

**LECTURE 3: GENESIS**  
**“The God Who Creates and Sustains”**  
 Jason S. DeRouchie, PhD

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## I. Introduction

### A. Orienting Data

1. *Content:* Description of creation and God’s intention for life; stories of the original blessing, human disobedience and its consequences, God’s choice of Abraham and his offspring as a means to restore blessing (the opening of the story of redemption)
2. *Historical Coverage:* From creation (the “beginning”) to the death of Joseph (1800 B.C.?)
3. *Author & date:* anonymous, likely Moses during wilderness sojourn
4. *Emphases:*
  - a. God as the creator and sustainer of all things
  - b. God’s kingdom-building plan through a community of image-bearers
  - c. The nature and consequences of human disobedience
  - d. Hope in alignment with God’s plan to restore blessing through covenant after the curse

### B. Advice for Reading Genesis

1. Use Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a lens for understanding God’s purpose and humanity’s purpose in God’s world.
2. Keep in mind the major plot: God’s intervention in the history of human fallenness by providing a means for restored blessing.
3. Keep in mind the several sub-plots:
  - a. Adamic/Noahic Covenant (Gen. 1–2; ch. 9) + Abrahamic Covenant (12:2–7; 15:1–21; 17:3–8).

- b. God's kingdom expands through a community of kingdom families (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:4–25).
- c. Promise of a special “offspring/seed” who would conquer the enemies of God—War of Judgment/Holy War motif (Gen. 3:14–15; 12:7; 22:17; cf. Exod. 15:1–18; Gal. 3:16).
- d. Faith in the promise of God is foundational for relationship with him (Gen. 15:6; 22:12; cf. 12:1–3).
- e. God is always faithful to his promise despite the ups and downs of life.

## II. Preface: The Original Plan for Universal Blessing (Gen. 1:1–2:3)

### A. God and Creation: NT Perspectives

- Rom. 11:36. For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.
- 1 Cor. 8:6. Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.
- Col. 1:16. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.
- Rev. 4:11. You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

### B. The Israelite Context and Significance of Genesis 1

1. Because no human was present at the creation of the world, Genesis 1 comes to us through a distinct form of special revelation. God may have disclosed this revelation very early, or he may have given it directly to Moses, perhaps on Mt. Sinai during the 6+1 days of tabernacle revelation (Exod 24:15; cf. the 6+1 speeches in Exod 25–31). Regardless, because the Bible's historical account that ends in Revelation begins in Genesis 2:4, marking Genesis 1:1–2:3 a preface to the whole.
2. We must ask, therefore, why Moses felt compelled to front the main narrative with this preface. His audience were those recently confronted with their sin (be it at the golden calf episode [Exod 32–24] or the rebellion at Kadesh [Num 13–14]), who were being continually reminded of its results through 38 years of wilderness punishment. It is these people to whom Genesis 1 is first revealed as Bible.
3. I propose that there must be more than chronology or science at stake here. Genesis 1:1–2:3 is designed for a people asking not, “How did God create everything?” but, “How can I live and not die?” To this group, the Bible's opening chapter speaks a worldview-shaping message.

### C. Gen. 1:1–2:3 as Introductory to Scripture. The historical narrative that dominates Genesis–Kings begins in Gen. 2:4. This makes Gen. 1:1–2:3 introductory and raises the question why it fronts Genesis, the Pentateuch, the OT, and Bible as a whole.

1. Gen. 1:1–2:3 is clearly not a first-hand, eye-witness account; rather, the week was disclosed through special revelation that was well-established in Israel's tradition (Exod. 16:22–30) even before God revealed the Ten Words at Mount Sinai (20:8–11).
2. There seems to be an intentional parallel with the building instructions of the tabernacle in Exodus, for the 6+1 pattern is seen in each. In Gen. 1:1–2:3, the 6+1 pattern reveals God's forming that which lacked shape and filling that which was empty (Gen. 1:2), climaxing on the sixth day in his creation of image bearers whose mission was to display God's greatness in the world (1:26–28) and all

pushing to the ultimate goal of God's sovereign rest over all, wherein his entire world was surrendered to him and at peace with him and one another. In Exodus, the tabernacle building instructions are given over six days, the last of which shows the equipping of two humans to oversee the project (Exod 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1); the seventh day then discloses God's purpose for Sabbath (31:12). These parallels do not by nature require that the former was crafted to image the latter, though the presence of this connection (along with numerous other parallels; see the *lecture notes*) suggests that Israel would have seen God's creating of the heavens and earth as the establishment of a cosmic temple.

3. The makeup and experience of the original audience on Gen 1:1–2:3 as we presently have it would have been post-fall and, in its present form, post-golden calf and perhaps wilderness rebellion. This suggests that the rhetorical purpose of Gen. 1:1–2:3 is more than to clarify origins or chronology (though not less). Life and death is at stake, and these verses become one of the most foundational worldview shaping texts in all the Bible, answering at least in part, all the major worldview questions: Who is God? What is valuable? Where are we? Who are we? What is wrong with the world? What is the solution? Gen. 1:1–2:3 tells the reader not only what happened but how things are supposed to be.

