

Genesis Chapter 1

Verses 1:1 – 2:3

This description of God creating heaven and earth is understood to be: (1) recent, i.e., thousands not millions of years ago; (2) ex nihilo, i.e., out of nothing; and (3) special, i.e., in 6 consecutive 24 hour periods called “days” and further distinguished as such by this phrase, “the evening and the morning.”

“In the beginning”:

While God exists eternally (Psalm 90:2); this marked the beginning of the universe in both time and space.

In explaining Israel’s identity and purpose to her on the plains of Moab, God wanted His people to know about the origin of the world in which they found themselves.

“God”:

Elohim is a general term for deity and a name for the True God, though used also at times for pagan gods (31:30), angels (Psalm 8:5), men (Psalm 82:6), and judges (Exodus 21:6).

Moses made no attempt to defend the existence of God, which is assumed, or explain what He was like in person and works which is treated elsewhere (Isa. 43:10, 13).

Both are to be believed by faith (Heb. 11:3, 6).

“Created”:

This word is used here of God’s creative activity alone, although it occasionally is used elsewhere of matter which already existed (Isa. 65:18).

Context demands in no uncertain terms that this was a creation without preexisting material (as does other Scripture: Isa. 40:28; 45:8, 12, 18; 48:13; Jer. 10:16; Acts 17:24).

“The heavens and the earth”:

All of God’s creation is incorporated into this summary statement which includes all 6, consecutive days of creation.

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

“In the beginning”:

Creation marks the absolute beginning of the temporal and material world. The traditional Jewish and Christian belief is that Genesis 1:1 declares that God created the original heaven and earth from nothing (Lat. “ex nihilo”) and that verse 2 clarifies that when it came from the Creator’s hand, the mass was “without form, and void,” unformed and without any life.

The rest of the chapter then explains the process of Creation in detail.

There is no evidence in the Hebrew text for long ages of evolutionary development or a gap of time between verse 1 and verse 2.

“God”:

Hebrew Elohim: This form of the divine name occurs 2,570 times in the Old Testament.

The plural ending “im” indicates a plural of majesty and takes a singular verb.

“Created”: (Hebrew bara):

Meaning to create shape or form.

This verb is used exclusively with God as its subject.

It refers to the instantaneous and miraculous act of God by which He brought the entire universe into existence.

Thus, the Genesis account of Creation refutes atheism, pantheism, polytheism, and evolution.

This leaves no doubt that God is an eternal being.

It also leaves no doubt that God himself created the earth.

God, mentioned in Genesis 1:1 is actually Elohim (a plural word).

Another Meaning of Elohim is, the highest being to be feared, Elohim indicates more than one involved in the act of creation.

“Elohim”, (high and mighty).

This high and mighty Eternal One is actually God the Father, God the Word, and God the Holy Spirit. All who is in fact God, a singular verb is used often with the plural word Elohim indicating that there not only is a trinity of beings, but they are one in Spirit.

The three words used in the creation are different, but all translated created (Bara, Yatzar, and Asah).

Bara means to create from nothing and is used in Genesis 1:1.

Genesis 1:2 "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

“Without form, and void”:

This means “not finished in its shape and as yet uninhabited by creatures” (Isaiah 45:18-19; Jeremiah 4:23).

God would quickly (in 6 days) decorate His initial creation (1:2 – 2:3).

(Hebrew, Tohu wabohu, “unformed and unfilled”) describes the condition of earth after the initial act of Creation.

It does not describe a chaotic condition as a result of judgment.

Thus was (Hebrew “hayetah”) is correct and should not be translated “became”.

How the earth became formed and filled is described (in verses 3-31).

“Darkness”:

This is not always a symbol of evil (Psalm 104:19-24).

Here it simply refers to the absence of light.

“Deep”:

This refers to the waters covering the earth, not some primitive evolution.

Sometimes referred to as existing waters, this is the term used to describe the earth’s water-covered surface before the dry land emerged (1:9-10).

Jonah used this word to describe the watery abyss in which he found himself submerged (see Jonah 2:5).

“The Spirit of God”:

Not only did God the Holy Spirit participate in creation, but so did God the Son (John 1:1-3 especially see John 1:14; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

Here is a clear reference to the creative activity of the Holy Spirit.

John 1:3 indicates that Christ actually created all things for the Father.

Thus, all three persons of the Trinity are active in the Creation.

This undoubtedly accounts for the plural pronouns “us” and “our” (in verse 26), which take singular verbs in expressing the tri-unity of God.

The first emblem of the Holy Spirit in Scripture is that of the Spirit “moving” or literally “brooding” over the waters, much as a bird broods over her eggs to hatch them.

The Scriptures assign to the Holy Spirit the works of creating the world (Psalm 33:6), of brooding over the waters (verse 2), of garnishing the heavens (Job 26:13), of renewing the earth (Psalm 104:30), and of sustaining life (Psalm 104:29).

“The heavens and the earth”:

All of God’s creation is incorporated into this summary statement which includes all 6, consecutive days of creation.

