

Dr. Kenneth Mathews, Genesis, Session 2, Creation, Genesis 1:1-2:3 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathews, Genesis, Session 2, Genesis 1:1-2:3, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Kenneth Mathews' Genesis Session 2 lecture analyzes the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3. He explores the text's structure, interpreting the meaning of "day" (yom) as potentially representing extended periods rather than solely 24-hour days. The lecture further examines the creation and blessing of humanity, highlighting humanity's unique image of God and dominion over creation. Finally, it contrasts the biblical creation narrative with those of the ancient Near East and Greco-Roman world, emphasizing the biblical God's personal and authoritative nature.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mathews, Genesis, Session 2 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →
Pentateuch → Genesis).**



**Mathews_Genesis_
Session02.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathews, Genesis, Session 2, Creation, Genesis 1:1-2:3

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Kenneth Mathews' lecture on Genesis 1:1-2:3:

Briefing Document: Dr. Kenneth Mathews on Genesis 1:1-2:3 (Session 2)

Document Overview:

This document summarizes Dr. Kenneth Mathews' second lecture on Genesis, focusing on the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3. He outlines the structure of the creation narrative, the interpretation of "day," the creation and blessing of humanity, the concept of Sabbath, and the theological implications of the text, particularly concerning the nature of God and creation.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Structure of the Creation Account (Six-Plus-One Structure):

- The creation account is structured around six days of creation followed by a seventh day of rest (cessation) described in chapter 2:1-3.
 - This is described as a "six-plus-one arrangement."
 - Verse 1 is a "lead statement" stating that God created "the heavens and the earth," a merism (opposites indicating totality), meaning God created *everything*.
 - Verse 2 describes the initial state of the earth as "formless and empty," "dark," with the "Spirit of God...hovering over the waters," indicating preparation, not chaos.
 - Days 1-3 involve creating form through separations (light/darkness, waters above/below, land/sea).
 - Days 4-6 address the emptiness by filling the formed spaces with life (sun/moon/stars, sea/sky creatures, land animals/humans).
 - Day 7 is distinguished from creation days and is a day of rest, not creation.
1. *Quote*: "Well, it is probably very obvious that we have a six-day plus one structure when it comes to creating an account. What I mean by that is we have six creation days, and then, in chapter 2, verses 1 through 3, we have a seventh day."

2. Interpretation of "Day" (Yom):

- The Hebrew word "yom" (day) is a key point of interpretation and there are various views about it.
 - **Solar Day:** The obvious reading of evening and morning suggests 24-hour days. The use of a number before the day also suggests a solar day, for example, "first day," "second day."
 - **Figurative Day:** "Yom" could also mean a longer period of time, accommodating geological history. The fact that "yom" is used for the light alone and that in Genesis 2:4, day refers to all six creation days, indicates the flexibility of the term.
 - **Literal vs. Phenomenological:** Mathews argues against a strict 24-hour interpretation. He highlights that you cannot have a solar day without a sun (created on the fourth day) and that the seventh day (without "evening and morning") is not a literal day, implying it's ongoing.
 - He suggests the days are a "rhetorical device" to structure the account and that the language is "phenomenological," describing creation as it would appear to an observer on Earth (like sunrise/sunset language) as opposed to using a precise scientific description.
1. *Quote:* "So, when it uses the language evening and morning, here I take it that it is a descriptive way of portraying the progression from darkness that occurs in verse 2 to light that occurs in verse 3, and that this pattern is used for literary purposes to segment the creation account into its six days. So, what I see it as a rhetorical device as opposed to be taking as a solar day, a 24-hour day."

2. Creation and Blessing of Humanity:

- Humanity is uniquely created in God's image, a privileged status not given to other creatures, and they are spoken to by God directly.
- "Image" and "likeness" are seen as synonyms, indicating humanity represents God.
- The image of God is not explicitly defined but is understood by what it *does*: ruling and procreating.
- This language is rooted in ancient Near Eastern royal language, where kings were considered sons of gods; however, in the biblical account, humans are *representative* vice-regents, not divine themselves.

- The creation account emphasizes the democratizing idea that all humans (male and female) are made in God's image.
- Human nature is distinct from other creatures, but human *personhood* (unique identity) is prioritized over human nature.
- Each person is designed for a unique relationship with God.

Quote: "Then God said, Man, in his own image, in the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them...In effect, image and likeness should not be divorced but rather seen as a poetic expression, a repetition, whereby you have both speaking of how they, that is, the man and the woman, represent God."

1. **Sabbath:**

- The seventh day is designated as a "holy day."
 - The Sabbath implies a celebration, set aside for worship and enjoying God's blessing, and it continues.
 - There is an invitation for creation to enter into this Sabbath rest, implying a spiritual dimension.
 - It ties to the idea of a Sabbath rest available through faith, as discussed in Hebrews.
1. *Quote:* "And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. The seventh day then does not have the device, there was evening and there was morning. In other words, it is suggestive that the seventh day is not to be taken as a literal day, but it is to be taken as literal plus more."