**D. Literary Artistry and Structure in Gen. 1:1–2:3** (\*See Figs. 3.1–3.2 below):

1. Genesis 1:1–2:3 reveals a high-level of artistry and beauty, but elevated style does not by nature mean a-historical (e.g., Exod. 14–15, where the parting of the Red Sea is described first through narrative and then through song; Judg. 4–5, where the death of Sisera is described in the same pattern).
2. The phrase “formless and void” (or “uninhabitable and uninhabited”) in Genesis 1:2 appears to provide an intentional structuring pattern for the first six days, days 1–3 including God's giving shape to that which was formless and days 4–6 including God's filling that which was empty (see Fig. 3.1 below).
3. Genesis 1 uses the explicit subject “God” in nearly every clause, the purpose of which is clearly rhetorical as it was unnecessary for the grammar. A proper view of the world demands keeping God as the center.
4. The chapter is dominated by multiples of the number 7, showing a high-level of intentional crafting: 7 day structure; “God” (<sup>ʿ</sup>*lōhîm*) = 35x; “Earth” (<sup>ʿ</sup>*ereṣ*) = 21x; “Heavens” (*šāmayim*) + “firmament/dome” (*rāqîaʿ*) + “separation” (*mabdil*) = 21x; “Good/beautiful” (*tōb*) = 7x
5. Day 6 alone includes the definite article, thus drawing attention to the day humanity was created (“a first day, a second day, a third day ... *the* sixth day”). The same emphasis is made by including *very* before “good” only in 1:31.
6. The seven days show an incomplete but repetitive narrative pattern (see Fig. 3.2).
  - a. The pattern:
    - i. Report of Divine Creative Utterance (“And God said...”)
    - ii. Ending formula for Divine Creative Utterance (“And it was so...”)
    - iii. Report of Divine Creative Act (“And God made...”)
    - iv. Report of Divine Shaping Act (“And God did...”)
    - v. Name-giving formula (“And God called...”)
    - vi. Ending formula for Divine Act (“And God saw that it was good”)
    - vii. Report of Divine Blessing Utterance (“And God blessed ... saying”)

- viii. Ending formula for the day (“And there was evening, and there was morning”)
- b. Inconsistencies in the Pattern:
  - i. Inconsistent placement of Ending Formula for Creative Utterance
 

<u>Consistent</u>	<u>Inconsistent</u>
1:3 (Day 1)	1:6–8 (Day 2) (after fulfillment)
1:9–10 (Day 3/Act 1)	1:20–23 (Day 5) (absent)
1:11–13 (Day 3 / Act 2)	1:29 (Day 6 / Act 2) (after food granted)
1:14–19 (Day 4)	
1:24–25 (Day 6 / Act 1)	
  - ii. Divine Act in 1st Day is not creative (cf. Rev 21:23), and no report of Divine Act in Day 3, Acts 1–2 (earth does “act” in 1:12)
  - iii. No Naming Formulae in Acts 4–8
  - iv. No ending formula in Day 5; ending formula for Divine Act in Day 6, Act 2 pertains to all creation (1:31)
  - v. Divine Blessing is pronounced in Day 5 and Day 6, Act 2 (also Day 7)
  - vi. Ending formulae for Days 1–5 are indefinite (“a second day”), but definite for Day 6 (“the sixth day”); no ending formula for Day 7

**Fig. 3.1. Narrative Structure of the Creative Acts in Genesis 1:1–2:3**

FORMLESS (1:2) > FORM <i>Uninhabitable &gt; Inhabitable</i>	VOID (1:2) > CONTENT <sup>1</sup> <i>Uninhabited &gt; Inhabited</i>
<b>Day 1/Act 1:</b> Light = “Day / Darkness = “Night” (1:3–5)	<b>Day 4/Act 5:</b> Luminaries (1:14–19)
<b>Day 2/Act 2:</b> Expanse = “Sky” / Water under sky = “ <u>Seas</u> ” <sup>2</sup> (1:6–8)	<b>Day 5/Act 6:</b> Sea creatures and flying creatures (1:20–23)
<b>Day 3/Act 3:</b> Appearance of dry land = “Land/Earth” / gathering of waters under sky = “Seas” [1:9–10] <b>Day 3/Act 4:</b> Earth sprouts vegetation [1:11–12] (1:9–13)	<b>Day 6/Act 7:</b> Land creatures [1:24–25]  <b>Day 6/Act 8:</b> <sup>3</sup> Mankind [1:26–30] (1:24–31)
<b>Day 7: Sovereign Rest</b> <sup>4</sup> (2:1–3)	

<sup>1</sup> Along with clear 6 + 1 pattern, the first six days of the creation week may be structured to answer the dilemma of Gen 1:2 – “the earth was formless and void.” Seen in this way, the first half of the week takes what is formless and gives it form, whereas the second half fills the emptiness with content that is directly related to the form of the corresponding day. The echo of “formless” in Deut 32:10 (where the “wilderness” through which God sustained Israel is described) suggests the translation “uninhabitable” (cf. Jer 4:23).

<sup>2</sup> While distinguished in day 2, the “waters under the sky” are named “seas” in day 3 (1:10).

<sup>3</sup> Focus is drawn to the sixth day in general and the creation of mankind (Act 8) in particular for the following reasons: (1) In the Hebrew text, day 6 alone has the definite article attached to number in the ending formula (1:31): “the sixth day” vs. “a second day, a third day, a fourth day, etc.”; (2) only after mankind is created does God declare what he has made “very good” (1:30); (3) only mankind is said to be created “in the image of God” (1:26–27); (4) the creation of mankind is the eighth (not seventh!) act of God in the creation week, which draws attention to its significance (cf. David as the eighth son of Jesse [1 Sam 16:10–11]; Amos’ placing Israel as the eighth nation under God’s wrath, after Aram, Philistia, Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and Judah [Amos 2:6–16])

<sup>4</sup> This is not the rest of laziness but the rest of a king who has definitively established his kingdom and now can sit on his throne and rule, for all is at peace (see Ps. 139:7–8, 13–14). Day 7 becomes the goal of the creation week, clarifying the ideal reality toward which all was created and still is headed (cf. Heb 4:1–13; Rom 8:18–25).