The Holy Spirit’s work in Creation results in order (Isa. 40:12, 14; Gen. 1:2); life (Job 33:4); beauty (Job 26:13); and renewal (Psalm 104:30).

The work of the Holy Spirit in Creation is one of the biblical proofs of His deity.

The Scriptures also describe the physical body of the Christian as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and suggest He is in the process of recreating us into Christ’s image (Philippians 1:6; Genesis 1:2; Luke 4:18).

Genesis 1:3 "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

“And God said”:

God effortlessly spoke light into existence (Psalm 33:6; 148:5).

This dispelled the darkness of verse 2.

This is the first of a highly-structured series of succinct and formulaic sentences expressing the creative commands of God.

Thus, Creation is accomplished by His word.

Each command consists of:

- (1) An announcement, “God said”;
- (2) A creative command, “Let there be”;
- (3) A summary word of accomplishment, “And it was so”;
- (4) A descriptive word of accomplishment, “The earth brought forth”;
- (5) A descriptive blessing, “God blessed”;
- (6) An evaluative approval, “It was good”; and
- (7) A concluding temporal framework, numbering each day.

“Light”:

The greater and lesser lights (the sun and moon) were created later (1:14-19), on the fourth day. Here, God was the provider of light (2 Cor. 4:6), and will in eternity future be the source of light (see Rev. 21:23).

“Verses 1:4-5 “Divided ... called”:

After the initial creation, God continued to complete His universe.

Once God separated certain things, He then named them.

Separating and naming were acts of dominion and served as a pattern for man, who would also name a portion of God’s creation over which God gave him dominion (2:19-20).

Genesis 1:4 "And God saw the light, that [it was] good: and God divided the light from the darkness."

“Good”:

Good for the purposes it was intended to serve (1:31).

The word contains less an aesthetic judgment than a designation of purpose and correspondence to God’s will, indicating the moral goodness of the Creation.

“Light”:

Not the sun which was created on the fourth day (verse 16), but some fixed light source outside of the earth.

The earth passed through a day-and-night cycle in reference to this light.

Genesis 1:5 "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."

“God called”:

This act demonstrates His sovereign dominion over His creation.

In the Semitic world, the naming of something or someone was the token of lordship.

Reuben changed the names of the cities of the Amorites after he had conquered them (see Numbers 32:38).

Likewise, Pharaoh Necho changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim after he defeated the Judean king (2 Kings 23:34).

“First day”:

God established the pattern of creation in 7 days which constituted a completed week.

“Day” can refer to: (1) the light portion of a 24-hour period (1:5, 14); (2) an extended period of time (2:4); or (3) the 24 hour period which basically refers to a full rotation of the earth on its axis, called evening and morning.

This cannot mean an age, but only a day, reckoned by the Jews from sunset to sunset (verses 8, 13, 19, 23, 31).

“Day”:

With numerical adjectives in Hebrew always refers to a 24-hour period.

Comparing the order of the week in Exodus 20:8-11 with the creation week; confirms this understanding of the time element.

Such cycle of light and dark means that the earth was rotating on its axis so that there was a source of light on one side of the earth, though the sun was not yet created (verse 16).

“Day” (Hebrew yom): Apart from the use of the word day in verses 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31, where it describes the days of Creation, it is used in at least four ways within the first two chapters of Genesis:

- (1) The 12-hour period of daylight as opposed to night (verses 14, 16, and 18);
- (2) A solar day of 24 hours (verse 14);
- (3) The period of light that began with the creation of light on the first day (verse 5); and
- (4) The entire, six-day creative period (2:4).

Everywhere in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Hebrew bible), the word “day” when used (as here) with a definite article or numerical adjective means a solar day or a normally calibrated, 24-hour day.

Thus, the biblical account of Creation clearly indicates that God created the world in six literal days (Exodus 20:11).

In verse one, the only indication we have when heaven and earth were created is that it happened in the beginning.

We must dwell on Genesis because a true and firm revelation of faith and God's grace begins right here at the beginning.

God's grace in that he wanted fellowship with mankind so much that He would go to the trouble to create the world and everything in it for man's use.

Then the faith comes in on our part.

We must believe that God's Words are true and that the world was created by Elohim God.

Thus, brings the end of the first day.

Genesis Chapter 1 Questions

1. Who are the three indicated in this word?
2. What is the word translated "God" in Genesis 1:1?
3. What does the word Bara mean?
4. How was the earth described when it was first formed?
5. Who moved on the face of the waters?
6. Is darkness always a symbol of evil?
7. What does "deep" refer to?
8. What is one of the biblical proofs of the deity of the Holy spirit?
9. Where did the light come from in verse 3?
10. What did each command start with when God started His Creation?
11. What was God's evaluative approval (3 words)?
12. What was the purpose of the light in verse 4?
13. What was the light called in verse five?
14. What was the darkness called?
15. Name 2 others mentioned in this lesson, showing their "lordship" by naming or renaming something?
16. How long in hours was the first day?
17. Was this light the sun?
18. How many biblical days did it take God to create the world?

19. What is our part in all of this?

20. In verse 5, which day comes to an end?