

Dr. Tiberius Rata, Old Testament Theology, Session 2, God as Creator Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Rata, Old Testament Theology, Session 2, God as Creator, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Rata's lecture explores the Old Testament understanding of God as Creator, contrasting it with ancient Near Eastern creation myths like the Enuma Elish to highlight the unique and orderly nature of the Genesis account. He emphasizes that Genesis presents God speaking creation into existence without conflict, establishing a foundational understanding of God's identity and actions. **The lecture discusses the implications of humanity being created in God's image (Imago Dei) as rational, moral, and spiritual beings with intrinsic value and representative authority.** Various interpretations of the Genesis creation days, such as literal six-day creation, theistic evolution, day-age theory, and gap theory, are briefly examined. **The significance of God as Creator extends throughout the Old Testament in books like Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Isaiah, and this understanding is continued and reinforced in the New Testament through Jesus and the apostles.** Ultimately, the lecture underscores that the Creator God is also the Redeemer and Sustainer, active from the beginning to the promise of a new creation.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Rata, Old Testament Theology, 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 (Theology → OT Theology, Rata).



Rata_OTTheology_Session02.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Rata, Old Testament Theology, Session 2, God as Creator

Briefing Document: Dr. Tiberius Rata on God as Creator in Old Testament Theology (Session 2)

Main Theme: This session explores the foundational doctrine of God as Creator in the Old Testament, emphasizing its significance in understanding God's identity, actions, and humanity's place in the world. Dr. Rata highlights Genesis 1 as the starting point, contrasting it with ancient Near Eastern creation myths, and traces the theme of God as Creator throughout the Old Testament (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah) and its implications in the New Testament.

Key Ideas and Facts:

1. Genesis 1 as Foundational and Polemical:

- The Bible begins with "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," establishing God's primary revelation as Creator.
- Moses' writing of Genesis was not in a vacuum; it occurred within a context of prevailing creation stories like the *Enuma Elish* (Babylonian/Sumerian-Akkadian) and Egyptian myths.
- The *Enuma Elish* describes creation through the violent division of the goddess Tiamat's body by Marduk and the creation of humanity to serve the lesser gods.
- Egyptian creation stories feature gods like Noom fashioning humans on a potter's wheel, requiring a consort to breathe life into them.
- Ancient Near Eastern creation myths often contained chaotic and immoral elements, starkly contrasting with the orderly account in Genesis.
- **Quote:** "So, there are a lot of chaotic, immoral elements in the so-called creation stories in the ancient Near East. And when we look at the Bible, we don't see anything like that. Everything is very, very orderly."
- Genesis is presented as a **polemic** against these other creation stories, using some contemporary terms but offering a distinct narrative.
- God inspired Moses, who was not present at creation, to write an orderly account where God speaks the world into existence without struggle.

2. Key Teachings of Genesis 1:

- **Who created:** God.
- **When he created:** "In the beginning," implying nothing existed before.
- **What he created:** "the heavens and the earth," a **merism** denoting the entirety of creation. **Quote:** "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The heavens and the earth are figures of speech, called merism, where two opposites denote the whole."
- God the Spirit was present at creation ("the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters").
- The doctrine of the Trinity has its beginnings here, also supported by John 1:1 (God the Son), although it is not fully developed in Genesis.
- Creation follows a **framework analysis**: God forms the formless (days 1-3) and fills the void (days 4-6) in an orderly manner.
- The creation of light before the sun, moon, and stars (day 1 vs. day 4) is noted, with biblical precedent for light without these sources (Exodus, Revelation).
- The Sabbath day is significant as God sanctifies **time**, not space, unlike the *Enuma Elish* which ends with the sanctification of a holy place. This is echoed in the fourth commandment.
- God's creative process involves command ("let there be"), fulfillment ("it was so"), and evaluation ("God said that it was good"), indicating a moral dimension to creation.