Fig. 3.2. Narrative Elements in Genesis 1:1–2:3

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3		Day 4	Day 5	Day 6		Day 7
	<i>Act 1</i>	<i>Act 2</i>	<i>Act 3</i>	<i>Act 4</i>	<i>Act 5</i>	<i>Act 6</i>	<i>Act 7</i>	<i>Act 8</i>	<i>Rest</i>
<b>1. Report of Divine Creative Utterance</b> (“And God said, ‘Let ...’”)	1:3	1:6	1:9	1:11	1:14	1:20	1:24	1:26	
<b>2. Ending Formula for Divine Creative Utterance</b> (“And it was so”)	1:3	<u>1:7</u> <sup>5</sup>	1:9	1:11	1:15		1:24	<u>1:30</u> <sup>6</sup>	2:1?
<b>3. Report of Divine Creative Act</b> (“And God made/ <u>created</u> ”)		1:7		<u>1:12</u> <sup>7</sup>	1:16	<u>1:21</u>	1:25	<u>1:27</u>	
<b>4. Report of Divine Shaping Act</b> (“And God did [something]”)	1:4				1:17				2:2
<b>5. Name-giving Formula</b> (“And God called”)	<u>1:5</u> <sup>8</sup>	1:8	1:10						
<b>6. Ending Formula for Divine Act</b> (“And God saw that it was good”)	1:4		1:10	1:12	1:18	1:21	1:25	<u>1:31</u> <sup>9</sup>	
<b>7. Report of Divine Blessing Utterance</b> (“And God blessed ... saying”)						1:22		1:28	2:3
<b>8. Report of Divine Utterance</b> (“And God said”)								1:1:29–30	
<b>9. Ending Formula for the Day</b> (“And there was evening and morning”)	1:5	1:8		1:13	1:19	1:23		<u>1:31</u> <sup>10</sup>	

NOTE: *Italics* means the element is peculiar in some way (always footnoted); underlining means the element is placed out of order from the common pattern.

### E. Different Interpretations of Gen 1:1–2:3 from the Perspective of History and Science

1. *24 Hour Mature Earth View*: God created all of physical creation out of nothing in six successive calendar days.

<sup>5</sup> Placed after 3.

<sup>6</sup> Placed after 8.

<sup>7</sup> “The earth brought forth” (rather than God but) in accordance with his creative utterance in 1:9.

<sup>8</sup> Placed after 6.

<sup>9</sup> Placed just before 9 with full declaration, “It was *very* good.”

<sup>10</sup> Only ending formula with definite article attached to the number: “*the* sixth day” vs. “a second day, a third day, a fourth day, etc.”

2. *Day-Age View*: God created all of physical creation out of nothing in a chronological progression of ages spanning an indefinite period of time.
3. *Framework View*: God created all of physical creation out of nothing, but Genesis 1:1–2:3 portrays this move of God through a literary, temporal framework and topical arrangement that may or may not have anything to do with actual chronology.
4. *Non-material, Functional View*: In Genesis 1:1–2:3, God is not creating the material universe but is instead giving functions to already existing matter over six successive days (John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*).
5. *Promised Land View*: Genesis 1:1 speaks of God creating the universe out of nothing, but Genesis 1:2–2:4 testify to his preparation of the Promised Land/Garden of Eden for humanity (John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*).

**THINK!**

Stake out your position on creation's origins, including the meaning of the days of creation in Genesis 1, the possibility of evolution, the historicity of Adam and Eve, the age of the earth, and any other related issues. While Genesis addresses larger issues of God's purpose in creation and the realities of sin and redemption, what does it say and what does it require and not require regarding our beliefs in origins? (After wrestling on your own, read "Questions of Origins" in A.3.1 in the Appendix for DeRouchie's take on the matter.)

#### F. An Overview of Gen 1:1–2:3

1. Gen. 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
  - a. *Time marker*: "In the beginning"
  - b. *Sole actor*: The Trinitarian Creator: God the father creates by his word ("Let there be...") and Spirit ("hovering over the waters").
  - c. *Distinctive divine act*: "to create" (bookended with 2:1)
  - d. *Object*: "the heavens and the earth"—a merism for the whole created realm: unseen heavens (where God and angels dwell), seen heavens (atmosphere and space), and earth (our planet) (see Psalm 148 where all three are linked with "heaven and earth")
  - e. *Is this a Summary or the start of a Sequence?*
    - i. Option 1: Sequence
      - (1) Gen. 1:1 is the first event in the creation week. The rest of the chapter *follows* this action.
      - (2) "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. *Then* he formed and filled it...."
      - (3) Strength: It makes absolutely clear that God created everything out of nothing.
        - (a) Heb 11:3. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.
        - (b) Rev 4:11. Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.
    - ii. Option 2: Summary
      - (1) Gen. 1:1 is a statement that is then unpacked.