2. **Theology: God and Creation:**

- The biblical creation account dramatically contrasts with ancient worldviews.
- Creation is *not* an emanation or extension of God's being.
- God and creation are separate entities.
- Unlike other accounts in the ancient Near East, there is no:
- Self-generation of gods.
- Warrior motif (god fighting against chaos).

- Procreation of gods (sexual union of male and female deities).
 - The God of the Bible is a personal God (I-Thou relationship) not a distant, impersonal force (I-It relationship) as described by Greek philosophers.
1. *Quote*: "Here, creation is not an extension of God's being. It is not an emanation, and by emanation, I mean it's not an outgrowth of his being, whether God and creation are totally separate entities, so we can say confidently that we don't have a divine creation."

Key Takeaways:

- The Genesis creation account is not intended as a scientific explanation but as a theological statement about God's power, purpose, and relationship with humanity.
- The interpretation of "day" is flexible and doesn't necessarily require a strict 24-hour understanding.
- Humanity's creation in God's image confers unique dignity, purpose, and representative authority.
- The Sabbath is an ongoing invitation to experience God's rest and blessing.
- The Genesis account offers a dramatically different view of God and creation compared to other ancient cosmologies.

This document serves as a comprehensive overview of Dr. Mathews' key arguments within the given excerpts and can be used as a reference point for understanding his perspectives on the first creation account in Genesis.

4. Study Guide: Mathews, Genesis, Session 2, Genesis 1:1-2:3

Genesis: Creation Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the six-plus-one structure of the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3?
2. Explain the concept of "merism" as it relates to the phrase "the heavens and the earth" in Genesis 1:1.
3. Describe the state of the earth before God began creation according to Genesis 1:2.
4. What separations occur on the first three days of creation?
5. How do the creations of days four, five, and six parallel the creations of days one, two, and three?
6. What is the significance of God creating humanity in His image on the sixth day?
7. Why does the lecture suggest that the seventh day should not be interpreted as a literal 24-hour period?
8. What does the lecture suggest is meant by phenomenological language in the context of the creation account?
9. How does the lecture describe humanity's role as vice-regents, derived from being created in God's image?
10. How does the Genesis account of creation differ from other ancient Near East creation stories?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The creation account is structured around six days of creative acts followed by a seventh day of rest. This "six-plus-one" structure emphasizes God's work followed by his cessation of labor, the Sabbath, a day blessed and made holy.
2. A "merism" is a figure of speech where opposites are used to indicate totality. In Genesis 1:1, "the heavens and the earth" signifies that God created everything, the entirety of existence, in the beginning.

3. Before God's creative acts, the earth was formless, empty, and covered in darkness. The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters, setting the stage for the organized creation to follow.
4. On day one, light is separated from darkness; on day two, the waters are separated by an expanse, or sky; and on day three, the waters and dry land are separated, producing vegetation. These separations are essential to bring order from formlessness and begin the creation.
5. Days four, five, and six fill the empty places created in the first three days. Day four creates the celestial bodies, day five fills the sky and waters with life, and day six creates land animals and humanity, each complementing their corresponding days.
6. Creating humanity in God's image gives humans a unique status as God's representatives on Earth. This signifies humans' capacity for relationship, intellect, and the mandate to rule and care for the earth, reflecting God's own authority.
7. The seventh day does not include the phrase "there was evening and there was morning," suggesting it is not a literal day like the others. This indicates a continuing, spiritual rest available to humanity, rather than a limited period of time.
8. Phenomenological language describes events as they appear to the human observer, rather than with scientific precision. In Genesis, the days of creation are presented from the perspective of an observer on Earth and not as a scientific account.
9. Humans are created with "derived authority" as vice-regents, meaning they are delegated authority by God. They are called to care for and rule over creation as God's representatives and are accountable for their stewardship of the earth.
10. Unlike other ancient Near East creation stories, the Genesis account does not feature divine battles, self-generating deities, or procreating gods. Instead, God creates through spoken word, is separate from creation, and is the sole, authoritative creator.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the structure of the Genesis 1 creation account, explaining the significance of the six-plus-one framework and the relationship between the first three and last three creation days.
2. Discuss the different interpretations of the word "day" (yom) in Genesis 1, and evaluate the arguments for and against a literal 24-hour interpretation.
3. Explain the concept of the "image of God" as it applies to humanity, based on the lecture, and explore its implications for human nature, identity, and relationship to God and the created world.
4. Compare and contrast the Genesis account of creation with typical creation narratives from the ancient Near East, focusing on the depictions of God, the creation process, and the role of humans.
5. Explore the theological implications of the Sabbath in the Genesis creation narrative, including the concept of entering into God's rest and its connection to the Christian faith, as suggested by the lecture's reference to the book of Hebrews.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Merism:** A figure of speech using opposites to express totality or inclusion. (e.g., "heavens and earth" to mean everything).
- **Toledoth:** A Hebrew word referring to generations or account, often used to mark divisions in Genesis narratives.
- **Yom:** The Hebrew word for "day," which can refer to a solar day or a longer period of time, depending on context.
- **Phenomenological Language:** Language that describes events as they appear to a human observer, rather than scientifically.
- **Vice-regent:** A person appointed to rule in place of the ruler; in Genesis, humanity has this status in relation to God's creation.
- **Sabbath:** A day of rest and worship; in Genesis, it is the seventh day when God rested from creation and was made holy.
- **Image of God:** The representation of God in humanity, signifying their unique position as God's representatives, including intellect, relationship, and authority.
- **Emanation:** The idea of something proceeding from a source, especially in philosophical contexts where the creation is seen as an emanation of God's being.
- **Solar day:** A period of time defined by the Earth's rotation and the presence of sunlight.
- **Divine creation:** The idea that creation is an extension of God's being or that the created gods are like living entities.