3. "Let Us Make Man in Our Image":

- The plural "us" in Genesis 1:26 has led to various interpretations:
- Not addressed to other ancient Near Eastern gods.
- Not an invitation for other created beings to participate.
- Possibly an honorific plural (absent in English).
- Possibly a plural of self-deliberation.
- Points towards the Trinity (though not explicitly proven here).
- Refers to the heavenly court.

- **Imago Dei (Image of God):** A **psychosomatic unity** involving both mind and body (though God himself is spirit).
- Means humans are intended to be faithful and adequate representations of God, possessing rationality, morality, and spirituality.
- Differentiates humans from animals, who operate on instinct, lacking the capacity for abstract reasoning and moral understanding.
- Includes the concept of humans as God's **representatives of authority** on earth, similar to ancient kings erecting statues. **Quote:** "God makes humans to be representatives. We are to be his representatives on earth."
- Gives humans **intrinsic value** regardless of their abilities or appearance.
- Applies to both male and female.

4. Significance of God as Creator:

- Reveals God as a person with a mind and will, omnipotent, good, and the creator of good things.
- God is **transcendent over nature**, unlike the gods in other creation myths who are part of creation. He speaks creation into existence.
- God is not just the creator but also the **sustainer** of life and all creation.
- The creation of humans in God's image makes them special, underscored by Jesus' death for the "race of Adam," implying Adam's historical existence. This poses a problem for theistic evolution if the image of God's entry point is unclear.
- Nature is a created entity, not filled with God's spirits and not to be worshipped (contrasting with practices of the time).
- The New Testament affirms the Triune God's involvement in creation (John 1, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1).
- God reveals Himself through both Scripture and nature (Augustine's "two books," general revelation in Romans 1).

5. Interpretations of Genesis 1:

- **Fiat Creationism (Literal Six-Day Creation):** Interprets "yom" with a numeral adjective as a 24-hour period, supported by the "evening and morning" formula and the internal evidence of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11) which

uses the six days of creation as the basis for the Sabbath. **Quote:** "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day."

- **Theistic Evolution:** Attempts to reconcile the Bible with Darwinian evolution, viewing Genesis 1 allegorically and suggesting God worked through evolutionary processes. Dr. Rata critiques this view, arguing it necessitates abandoning the literal biblical account. While acknowledging microevolution (change within species), he notes the lack of evidence for macroevolution (ape to human).
- **Day-Age Theory:** Interprets "yom" as a longer, indeterminate period of time, noting that "yom" can have this meaning in Scripture (e.g., Genesis 2:4, "the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens," "the day of the Lord"). A challenge is reconciling the "evening and morning" with long ages.
- **Gap Theory:** Proposes a cataclysmic event between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, suggested by the phrase "without form and void" (*tohu vavohu*) also appearing in judgment language in Jeremiah. This allows for an old earth.

6. God as Creator Throughout the Old Testament:

- **Job:** Presents God as the Creator God, especially in Job 28 (wisdom song) and God's speeches at the end, emphasizing His power, wisdom, and the order of creation. God doesn't answer Job's questions directly but reveals Himself as the all-powerful Creator. Dinosaurs are understood to have been created on day six.
- **Psalms:** Frequently describe God as Creator, with parallels to Genesis 1 (e.g., Psalm 8). Creation verbs beyond *bara* (like *kun* and *yatsar*) are used. Psalm 33:6 emphasizes God creating by His word and the breath of His mouth, without needing raw materials. Psalm 104 uses creation language, potentially alluding to both Genesis 1 and the flood.
- **Proverbs:** Rich in creation theology, particularly the personification of Wisdom (Lady Wisdom) in Proverbs 8, who was with God "at the beginning of his work."
- **Isaiah:** Describes God (Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel) as *boreh* (the creator) in chapters like 40. The God who saves is the same God who creates. The sanctity of life is linked to God forming individuals in the womb (Isaiah 44:24).