- (2) “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And this is how he did it....”
  - (3) Strength: It keeps all of creation at “the beginning” and in contrast to “the end” or “latter days.”
- 2. Gen. 1:2. ““The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.””
  - a. *Creation was a process*: Focus here is on unmet potential. The start of Day 1 included an undifferentiated mass.
  - b. *“Formless and void”*: Uninhabitable and uninhabited; lacking clear shape and distinction of the parts (land and water, sky and earth).
- 3. The Creation Week
  - a. Days 1–3 = The formless takes shape
    - i. Day 1 (vv. 2–5):
      - (1) God creates light
      - (2) God separates light and dark/day and night
    - ii. Day 2 (vv. 6–8):
      - (1) God creates the expanse (“heavens” in 1:8 = the earth’s atmosphere + outer space as part of the “heavens” in 1:1)
      - (2) God separates waters above and below
    - iii. Day 3 (vv. 9–13):
      - (1) Creation of land and vegetation
      - (2) God separates land and seas
  - b. Days 4–6 = The Void Becomes Filled
    - i. Day 4 (vv. 14–19):
      - (1) God creates luminaries for the heavens (2 greater lights and the stars)
      - (2) God places and delegates luminaries for signs and to rule over day and night, to separate light from darkness and day from night, and to distinguish seasons, days, years.
    - ii. Day 5 (vv. 20–23)
      - (1) God creates air and sea creatures
      - (2) God delegates them to be fruitful, to multiply, and to fill the seas and land.
    - iii. Day 6 (vv. 24–31)
      - (1) God creates land creatures and mankind
      - (2) God delegates land creatures to fill the land and mankind to fill the land and rule over the creatures of the sea, sky, and land.
    - iv. Day 7: God’s sovereign rest

### G. The Message of Gen 1:1–2:3

- 1. *God as the Source and Goal of All Things*
  - a. The opening statement (Gen. 1:1) affirms that the universe is not eternal but has its origin from the one true God; nothing exists that he did not create. God is over all luminaries, water, and living things; polytheism, pantheism, and naturalism have no place in this world.
  - b. God’s declaration that all was (very) good (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) implies an ultimate, objective standard of value. One personal being alone

determines what is good and evil, right and wrong; there is no dualism or polytheism.

- c. God creates his world with order and structure, pointing to the fixed and unaltering nature of his commitment to his people (Jer. 31:35–37; 33:20–21, 25–26) and of his written word (Matt. 5:18); the luminaries are “signs” in this sense (cf. Gen. 1:14).
  - d. At the climax of his creation, God creates mankind in “his image,” giving them authority to rule over and subdue creation and by this to “image” to the world the one with ultimate dominion—God himself (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8); mankind is the key means by which God will expand his kingdom.
  - e. The use of the explicit subject “God” throughout Gen. 1:1–2:3 places proper stress on him as the source of all things and the one to which all is to point: “*God* created, *God* said, *God* made, etc.; as humans experience life in this world, they are to be directed back to God.
  - f. “7” is the number of perfection in the Bible:
    - i. 7 day structure
    - ii. “God” (*ʾēlōhîm*) = 35x
    - iii. “Earth” (*ʾeres*) = 21x
    - iv. “Heavens” (*šāmayim*) + “firmament/dome” (*rāqîaʿ*) + “separation” (*mabdîl*) = 21x
    - v. “Good/beautiful” (*tôb*) = 7x
  - g. The call to “multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and rule” is framed in the context of a divine blessing, which means God himself will ultimately be the one to fulfill his kingdom building expansion, and he will do it through a community of kingdom families; the commission is ultimately promise.
  - h. The divine rest of the 7<sup>th</sup> day provides the goal to which all creation moves—God existing at peace with his world (cf. Exod. 20:11; Heb. 3–4). The rest here is not of laziness but of sovereignty, wherein God the Creator, having established the sacred space of his kingdom, sits enthroned at peace with what he has made (cf. Ps. 132:7–8, 13–14). While the fall did not disrupt God’s right and sovereignty over all, it did disrupt the world’s peace with God. The goal of creation, therefore, becomes seeing sovereign rest realized again on a global scale—a reality accomplished in Christ (Matt. 11:28–29; Heb. 4:8–11).
  - i. Conclusion: Human life is carried out in God’s world, and every experience within this world is to direct us back to him as the great provider and sustainer of life.
2. *Excursus: Why Elohim and not Yahweh in Genesis 1?*
- a. Elohim is a challenging title in many ways.
    - i. It is applied both to the supreme true God over all (Gen. 5:22; Ps. 42:3) but also to false deities (Exod. 12:12), to their images (Deut. 7:25), and to angelic beings (Ps. 8:6) (and even metaphorically to Moses [Exod 4:16; 7:1] and the king [Ps 45:7]).
    - ii. While the full term is found nowhere outside the Bible, it is an expanded form of the common Semitic noun for deity (El) used in many places throughout the ancient world.