5. FAQs on Mathews, Genesis, Session 2, Genesis 1:1-2:3, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on the Genesis Creation Account (Genesis 1:1-2:3)

1. **What is the overall structure of the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3?** The creation account follows a six-day plus one structure. The first six days detail God's acts of creation, while the seventh day is a day of cessation, rest, and sanctification. The six days are also internally structured, with the first three days focused on creating form and the next three days filling that form with life. The first three days are often said to be "formative" and days 4-6 are "filling."
2. **What does the phrase "the heavens and the earth" in Genesis 1:1 signify?** The phrase "the heavens and the earth" is a *merism*, a figure of speech where opposites are used to indicate totality or inclusion. It means that God created everything, the entire cosmos, encompassing all that exists. It is a lead statement, introducing the concept that God created the initial substance out of which the organized, created order will come.
3. **How should the term "day" (*yom*) in Genesis 1 be understood, and how does this connect to the possibility of a historical reading of the text?** The term "day" (*yom*) has been subject to different interpretations. It is difficult to read the days as solar days given that the sun isn't created until the fourth day, and the lack of an "evening and morning" on the seventh day. While the text uses language like "evening and morning," this may be a literary device to segment the creation narrative rather than implying literal 24-hour solar days. A figurative reading that considers "days" as longer periods of time is possible, although some prefer a looser connection with geological history, acknowledging a logical progression of creation. The presence of genealogical language throughout the Genesis narrative strongly suggests that the account is not just a story but is connected to actual history.

4. **What does it mean that humans are created in God's image, and what does this imply about their role in creation?** Being created in God's image means that humans, both male and female, are representatives of God's rule on earth. The image of God is connected to the way that humans rule, procreate, and have relationships with each other and God. The image isn't primarily about what humans are; it's more about what humans *do*. They are not divine or semi-divine but are God's "handprint" or "pillar," exercising a derived authority as vice-regents over creation, responsible for its care. This is presented as a democratization of a concept formerly associated with the divine status of kings in the ancient Near East.
5. **How does the creation of humans differ from the creation of other living things?** While God speaks about and blesses other creations, He speaks *to* humanity directly, blessing them and granting them dominion. This highlights humanity's special position and unique relationship with God. Humans are created in His image, which sets them apart from all other created beings.
6. **What is the significance of the Sabbath in the creation account, and what does it mean for people today?** The Sabbath, the seventh day, is not a day of creation, but a day of rest. The text does not specifically call it the Sabbath but implies the concept. It is the only day that is blessed and made holy. Unlike the other days, it lacks the "evening and morning" phrasing, suggesting a continuous, ongoing rest. This day invites all of creation to enter into God's rest, a rest that is still available today as the writer of Hebrews explains, accessible through faith and repentance. The Sabbath becomes a day of worship and experiencing God's refreshing presence.
7. **How does the Genesis 1 creation account present a view of God that is different from other ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman views?** Unlike other ancient creation myths, Genesis 1 presents a God who is separate from creation, not an emanation or extension of the divine being. There are no warring gods of chaos or procreating deities. God creates through His authoritative word, demonstrating His ultimate power and sovereignty. Also, there is no female deity or goddess, dramatically differing from the worldview of the ancient Near East. Also, unlike Greek philosophical views, the God of Genesis is not a distant, impersonal thought, but a relational, personal being.

8. **How do the two creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 relate to each other?** The second creation account in Genesis 2 is not a contradiction of the first account in Genesis 1, but rather a complementary and topical arrangement of the same events. The first account provides a general description of creation, while the second account focuses specifically on the creation of the garden, humans, and the union of man and woman. Chapter 2 is a zooming-in of the 6th day, adding further details and emphasizing different aspects of the creation of humankind and their place in the garden.