

Genesis, Session 2: Creation, Genesis 1:1 to 2:3

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Abstract

This source is a theological and structural analysis of the biblical creation narrative in Genesis 1:1–2:3. The author examines the **six-plus-one day literary structure**, arguing that the word "day" (*yom*) is used figuratively to depict a historical event through **phenomenological, non-scientific language**. The text highlights the **unique creation of humanity**, which is democratized as all men and women are made in the **image of God** to rule as His representatives. Finally, it contrasts biblical theology with ancient Near Eastern and Greek mythologies, emphasizing a **personal, sovereign Creator** who shapes the world by His word alone without conflict or physical emanation.

Outline

I. Introduction to Genesis 1:1–2:3 A. Creation account spanning from Genesis 1:1 to Genesis 2:3. B. Five core topics: structure, the term "day," humanity's blessing, Sabbath, and theology.

II. The Structure of the Creation Account A. The **Six-Plus-One Day Arrangement** 1. Six days of active creation followed by a seventh day of cessation and rest. 2. Clear boundary at Genesis 2:3, followed by a second, complementary creation account beginning in Genesis 2:4. B. Days 1–3: **Forming the Formless** 1. Preliminary setting of Genesis 1:1–2 (the "heavens and the earth" as a **merism** indicating totality; the formless, empty, and dark earth). 2. **Day 1**: Separation of light from darkness. 3. **Day 2**: Separation of waters above (atmosphere) from waters below. 4. **Day 3**: Separation of land (earth) from seas; land as a mediator producing vegetation. C. Days 4–6: **Filling the Emptiness** (Parallel to Days 1–3) 1. **Day 4**: Light-bearing luminary bodies (sun and moon) to mark seasons, days, and years. 2. **Day 5**: Creation of living creatures in the sea (fish) and sky (birds). 3. **Day 6**: Creation of land animals and humanity (male and female) in the image of God.

III. Interpretation of the Keyword "Day" (*Yom*) A. The **Solar Day (24-Hour) Interpretation** 1. Supported by references to "evening and morning" and numbered sequences. B. The **Figurative Day Interpretation** (Preferred by Mathews) 1. Flexible use of *yom* elsewhere in

Genesis (e.g., light in Gen 1:5, entire creation in Gen 2:4). 2. Absence of a sun until the fourth day limits literal "solar day" interpretations. 3. Absence of the "evening and morning" formula for the seventh day, suggesting an ongoing spiritual rest. C. **Phenomenological Language** 1. Events described as they appear to the human eye, rather than in scientifically precise terms. 2. Genealogies (*toledoth*) anchor the narrative in real, primeval history.

IV. **Creation and Blessing for Humanity** A. Unique Status and Communication 1. Unlike animals, God addresses humans directly and assigns them a privileged role. B. The **Image of God (*Imago Dei*)** 1. Representation: Both "image" and "likeness" function as synonyms indicating human representation of God. 2. Functional role: What the image *does* (ruling, subduing, procreating). 3. Contrast with Ancient Near East (ANE): ANE kings set up stelae (images) to assert authority; Hebrew theology democratizes this status to *all* men and women as vice-regents. 4. Personhood and identity: Image of God is tied to unique, relational personhood rather than intellectual or physical capacity.

V. **The Sabbath** A. A holy day set aside for cessation of work, worship, and celebration. B. New Testament connection (Hebrews 3–4): The ongoing invitation to enter God's spiritual rest by faith.

VI. **Theological Contrasts with Ancient Worldviews** A. The Biblical Model vs. **Ancient Near Eastern Religions** 1. **No emanation**: Creation is completely separate from God's being, not an extension of it. 2. **No warrior motif**: God creates by sovereign speech ("it was so") without battling chaos or other deities. 3. **No procreation**: No male and female deities interacting sexually to produce the cosmos; completely countercultural absence of a female deity. B. The Biblical Model vs. **Greek Philosophy** 1. Greek philosophers (Plato, Aristotle) viewed God as an impersonal, distant "pure act of thought" (an "I-it" relationship). 2. The God of the Bible establishes a deeply personal "**I-thou**" relationship with His creation.