- iii. Its spelling includes the masculine plural noun ending, but it usually takes singular verbs because it is usually applied to a single divine being, most commonly Yahweh but not exclusively (see 1 Kgs 11:33).
    - b. Rather than viewing the “plural” ending as a “plural of majesty” (so Joüon-Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §136*d*), I am more drawn to the think that the plural is used to intensify, absolutize, and/or exclude, expressing a shorthand for “God of *gods*” (so Fretheim, *NIDOTTE* 1:405–406). I am cautious to see in the plural a direct reference to the Trinity, but its use does make the later explicit Trinitarian descriptions quite natural.
    - c. As for meaning, it is the most common and generic word for “god.”
      - i. It is often used right alongside Yahweh, but because it is directly related to term for “god” used by non-Israelites, its use in Scripture may have an apologetic, polemical, or missional purpose—that is, “the real God of the universe is the one worshipped by Israel” or “you say you worship a god, but I worship the God of gods” (see Deut 10:17).
      - ii. It seems best to define Elohim as “God” rather than to add some qualifier like “creator God” or the like, for as the most universal term for God it includes all other expressions of the divine character. However, as the most general, universal term for God, it is uniquely suited to capture God’s mission heart for all nations of the earth.
      - iii. It seems likely that Elohim rather than Yahweh is used in Genesis 1 *so that* Israel will grow to see that their God is the God of the world; the title “Yahweh Elohim” is then used in Genesis 2 to identify the universal God with Israel’s personal God.
3. *Humans Created in the Image of God*
    - a. Biblical synthesis:
      - i. Mankind was created in God’s image, according to his likeness, which appears to imply both function and ontology. Specifically, the terms point to divine royal sonship, bearing kinship, priestly, and royal overtones. Like a son born into royalty who bears identity, relationship, responsibility, and knowledge all humans bear the capacity and responsibility to represent, reflect, and resemble God in some ways, which results in their ruling creation and relating to God and others.
        - Gen. 1:26. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”
        - Gen. 5:1–3. This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. <sup>2</sup>Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. <sup>3</sup>When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.
      - ii. God’s commission was for humanity to multiply the representation, reflection, and resemblance of God through the entire globe.
        - Gen. 1:28. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the

sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

- iii. The knowledge of God’s pleasures and values (e.g., good and evil) is a likeness that people gain through obedience or disobedience.
  - Gen 2:16–17. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,<sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
  - Gen 3:5. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”
  - Gen 3:22. Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.
- iv. After the fall, we all remain in the image of God, distorted as it may be, and the charge remains to display God’s supremacy in our lives.
  - Gen. 9:6. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.
  - Jas. 3:9. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.
  - Matt. 22:17–20. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”<sup>18</sup>But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?<sup>19</sup>Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius.<sup>20</sup>And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?”<sup>21</sup>They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”
- v. When united to Adam, our original covenant representative, we bore his image.
  - 1 Cor. 15:49a. We have borne the image of the man of dust.
- vi. Though we are *in* the image of God, Jesus *is* the image of God.
  - Col. 1:15. [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God.
  - 2 Cor. 4:4. Christ ... is the image of God.
  - Heb. 1:3. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.
  - John 1:18. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.
  - John 14:9. Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?”
- vii. When we become united with Christ, our new covenant head, our goal is to be conformed and transformed into his image, which includes growth in righteousness, holiness, and knowledge.
  - Rom. 8:29. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.
  - 2 Cor. 3:18. Beholding the glory of the Lord, [we] are being transformed into the image from one degree of glory to another.
  - Eph. 4:21–24. You ... were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,<sup>22</sup> to put off your old man, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,<sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,<sup>24</sup> and to put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.
  - Col. 3:10. [We] have put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.
- viii. When Christ returns, we will fully and completely reflect the image of Christ.

- 1 Cor. 15:49. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.
- 1 John 3:2. Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

**Fig. 3.4. The Image of God: Four Views**

View	Description
Substantive	Qualities humans share with God (Who we are in essence – e.g., spirit, intellect, emotions, will, conscience, etc.)
Functional	Exercising dominion like God (What we do – see Gen 1:26, 28; 2:15)
Relational	Social beings relating to God & others (How we relate – see Gen 1:27)
DeRouchie	Reflectors and magnifiers of God’s supremacy in all areas of life (our makeup, actions, interactions—telescopes, not microscopes)

b. Ancient Near Eastern Context

i. Mankind as images of the gods

- Instruction of Merikare (Egypt). Well tended mankind—god’s cattle, he made sky and earth for their sake, he subdued the water monster, he made breath for their noses to live. They are his images, who came from his body, he shrines in the sky for their sake; he made for them plants and cattle, fowl and fish to feed them. (M. Lechtheim, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1.106)

ii. Kings as images of the gods

- Esarhaddon Text 1 (Mesopotamia [Akkadian]). A freeman is as the shadow of a god, the slave is as the shadow of a freeman, but the king, he is like the very **image** (Akk. *muššulu*) of god.
- Esarhaddon Text 2 (Mesopotamia [Akkadian]). The father of the king, my lord, was the very **image** (Akk. *šalmu* = Heb. *šlm*) of Bel, and the king, my lord, is likewise the very **image** (*šalmu*) of Bel.

iii. Priests as images of the gods

- An Exorcism Text (Mesopotamia [Akkadian]). The exorcism is the exorcism of Marduk; the priest is the **image** (Akk. *šalmu* = Heb. *šlm*) of Marduk.

iv. Kings make images/statutes of themselves

- The Tell Fekheriye Inscription (Old Aramaic, ca. 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of ninth cent. B.C.). The **image** (Aram. *dmwṗ* = Heb. *dmwt*) of Hadad-yith<sup>c</sup>1 which he has set up before Hadad of Sikan, regulator of the waters of heaven and earth, who rains down abundance, who gives pasture and watering-places to all lands, who gives rest and vessels of food to all the gods, his brothers, regulator of all rivers, who enriches all lands, the merciful god.... The **statue** (Aram. *šlm* = Heb. *šlm*) of Hadad-yith<sup>c</sup> I, king of Guzan and of Sikan and of Azran, for exalting and continuing his throne.... this **image** (*dmwṗ*) he made better than before. In the presence of Hadad, he has set up his **statue** (*šlm*).... (CS 2:153–54).

