ichthyosaurs) that resemble lizards. 📌

In other words, by the end of Day Five and the beginning of Day Six God, will have created all species of non-human life for the earth—which brings us to v21.

### **swarms**

Beneath the waves we find vast schools of fish moving together as one; likewise in the air flocks of birds can move in sweeping turns as if guided by a master intelligence.

### **plants and rocks**

We may, in our modern vernacular, refer to “living plants,” but the biblical viewpoint is that plants have no life.

### **saurian usage**

During the great Age of Reptiles when dinosaurs ruled the land, there were also fantastic saurian in the seas. (*Riley Black, Smithsonian Magazine, 10 Dec. 2020*)

v21

**And 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.**

Verse 21 recapitulates v20, but also adds some new information.

### *And God created the great sea monsters*

Along with fish of every shape and kind, and other aquatic creatures, God made the *tannimin*, plural for *tannin* (tah-NEEN), which is translated venomous serpent, devouring dragon, sea monster. The same word is used to describe the serpent Moses threw down before the pharaoh, and is always used in an evil, threatening context, such as elsewhere in the Pentateuch.

### **Read Deuteronomy 32:31-33.**

It is also associated with Rahab, Babylon, and Leviathan during the end times.

**In that day Yahweh will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,  
With His fierce and great and mighty sword,  
Even Leviathan the twisted serpent;  
And He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea. (Isaiah 27:1)**

The KJV translates this “whales,” and I have no doubt that whales would be included in this term, but, as I’ve shown, it goes far beyond just a gentle but massive whale.

I personally subscribe to the position that God made the sea and land “monsters”—which would include all manner of dinosaurs—along with all the rest. This means that they walked the earth (and swam the seas) along with early man, but ultimately died out, as a species, earlier than others. Remember what David Guzik wrote regarding the theory that the dinosaurs lived and died out long before the first man:

*Guzik:* Whatever merit the gap theory may have, it cannot explain the extinction and fossilization of ancient animals. The Bible says plainly death came by Adam (Romans 5:12), and since fossils are the result of death, they could not have happened before Adam’s time.

Verse 21 continues, “and every living creature that moves”; at this point in the Creation narrative, that would have to include any sea-going dinosaurs.

*...and every winged bird after its kind;*

In v20 it says that the birds “birds fly above the earth across the face of the expanse of the heavens.” That is just a rather poetic way to say that when birds are flying they do so in the expanse of the first heaven described in vv6-8. The “face” of that first heaven is turned down toward the earth, and that is the domain of the birds that fly.

Once again, many of us take for granted the winged creatures that fly in the sky—not just birds, as we think of them, but *all* winged creatures: bats, insects, even pterodactyls, large, winged reptiles, now extinct. These are a brand new type of being: “creatures that breathe and are animated and have power on their own volition to go from place to place” (Leupold).

v22

**Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”**

Here we have the first recorded blessing of God bestowed on any other being. He does so to empower the commandment He gives them, to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

*Leupold:* From these copious beginnings these creatures are to keep on multiplying until they fill the earth. Every vestige of emptiness is to be ultimately canceled. This blessing of God, however, is not a mere wish or a wishing-well on the part of the Almighty. It is a creative word of power which makes possible the things that it commands, and it continues in power to this day. The Creator is glorified by the multitudes of beings which His creative word makes.

v23

And v23 closes this fifth day with the now-standard line,  
**And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.**

By the end of Day Five the earth is populated with living, breathing beings. The oceans, lakes and streams are populated with fish and creatures of myriad kinds: some beautiful, some horrific. (Remember, fish breathe as well as birds and other animals; they just do it through the water.) Likewise the sky above the earth’s surface is now filled with flying creatures of all sorts: some beautiful, some downright irritating.

God continues piecing together this brand new world, and in the next and last day of Creation, He will complete it with beasts that roam the earth, including perhaps the most fearsome beast of all: man.

# SESSION 11

## The First Creatures Genesis 1:20-23

### Day Five

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### “Swarms”

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### “Sea Monsters”

And God created the great sea monsters...

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How numerous are Your works, O Yahweh!  
In wisdom You have made them all;  
The earth is full of Your possessions.  
This is the sea, great and broad,  
There the creeping things are without number,  
Creatures both small and great.  
There the ships move along,  
And Leviathan, which You have formed to play in it.  
Psalm 104:24–26

In that day Yahweh will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,  
With His fierce and great and mighty sword,  
Even Leviathan the twisted **serpent**;  
And He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea.  
Isaiah 27:1

### The Blessing

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