7. God as Creator in the New Testament:

- The New Testament writers consistently refer to God as the Creator.
- Jesus, when discussing divorce in Mark, refers back to "the beginning of the creation" in Genesis, highlighting the original design.
- Jesus' calming of the storm demonstrates His divine power as the Creator God.
- John 1:1-3 explicitly states that "the Word" (Jesus) was involved in creation, paralleling Genesis 1. Jesus' claim "before Abraham was, I am" (John 8) asserts His deity and involvement in creation.
- The New Testament also speaks of a **new creation** (Isaiah 65, Revelation 21), indicating God's continued creative activity throughout history.
- God is not just the Creator but also the **sustainer** of creation, actively involved in the world.
- Creatio ex nihilo (creation out of nothing), though a term coined by Augustine, is supported by Scripture (Psalm 33).

8. Practical Implications for Ministry:

- Preaching and teaching creation is foundational to Christian beliefs and lifestyle.
- Starting with Genesis can be a better approach for new believers than beginning with the Gospel of John, as John builds upon the foundation laid in Genesis.

In conclusion, Dr. Rata emphasizes the fundamental importance of understanding God as Creator, highlighting its contrast with ancient Near Eastern myths, its key teachings about God and humanity, its consistent presence throughout the Old Testament, its affirmation in the New Testament, and its practical relevance for Christian faith and teaching.

4. Study Guide: Rata, Old Testament Theology, Session 2, God as Creator

Study Guide: God as Creator in Old Testament Theology

Key Concepts and Themes:

- **God as the Initial Revealer:** The Bible begins by presenting God as the Creator, establishing His primary identity and action.
- **Genesis as Polemic:** The creation account in Genesis is understood, in part, as a deliberate counter-narrative to prevailing ancient Near Eastern creation myths like the Enuma Elish. It uses familiar language but subverts chaotic and immoral elements.
- **Order vs. Chaos:** The Genesis creation account emphasizes God's orderly and purposeful creation through His word, contrasting with the chaotic cosmogonies of other ancient cultures.
- **Creation Ex Nihilo:** Genesis implies creation "out of nothing," where God does not rely on pre-existing materials.
- **Merism in Genesis 1:1:** The phrase "heavens and the earth" is a figure of speech denoting the entirety of creation.
- **Presence of the Trinity:** While not explicitly proven in Genesis 1, the text hints at the involvement of the Spirit of God and the New Testament reveals the Son's role in creation, laying the groundwork for the doctrine of the Trinity.
- **Framework Analysis:** The structure of the creation days (forming the formless and filling the void) reveals God's intentional and systematic approach.
- **Sanctification of Time:** In contrast to other cultures that sanctified space, Genesis highlights God's sanctification of the Sabbath day, emphasizing the importance of time.
- **Imago Dei (Image of God):** Humanity is uniquely created in God's image, signifying a psychosomatic unity and the capacity for rational thought, moral discernment, and spiritual relationship with God. It also denotes our role as God's representatives on earth, possessing intrinsic value.

- **God's Attributes Revealed in Creation:** God's act of creation reveals His personal nature (mind and will), omnipotence, goodness, and transcendence over His creation.
- **Creation in the Rest of the Old Testament:** Beyond Genesis, the theme of God as Creator is prevalent in books like Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and the Prophets, highlighting His power, wisdom, and sovereignty.
- **New Testament Perspective on Creation:** The New Testament affirms God the Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit as active in creation (John 1, Colossians 1). Jesus' miracles demonstrate His power as the Creator.
- **General Revelation:** God reveals Himself through both Scripture and nature, making His existence and attributes evident to all (Romans 1).
- **Interpretations of Genesis 1:** Various interpretations exist among believers, including literal six-day creation (fiat creationism), theistic evolution, and the day-age theory, with ongoing discussions about the meaning of "yom" and the structure of the creation week. The gap theory proposes a cataclysm between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.
- **Sabbath and Rest:** The Sabbath signifies God's rest after creation and invites humanity to participate in that rest.
- **New Creation:** The Bible speaks of a future new heavens and a new earth, demonstrating God's continued creative activity and ultimate plan.
- **God as Sustainer:** God is not just the initial creator but also actively involved in sustaining and governing His creation.