v. Other related texts from Mesopotamia:

- Enki, Ninmakh, and the Creation of Humankind (Sumerian). O my mother, the being whom you named is there: associate the image[?] of the gods with him, mix the nucleus of clay above the primal ocean. The gods and princely figures[?] will thicken the clay, but you must give life to the limbs. (W. Beyerlin, ed., *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 77)
- Atrahasis Epic (Akkadian, ca. 1635 B.C.). *Ea spoke to the gods*: Belet-ili the womb-goddess is present—Let her create a mortal man so that he may bear the yoke, [the work of Ellil], let man bear the load of the gods. (SBV iv; Dalley, *Myths From Mesopotamia*, 14)

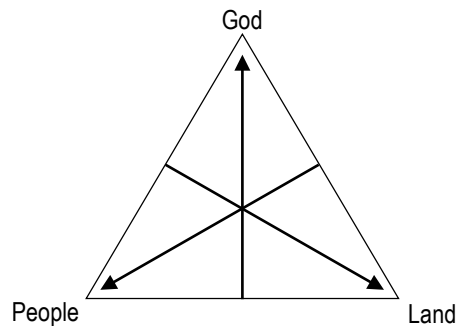
- Enuma Elish / Epic of Creation (Akkadian, ca. 1100 B.C.). *Marduk addresses Ea*: Let me put blood together, and make bones too. Let me set up primeval man: Man shall be his name. Let me create a primeval man. The work of the gods shall be imposed (on him), and so they shall be at leisure. (VI:2–8; S. Dalley, *Myths From Mesopotamia*, 261; cf. *ANET*, 68)
- vi. **Significance.** The significance of persons or objects as *images* of a god or king was in the way they pointed to that which they represented.
  - c. Theological implications of being image bearers:
    - i. Humans are called to image God, reflecting or magnifying his supremacy in all areas of life (our makeup, actions, interactions).
    - ii. Humans hold a special place in God’s creation; as the pinnacle of God’s creative acts, we are designed to be the key instruments through which God is exalted on the earth.
    - iii. Humans are social beings, created to express God’s supremacy in community.
    - iv. Humans are on mission to reflect God as glorious all the time and in every way (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31); sin occurs when we fail to glorify God in this way (Rom. 3:23).
    - v. At the heart of what it means to be human is surrender and trust: Humans image God when he is shown to be the king of our decisions, intentions, relationships, reactions, and words.
  4. *The Land as the Context for Divine-Human Relationship*
    - a. The earth’s purpose:
      - i. *A Pointer.* To display God’s glory in a way that directs humans back to God. Every facet of God’s world testifies to the wonder of the Creator *God*, radiating his excellence and calling for praise (cf. Isa. 6:3; Ps. 19:1–6).
        - Isa. 6:3. Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.
        - Ps. 19:1. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
      - ii. *A Context.* Through the space it provides and the food it produces (1:28–29), it plays a key role in the God-glorifying mission of humanity; without the earth, mankind cannot fulfill its mission.
    - b. The implication for humanity:
      - i. *Gratitude.* Humans should be grateful, knowing that the very context of life and all provision for life is a gift of God.
      - ii. *Stewardship.*
        - (1) Humans must not destroy or exploit the environment but must maintain it in such a way that the context for relationship with God can be maintained and that God’s image can be displayed throughout the world from generation to generation.
        - (2) God calls an ever-expanding community of kingdom families to oversee and care for the earth, all the while inter-relating in such a way that the lordship of God is treasured and displayed. Men and women together are to “have dominion over” the various creatures of the sea, sky, and dry land (1:26, 28)—a responsibility that includes distinct roles and is clarified later as a

leadership of service and guardianship, of provision (“work it”) and protection (“keep it”) (2:15, 18).

#### H. The Covenant Triangle

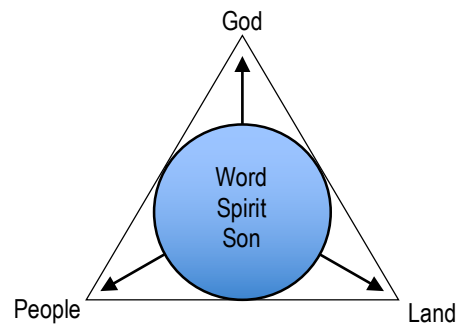
1. Genesis 1:1–2:3 discloses an interrelationship between the supremacy of God over all things, his passion to relate with a people, and the context wherein this relationship is enjoyed. This symbiotic relationship exists throughout every stage in redemptive history.
2. The general pattern is as follows: When the people delight in the Lord and surrender to his ways, the land flourishes, supplying human need and security. When God upholds the environment through productivity and protection, people are satisfied. And when people live God’s way in his world, the Lord is glorified. However, when any side of the “covenant triangle” is broken, the whole relationship crumbles.

**Fig. 3.5. Inter-relationship within the Covenant Triangle**



3. In addition the way God maintains or oversees this covenantal triangle is through a combination of his Word, his Spirit, and his “Son.”

