

Beginning at the Beginning

A Very Good Place to Start



Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

I. Objectives for our Study

- ◆ To understand what God (through the writer) intended to reveal in the text
- ◆ To discover what effect that revelation should have on our thinking and living
- ◆ To explore the strengths and weaknesses of various interpretive strategies for this passage.
- ◆ To respond in worshipful awe and faithful obedience to our Creator.

II. The Structure of the Passage

A. Overview (Standard Hebrew Pattern)

1. Temporal Clause 1:1
2. Circumstantial Clauses 1:2-3
3. Main Narrative - The Creation Week 1:4 - 2:3

II. The Structure of the Passage

B. The Temporal Clause – 1:1

1. Relative?
 - a. No article (“the”) in Hebrew text, hence “*When God began to create the heaven and the earth . . .*”
 - b. Creation account may be a description of present order, not a description of *ex nihilo* creation.
 - c. Is it possible God had a history with creation prior to the present order??
2. Absolute?
 - a. Year “zero” for earth’s existence
 - b. The traditional reading – describes *ex nihilo* creation (cf. Hebrews 11)

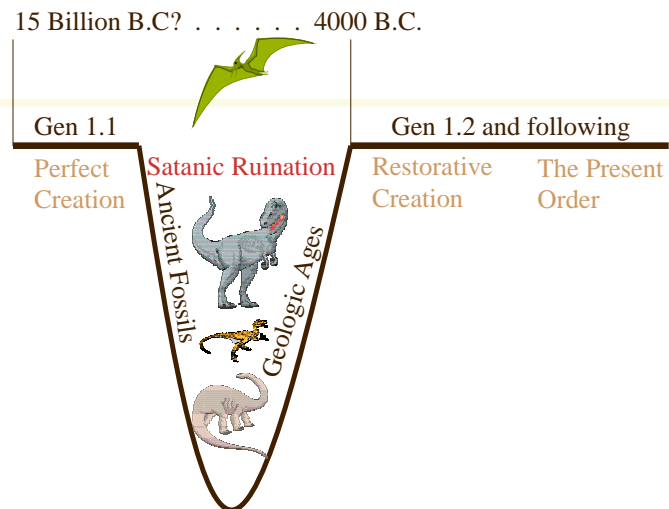
II. Structure of the Passage

C. Circumstantial Clauses – 1:2 – 3

1. “Formless and void” - *tohu wobohu*
2. “Darkness over the deep” – *Tehom*
3. God’s spirit “moving over the face of the waters”
4. Interpretive options for these “precreation” conditions
 - a. Depiction of God’s victory over chaos and all disordering powers?
 - b. Description of God’s work “in progress?”
 - c. Result of Satan’s destruction of God’s originally perfect creation in verse 1?

Excursus: The Gap Theory

- A. Gen 1.1 an original, perfect creation, perhaps billions of years ago
- B. In Gen 1.2, *was* should be translated *became tohu wobohu*. Cf. Isa 35.18, Jer 4.23
- C. Proposed destruction associated with Satan’s judgment in Isa 14.12 – “cast down to the earth”
- D. “Creation week” is actually a re-creation
 1. Creation becomes a type of redemption in Christ – perfection, ruination, restoration – by the agency of the Spirit and Word of God
 2. Darkness after Calvary reflective of another temporary victory by Satan



II. Structure of the Passage

D. Main Narrative – 1.4-2.3

1. Enumeration of the Seven Days
 - a) Day 1 - Light/darkness separated
 - b) Day 2 - Firmament separates waters above/below
 - c) Day 3 - Dry land, vegetation
 - d) Day 4 - Sun, moon, stars in firmament
 - e) Day 5 - Fish and birds
 - f) Day 6 - Land animals, humanity
 - g) Day 7 - Rest, completion

II. Structure of the Passage

D. Main Narrative – 1.4-2.3

2. Formulaic Pattern

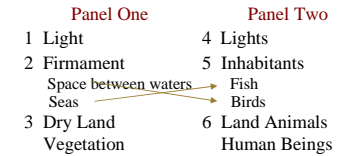
- a. “And God said (10 x) . . . and it was so”
- b. God saw that it was good
 - 1) Days 2 and 7 are exceptions, though the seventh day is “blessed”
 - 2) Days 3 and 6 are doubly good
 - 3) Day 6 (v 31) is climax, “all” was “very good”
- c. Evening and morning, Day x
 - Consistent for all except seventh, which is not bounded