Short-Answer Quiz:

1. How does the Genesis creation account differ from the Enuma Elish regarding the origin of the heavens and the earth?
2. Explain the concept of "merism" using the example from Genesis 1:1. What does it tell us about God's creation?
3. While the doctrine of the Trinity isn't fully developed in Genesis 1, what elements in the text hint at the involvement of more than one divine person in creation?
4. Describe the "framework analysis" of the creation days. What does this structure suggest about God's creative method?

5. In what way does Genesis' emphasis on the Sabbath differ from the focus on holy places in other ancient Near Eastern creation narratives?
6. What does it mean for humanity to be created in the "image of God" (Imago Dei)? Provide at least two key aspects of this concept.
7. How does the Old Testament book of Job contribute to our understanding of God as Creator, particularly in God's response to Job?
8. According to the provided text, how does the New Testament (specifically Colossians 1) affirm Jesus Christ's role in creation?
9. Explain Augustine's concept of "creatio ex nihilo." What scriptural basis is provided for this idea in the text?
10. Briefly describe the core belief of theistic evolution regarding the creation account in Genesis and the process of life's development.

Answer Key:

1. The Enuma Elish describes the heavens and the earth being formed from the divided body of the goddess Tiamat after a battle with Marduk. In contrast, Genesis portrays God creating the heavens and the earth through His spoken word, without conflict or pre-existing chaotic matter.
2. Merism is a figure of speech where two opposite terms are used to refer to the entirety of something. In Genesis 1:1, "the heavens and the earth" signifies that God created everything that exists, the whole cosmos.
3. Genesis 1:2 mentions the Spirit of God "hovering over the face of the waters," suggesting the Spirit's active presence at creation. Additionally, the New Testament (John 1:1) identifies the Word (Jesus Christ) as being present with God and as God in the beginning, through whom all things were made.
4. The framework analysis suggests that God's creation occurred in an orderly fashion, forming the formless in the first three days (light, sky/sea, land) and filling the void in the subsequent three days (sun/moon/stars, sea/air creatures, land creatures). This highlights a deliberate and structured creative process.
5. Genesis emphasizes the sanctification of the seventh day, the Sabbath, as a time of rest established by God, making time itself holy. Other ancient Near Eastern narratives often focus on the establishment and sanctification of sacred spaces or temples.