**Fig. 3.6. Maintenance of the Covenant Triangle**



- a. **God’s Word.** By God’s Word all things in the universe are upheld (Heb. 1:3). His Word is powerful, never returning empty and always accomplishing what it sets forth to do (Isa. 55:11). God’s Word creates what it commands, whether light in space and time (Gen. 1:3) or spiritual sight in a blinded heart (2 Cor. 4:6; cf. Deut. 29:4).

The Lord spoke his Word through the prophets (Deut. 18:18; 2 Peter 1:21), who in turn wrote down those words in the language of the people,

thus securing a lasting guide and witness in what we now call the Old Testament (Deut. 31:26–29; 2 Kgs. 2:3; 23:3; Dan. 9:11). This written, canonical text was then to be copied (Deut. 17:18; Josh. 8:32), studied or meditated on (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:3; Neh. 8:13), and taught by faithful followers from generation to generation, be they priests, prophets, princes, parents, or the like (Lev. 10:10–11; Deut. 18:18; 31:9–13; 33:10; Ezek. 22:26; Mal. 2:7; Ps. 78:5–8; Neh. 8:8). God promised to look favorably upon all who tremble at his Word (Isa. 66:2). Heeding his Word sustained life, but rejecting God’s Word would result in death (Deut. 32:46–47; Jer. 14:14–15; Ps. 19:7–11).

In the fullness of time (Gal 4:4), God spoke again, now through Jesus, his eternal Word (John 1:1; Heb 1:1), who called his disciples to obey his teachings (Matt. 28:20). He also promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would recall for them all he taught (John 14:26; 16:12–13). Then these apostles, empowered by the Spirit of Christ in them, spread the teaching of Jesus through what we now call the New Testament (Eph 2:20; 3:5; 2 Pet 3:2; Jude 3).

- b. **God’s Spirit.** Throughout the Old Testament, the Spirit is God’s active presence in space and time. Often it manifested itself visibly as a thunderstorm filled with darkness, cloud, fire, smoke, wind, and thunder (see Isa. 63:11; Hag. 2:5; Neh. 9:20). Through such a theophany, God created the universe (Gen. 1:2), vowed unbreakable promises to Abra(ha)m (Gen. 15:17–18), dwelt in the midst of Israel (Exod. 13:21–22; 40:34–38), gave his Law (Exod. 19:16; Deut. 5:22), destroyed rebels (Lev. 10:2; Num. 16:35), and encountered his prophets (1 Kgs. 19:11–12; Ezek. 1:4).

God’s Spirit often “came upon” or “filled” select individuals for specific tasks. At times this appears to have been empowerment for a limited duration, as with the craftsmen for the Tabernacle (Exod. 31:3; 35:31), some prophets (Num. 24:2; 1 Sam. 10:10; 2 Kgs. 2:15; 2 Chr. 15:1–7; 20:14–17), and the judges (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6). Other times, as with some of Israel’s leaders, the empowerment appears to have been more long-term (Num. 11:17, 25; 1 Sam. 11:6; 16:13), except in the case of Saul, where God removed his Spirit, resulting in the king’s ruin (1 Sam. 16:14; cf. Ps. 51:11).

God’s indwelling presence distinguished Old Testament saints from the rebel majority (Num. 14:24; 27:18; Deut. 34:9), and in anticipation of Pentecost, Moses longed for the day when Yahweh would put his Spirit on all his people (Num. 11:29; cf. Acts 2:1–21). Moses also declared that God’s presence alone was what set Israel apart from the nations (Exod. 33:16; Deut. 4:7), and he was convinced that recalling this manifest glory was a key means for generating the fear that leads to holiness (Deut. 4:9–10).

In the age of restoration, the entire covenant community would readily identify with Yahweh and enjoy the indwelling Spirit, who would bring righteousness and peace and enable sustained surrender to God and his ways (Isa. 32:15–18; 44:1–5; Ezek. 36:23, 27; 37:26–28). This Spirit is

nothing less than the new covenant Spirit of Christ, who regenerates, empowers, and sustains (John 3:8; 6:63; Rom. 8:9–14; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 6:8). The Spirit, therefore, is portrayed as vitally important for maintaining the covenant triangle and enabling the display of God’s greatness for which man was created.

- c. **God’s Son.** Genesis 5:1, 3 compare God’s creating Adam in his likeness with the way Adam “fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.” Just as Seth bore his father’s image, so too Adam, as the “son of God,” was in the likeness of his “Father,” being created with a unique capacity to display God’s glory and being charged to raise up offspring who would continue this mission in the next generation (Gen. 1:26–28; cf. Deut. 6:7, 20–25; Ps. 78:4–8). Adam’s role was that of a priest-king, who was called to represent God’s leadership and direct others to God’s supremacy on earth. While Adam failed miserably at his task, this nevertheless was the responsibility of a royal son, and it was carried on throughout the Old Testament, specifically through the line of promise.

By setting Israel apart for himself, God became Israel’s “father” and they his “firstborn son” (Exod. 4:22–23; Deut. 32:6), and the nation was to represent God as priests in the world (Exod. 19:5–6; Deut. 4:5–8). Ultimately, the nation failed in this mission, substantially because their leaders continued to rebel.

However, in the midst of the darkness, the Lord raised up King David and promised that his offspring would be the royal “Son” of God, whose inheritance would be an eternal dynasty with worldwide governance (2 Sam. 7:13–14; Ps. 2:7–8). This latter application recalled the earlier promises from Genesis of a male, royal offspring of the woman and offspring of Abraham who would destroy evil and establish peace throughout the world (Gen. 3:15; 22:17b–18; 24:60; 49:8–10). This royal son would image his “Father” rightly and perfectly and thereby serve as a channel of blessing to the nations.

