

All Creatures Great and Small

(Genesis 1:20-25)

*"All Things Bright and Beautiful, All Creatures Great and Small,
All Things Wise and Wonderful, The Lord God Made Them All."
- Cecil Frances Alexander*

1. The **Aquatic** Life:

1:20 - "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures..."

Literally, "let the waters swarm with swarming things."

Similarly, **verse 11**, could literally read, "let the earth vegetate with vegetation."

"The two expressions ("vegetate" and "swarm") make a contrast, and the emphasis here is on movement—specifically the animation of living creatures that can move and migrate at will, in contrast to plant life, which is essentially stationary."¹

"Water is preeminently the seat of life. There is not a bay or creek, not a shelf or a sound on the face of the earth that does not teem with life. Even a drop of ditch water can hold 500 million microscopic creatures so small that a teaspoonful of water would be to them what the Atlantic is to us."²

2. The **Aerial** Life:

"Create" (1:21) is *bara*, which means to bring forth something out of nothing. *Bara* occurs once before in **Genesis 1:1**, "God created the heavens and the earth," and it also means bringing something into existence from nothing. (Also in v.27, the creation of human life).

In 2011, evolutionist John Horgan wrote an article in the generally anti-creationist (but creationist-founded *Scientific American* entitled, "Pssst! Don't tell creationists, but scientists don't have a clue how life began."³

3. The **Animal** Life:

"cattle" (1:24) - livestock and animals that are capable of being domesticated (like sheep, goats, and oxen)

"creeping things" (1:24) - includes reptiles, insects, and small mammals like squirrels and rodents.

"beasts of the earth" (1:24) - would include all other kinds of animals.

¹ John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 124.

² John Phillips, *Exploring Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Kregel Publications, 2009), Ge 1:20–25.

³ As quoted in Jonathan Sarfati, *The Genesis Account* (Powder Springs, GA: Creation Book Publishers, 2015), 228.

“Modern biologists classify biological species by a hierarchy of categories called the Linnaean system. Every creature is designated by kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species. But the three biblical categories are not meant to give a technical taxonomy of that kind. It’s a simple, shorthand way of designating all land-based creatures.”⁴

What About Dinosaurs? Richard Owen (1804-1892) created the name dinosaur in 1842, from *deinos* meaning “terrible”, “potent”, or “fearfully great”; and *sauros*, meaning “lizard” or “reptile”.

1:21 – “great sea creatures”. CEV says, “giant sea monsters.” ISV says, “Every kind of magnificent marine creature.” NASB says, “Great sea monsters.” The Hebrew word is *tannin*, which can refer to any large creature, or it can mean “dragon” or “sea-serpent.”

Job 41: Leviathan. The best explanation seems to be a giant crocodile known as *Sarcosuchus*. This creature grew to 36-40 feet long [today’s largest crocodile has been measured around 20 feet long]. This creature weighed up to 8 tons [1 ton = 2,000 lbs.] while today’s crocodile has been weighed at a max of 1.2 tons]. **Job 41:15 says, “His back is made of rows of shields,”** and the *Sarcosuchus*’ back had a row of bony plates called *osteoderms*.⁵ See also **Psalm 104:26**.

Job 40:15-24 - Behemoth (a transliterated word – the plural form of “beast” – literally “beast of beasts”). Some Bible notes suggest that the behemoth was an elephant or hippopotamus, because they are the largest land animals today. However, Job 40:17 says he sways his tail “like a cedar”, which is the largest tree in the Middle East. Modern paleontologists now believe that dinosaur tails were held quite rigidly horizontal, not dragging on the ground as in some of the older illustrations. This fits very well with the simile of a big tree trunk.⁶

4. The Animated Life

1:21 - “every living thing” is **nephesh, the same word translated “soul,”** in the King James Version of **Genesis 2:7: “the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”** *Nephesh* literally means “that which breathes.” It speaks of soulish life, creaturely life, as opposed to the merely organic life of plants.⁷

Man is made of body, soul and spirit⁸:

- A. **Body** - With your body, you have physical life and you know the physical world—roughly speaking, the world beneath you.
- B. **Soul** - The Greek word for soul is the word *psuche*—a word we anglicize and get *psyche* from, *psychology* from, *psychiatric*. Your soul is the emotional part of you—...all of those things that make you the person you are, mind, emotion, and will. With your soul you have psychological life; you know the world within and around you.
- C. **Spirit** - God makes a differentiation between spirit and soul. (see **Hebrews 4:12**). So, God divides between soul and spirit. Your spirit is that part of your nature that enables you to know God (see **John 4:24**). When we get saved, God’s “**Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God**” (**Romans 8:16**).

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Adrian Rogers says, “Plants have a body, but they don’t have a soul. Animals—it may surprise you, but they have a soul. Soul—the word soul means ‘conscious life.’ In the Book of Genesis, the Bible speaks of living creatures have ‘*nephesh*’, or, ‘*soul*.’ Your dog has mind, emotion, and will. But, what makes man more than a clever animal is he has a spirit... You see, **plants have inanimate life; animals have animate life, but humans have spiritual life.** God put into you a spirit. God breathed into your nostrils the breath of life. You became a living soul because God’s Spirit is in you. It’s the spirit that is the organ of spiritual knowledge. And so, God made man to live in.”⁹

⁴ MacArthur, 142.

⁵ Taken from Sarfati, 221.

⁶ Ibid, 240-241.

⁷ MacArthur, 142.

⁸ Taken from Adrian Rogers, “My Heart,—God’s Home,” (Signal Hill, CA: Rogers Family Trust, 2017), 1 Co 6:19–20.

⁹ Ibid.