6. Being created in the "image of God" signifies that humans possess a psychosomatic unity (mind and body) and are rational, moral, and spiritual beings capable of reasoning, discerning right from wrong, and having a relationship with God. It also means humans are intended to be God's representatives, exercising dominion on earth.
7. Job presents God as the powerful and wise Creator through poetic descriptions and God's own questions to Job about the intricacies of creation. God's revelation emphasizes His incomparable power and wisdom in creating and sustaining the cosmos, without directly answering Job's personal struggles.
8. Colossians 1:16 explicitly states that "by Him [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible," affirming Christ's central role as the agent through whom all of creation came into being.
9. Creatio ex nihilo is the theological concept that God created the universe "out of nothing," without any pre-existing matter. Psalm 33:6 ("By the word of the Lord the heavens were made") supports this by indicating that God spoke creation into existence, implying no need for raw materials.
10. Theistic evolution is the belief that God created the universe and life, but He did so through the natural processes of evolution over vast periods of time. Proponents often interpret the Genesis creation account allegorically, focusing on who created rather than the literal how.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the ways in which the Genesis creation account can be understood as a polemic against other ancient Near Eastern creation myths, using specific examples from the Enuma Elish.
2. Discuss the significance of the concept of "Imago Dei" for understanding human identity and value, drawing connections to both Genesis and the teachings of Jesus.
3. Compare and contrast two different interpretations of the Genesis creation account (e.g., literal six-day creationism and the day-age theory), outlining their key arguments and potential challenges.
4. Explore the theme of God as Creator as it appears in at least two Old Testament books beyond Genesis (e.g., Psalms, Job, Isaiah), illustrating how these texts expand upon the initial creation narrative.
5. Examine the relationship between God as Creator in the Old Testament and the role of Jesus Christ in creation as presented in the New Testament, considering the implications for understanding the nature and work of God.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Polemic:** A strong verbal or written attack on someone or something. In this context, referring to Genesis as a counter-argument to other creation stories.
- **Enuma Elish:** The Babylonian creation epic, a primary ancient Near Eastern text that predates Genesis and tells a different story of the cosmos' origin involving conflict among gods.
- **Merism:** A literary device using two contrasting words or phrases to refer to a whole or totality. Example: "heavens and earth" meaning everything.
- **Trinity:** The Christian doctrine that God is one being in three co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit.
- **Framework Analysis:** An interpretive approach to Genesis 1 that focuses on the logical and thematic structure of the creation days rather than a strict chronological sequence.
- **Sanctify:** To set apart as holy; to consecrate. In the context of Genesis, God sanctifies the Sabbath day.
- **Imago Dei:** Latin for "image of God," referring to the unique way in which humanity reflects God's likeness, including rational, moral, and spiritual capacities.
- **Psychosomatic Unity:** The understanding that human beings are a unified whole, consisting of both a physical (soma) and a spiritual/mental (psyche) dimension that are interconnected.
- **Omnipotent:** Having unlimited power; able to do anything.
- **Transcendent:** Existing apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe.
- **General Revelation:** The idea that God reveals aspects of His nature and existence through the created world, accessible to all people.
- **Fiat Creationism:** The belief that God created the universe and everything in it instantaneously and directly in six literal 24-hour days, as described in Genesis.
- **Theistic Evolution:** The view that God used the process of biological evolution to bring about life on Earth.

- **Day-Age Theory:** An interpretation of Genesis 1 that understands the "days" of creation as long, indefinite periods of time or ages, rather than literal 24-hour days.
- **Gap Theory:** The belief that there was a significant period of time or a cataclysmic event between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.
- **Creatio Ex Nihilo:** Latin for "creation out of nothing," the theological doctrine that God created the universe without pre-existing materials.
- **Tohu Vavohu:** Hebrew phrase meaning "without form and void," used in Genesis 1:2 to describe the initial state of the earth.
- **Boreh:** A Hebrew participle meaning "the one who creates." Used in Isaiah to describe God.

5. FAQs on Rata, Old Testament Theology, Session 2, God as Creator, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: God as Creator in Old Testament Theology

1. Why does the Bible begin with God as the Creator, and what was the cultural context of this declaration?

Genesis begins by declaring, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," establishing God's primary identity as Creator. This was significant because it directly contrasted with prevailing ancient Near Eastern creation myths, such as the Enuma Elish. These myths often depicted chaotic origins involving battles between gods (like Marduk and Tiamat) or the accidental creation of humanity due to disgruntled lesser deities. The biblical account, therefore, serves as a polemic, presenting a God who creates order peacefully through his word, unlike the violent and haphazard creations described by surrounding cultures.

2. How does the Genesis creation account differ from other ancient Near Eastern creation stories?

The Genesis account stands apart from other ancient Near Eastern creation stories in several key ways. Firstly, it portrays a single, all-powerful God who speaks creation into existence without struggle or the need for pre-existing materials (*creatio ex nihilo*). Secondly, it emphasizes order and goodness in creation, contrasting with the chaotic and often immoral elements found in other myths (like divine orgies leading to humanity). Finally, while other stories often focus on the origins of gods or the servitude of humans to deities, Genesis highlights humanity's unique creation in God's image and their designated role to have dominion over creation.