As the ultimate fulfillment of the ever-narrowing trajectory set with Adam (universal), Israel (national), and David (individual), Jesus was considered “the Son of the Most High” and “the Son of God,” who would enjoy “the throne of David his father” and “reign over the house of Jacob forever” (Luke 1:32–33, 35; cf. 3:22). His own ancestry was linked to “Adam, the son of God” (3:38), and through his perfect reflection of his Father’s glory and by his representation of his spiritual offspring, he would maintain the new covenant triangle forever (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 9:15).

The Word, Spirit, and Son are the glue that holds covenant relationships together. As Old Testament history showed, when God’s Word was ignored, or when his Spirit was not present or feared, or when the “Son” failed to represent his “Father” well, the glue for holding the covenant triangle together is absent, God’s people fail in their mission, and the three-part relationship deteriorates. The following figures show the development of the God-people-land relationship throughout redemptive history.

**Fig. 1.5. The God-People-Land Relationship in Redemptive History**

<p><b>1. Adamic/Noahic Covenant</b></p> <p><i>Gen. 1:27–28.</i> So God created man in his own image ...; male and female he created them.... And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it."</p> <p><i>Gen. 9:1, 9–10.</i> Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.... Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you.</p>	<p><b>2. Abrahamic Covenant &amp; Israel's Mission</b></p> <p><i>Gen. 12:1–3.</i> Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.</p>
<p><b>3. Mosaic-Davidic Covenants &amp; Israel's Mission</b></p> <p><i>Exod. 19:4–6.</i> You yourselves have seen what I did not the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.</p> <p><i>2 Sam. 7:12–14.</i> I will raise up your offspring after you.... He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.</p> <p><i>Ps. 2:7–8.</i> Yahweh said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession."</p>	<p><b>4. New Covenant Fulfillment</b></p> <p><i>Rom. 8:3–4.</i> God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.</p> <p><i>Gal. 3:13–14, 24–26.</i> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us ... so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith..... The law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.</p>



## I. Summary: The Questions of Life and the Old Testament Worldview<sup>11</sup>

Genesis 1:1–2:3 is indeed a worldview shaping text that calls readers to reorient their core commitments about the basic constitution of reality. Through answering major questions of life, the text calls not only for right beliefs but also proper affections and lifestyle in light of who God is and why he does what he does. A person who reads the Bible's preface rightly will be forced out of the status quo into a radical lifestyle that cherishes mercy and treasures all God is for us, ultimately in Jesus Christ. What follows is a summary of the major truths taught in Genesis 1:1–2:3.

1. **Who or what governs reality?** Genesis 1:1–2:3 teaches that there is only one God from whom, through whom, and to whom everything visible and invisible exists. This implies that he alone is the supreme Savior, Sovereign, and Satisfier of mankind. Peace will only be truly enjoyed in this world when God's supremacy over all things is cherished.
2. **Who are we?** Humans are the climax of God's creation, designed to represent, reflect, and resemble God on the earth. For sinners longing to live, this clarification of humanity's purpose should motivate a new passion for God-oriented surrender, for helping others to find joy in God's supremacy, and for guarding against self-exaltation.
3. **Where are we?** The earth is the Lord's and provides the context for those in this present age to enjoy relationship with the Creator. Because it provides a means for sustenance and a setting for lasting enjoyment of God, humans must maintain it with care.
4. **What is valuable in this world?** Because God is preeminent over all things, true value is only understood in relation to him. That which displays his worth and affirms his supremacy is what is good.
5. **What has gone wrong in this world?** Every reader should recognize how far humanity has "fallen short" from this ideal of Genesis 1:1–2:3. Rather than living for the glory of God, Adam and all who sinned in him (Rom. 5:12) have exalted self over God and loved things other than God not for his sake (1:21; 3:23). If rest and life, joy and blessing are experienced when God's supremacy is celebrated, chaos and death, discontentment and curse are what is characteristic of this world apart from God. Because any offense against an infinitely glorious God would demand an equally infinite punishment, our sin is the greatest problem in this world.

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<sup>11</sup> For a similar list of worldview questions (2, 3, 5, 6), see Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984), 35; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 123; J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 11; C. J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 18. N. T. Wright (123 n. 6) notes that in Vatican II, the Roman Catholics suggested the following questions were common to all humans: What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behavior, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? What happens at death? What is judgment? What reward follows death? What is the ultimate mystery, beyond human explanations, which embraces our entire existence, from which we taken our origin and towards which we tend? For more on the latter discussion, see Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publishers, 1975), 738.

6. **What is the remedy?** Is there any hope for sinful humanity? Every reader of Genesis 1:1–2:3 has been and continues to be part of the age of curse. As such, the portrait of the original creation must be seen not simply as a record of what was but as an ideal goal to be pursued. Humanity’s purpose is bound up in replacing lives of self-rule and destruction with radical God-exalting, passion-filled surrender and in helping others live for this same goal. But how, once the relationship with God was breached, could mankind again enjoy relationship with its Creator? The very presence of Genesis 1 at the front of the Bible answers, “Amazing Grace!” And the rest of Scripture, beginning with Genesis 2:4, clarifies God’s *program of redemption*, by which he purposed to restore kingdom-order on a universal scale through a series of covenants climaxing in the person of Jesus and overflowing in new creation.