II. Structure of the Passage

D. Main Narrative – 1.4-2.3

3. Parallelisms

- 2 panels of
- 3 days and
- 4 creative acts



- a. Perfect Symmetry with chiasm in the middle
- b. Forming (1-3), and filling (4-6) as the exact counterparts of “formless and void”
- c. Resources (1-3), Utilizers (4-6)
- d. Time, Space, Space, Time, Population, Population, Time
- e. Each panel moves from the heavens to the earth with the second day forming a transition between.

II. Structure of the Passage

D. Main Narrative–Parallelism

“Each triad progresses from heaven to earth: [the first] from light to dry land, [the second] from heavenly luminaries to earth creatures. Each triad progresses from a first day with a single creative act, (light matched by luminaries,) to a second day with one creative act with two aspects, (sky and seas paired with fish and birds), to a third day with two separate creative acts, dry land and vegetation coupled with land animals and humans. Each triad ends with the earth bringing forth: first flora and then fauna. The inhabitants of the second triad rule over the static spheres of the first: luminaries over the light, birds over the sky, fish over the sea, beasts over the land that houses them and the vegetation that feeds them, and humans over all living things.” - Bruce Waltke

Triad of Triumphs

Problem	Preparation	Population
<i>1.2</i>	<i>Days 1 - 3</i>	<i>Days 4 - 6</i>
Darkness	1a Creation of light 1b Separation from Darkness (Night)	4a Creation of Sun 4b Creation of Moon, Stars
Watery Abyss	2a Creation of Firmament 2b Separation of Waters above from Waters Below	5a Creation of Birds 5b Creation of Fish
Formless Earth	3a Separation of Earth from Sea 3b Creation of Vegetation	6a Creation of Land Animals 6b Creation of Humans

THE POINT BEING . . .

II. Structure of the Passage D. Main Narrative – 1.4-2.3

4. Numerological Symbolism

- a. The Heptad (7) symbolizing design, completeness, perfection
 - 1) Temporal Clause in 7 Hebrew words
 - 2) Circumstantial clause in 14 words (7 x 2)
 - 3) Seven units (days) in the main narrative
- b. The Hexameron (6 days of creative activity)
 - 1) Six is smallest number that is the sum of its factors (1,2,3)
 - 2) Diagram of factors is perfect triangle, with 7 sitting at apex

We cannot, therefore, say that the number six is perfect precisely because God perfected all his works in six days, but rather we must say that God perfected his works in six days because six is a perfect number. - *Augustine*

II. Structure of the Passage E. Conclusions

1. Is itself a marvelous creation of profound simplicity and artful symmetry
2. Implications drawn from the structure
 - a. The power of God's Word to effect his purpose is inherent in the created order
 - b. Humanity stands at the apex of God's creation
 - c. The One God is supreme & purposeful, not limited & capricious
 - d. Repetition of formula indicates ordered stability of world as opposed to chaos
 - e. Sabbatarian pattern is derived from creation, not the Mosaic law

III. The Revelation of God in Gen 1

A. God's Creativity Portrayed

1. God created - bara 5x
2. God made - asa 10x
3. Spirit of God moved - rachaph
4. God said - amar 11 x
5. God saw - raah 7x
6. God divided/separated - badal 5x
7. God called - qara 5x
8. God set - nathan 2x
9. God blessed - barak 3x
10. God rested - shabath 2x

III. The Revelation of God in Gen 1

B. God's Character Proclaimed

1. Distinct from and superior to all that is created
2. Good, wise, purposeful
3. Faithful. Morning by morning. . .
4. Sovereign. Creation by *fiat*, speaking things into existence.
5. A God worthy of worship

III. The Revelation of God in Gen 1

C. God's Competition Denounced

1. Syncretism
2. Atheism
3. Materialism
4. Pantheism
5. Gnosticism/Platonism/Dualism
6. Polytheism
7. Paganism
8. Evolution