3. What is the significance of the phrase "heavens and the earth" in Genesis 1:1?

The phrase "heavens and the earth" in Genesis 1:1 is a figure of speech known as a merism. This literary device uses two opposite terms to refer to the entirety of something. Therefore, when Genesis states that God created the heavens and the earth, it means that God created everything – the entire cosmos, visible and invisible. This introductory summary establishes the comprehensive scope of God's creative act, encompassing all that exists.

4. What does it mean for humanity to be created "in the image of God" (Imago Dei), and what are its implications?

Being created "in the image of God" (Imago Dei) signifies that humanity is uniquely different from the rest of creation. It implies a psychosomatic unity, meaning it involves both our mind and body, reflecting God in ways that animals do not. While it doesn't mean God has a physical body (as God is spirit), it does mean humans are created as rational beings capable of thought and reason, moral beings with a sense of right and wrong, and spiritual beings designed for relationship and communion with God. Furthermore, being created in God's image also implies that humans are intended to be God's representatives on earth, reflecting his authority and care over creation, bestowing intrinsic value upon every individual.

5. How is God as Creator portrayed beyond the book of Genesis in the Old Testament?

The theme of God as Creator extends throughout the Old Testament in various genres. The book of Job portrays God's wisdom and power in creation through poetic descriptions. Psalms frequently praise God for his creative acts, echoing the themes of Genesis 1 and highlighting the order and majesty of his creation. Proverbs, particularly the personification of Wisdom in chapter 8, depicts God's involvement of wisdom in the creation process. The prophets, like Isaiah, identify Yahweh as both the Redeemer and the Creator ("boreh"), emphasizing that the God who saves is the same God who created, underscoring his sovereignty and care for humanity.

6. How does the New Testament affirm God as the Creator, and what new insights does it offer?

The New Testament unequivocally affirms God the Father as the Creator, echoing the Old Testament. Additionally, it reveals that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was also instrumental in creation. John 1:3 states that "all things were made through him," and Colossians 1:16 elaborates that "by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth." This highlights the Trinity's involvement in creation. Furthermore, the New Testament speaks of a future "new creation" (Isaiah 65, Revelation 21), indicating God's ongoing creative activity and his plan for the restoration of all things. Jesus himself refers back to the creation account in Genesis when discussing fundamental issues like marriage, emphasizing the original design and intent of God the Creator.

7. What are some different interpretations of the Genesis creation account among Christians?

There are various interpretations of the Genesis creation account within Christianity. "Fiat creationism" or literal six-day creation interprets the days of creation as six consecutive 24-hour periods, supported by the use of "yom" with numerical adjectives and the analogy of the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments. "Theistic evolution" proposes that God used the process of evolution to bring about creation, often interpreting Genesis 1 allegorically. The "day-age theory" suggests that the "days" in Genesis represent longer, indeterminate periods of time, potentially aligning with evolutionary timelines. The "gap theory" posits a significant time gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, allowing for an old earth and potentially explaining the "formless and void" state as a result of a prior cataclysm. While these interpretations differ on the "how" and "when" of creation, they generally affirm that God is the ultimate Creator.

8. Why is the doctrine of God as Creator foundational to Christian belief and practice?

The doctrine of God as Creator is foundational to Christian belief and practice for several reasons. It establishes God's ultimate sovereignty, power, and authority over all existence. It reveals God as a personal being with a mind and will who intentionally brought the universe into being and declared it good. The creation of humanity in God's image underpins the inherent dignity, value, and uniqueness of every person. It forms the basis for understanding our relationship with God and our role as stewards of his creation. Furthermore, the concept of God as Creator is essential for understanding redemption, as the same God who created is the one who acts to save and promises a new creation. Understanding God as Creator provides a crucial foundation for comprehending the entire biblical narrative and living a life that reflects God's purposes.