

# IN THE BEGINNING

## *A Study of Genesis*

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### Study #2

#### God Created

(Genesis 1:1 – 2:4)

#### I. SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON GENESIS

- A. **Title.** In Tanakh, the book of Genesis is titled “Bereshith,” which means “in the beginning.” This follows the customary way that the books of Tanakh were named: by the first word or words of the text. Our modern title, Genesis, is from the Latin word that means “beginnings” or “origins.” This title comes from the translation of the Bible into Latin in the 4<sup>th</sup> century by Jerome. This Latin translation is called the Vulgate, from the Latin word for “common,” (*i.e.* “vulgar”), and it was the standard translation used by the Roman Catholic organization for more than a millennium.
- B. **Position in the Canon.** Genesis is first in Tanakh (at the head of the Pentateuch, or Torah), just as it is in modern English translations. Its teaching is foundational to literally everything else in the Scripture, even (and especially) the book of Revelation! Paul’s teaching about the nature of God, mankind, sin, and redemption all hinge on the truths taught in Genesis. Some Bible students have even said that Genesis is more closely related to the New Testament than to the Old!
- C. **Author.** We will discuss this in more detail in just a moment; but for now, note three things.
1. **Historical Belief.** Both Jewish and Christian history and tradition affirm unwaveringly that Moses is the author of the entire Torah (Genesis – Deuteronomy).
  2. **Recent “Higher” Criticism.** Recently, within the past century, so-called *higher* criticism has attempted to question the claim of Mosaic authorship. They cite several reasons that Moses could not have authored the entire Torah, and specifically Genesis.
  3. **Holding Fast.** However, their claims fall short. We hold fast to the claim of Mosaic authorship for several reasons. But most convincing of all these reasons is the fact that the New Testament, and specifically our Lord Jesus Christ, affirmed Moses as the author (*cf.* Luke 24:44; John 5:46; *et al*).
- D. **Date and Audience.** The Exodus of Israel from Egyptian bondage occurred in 2558 TT (or 1446 BC). Moses died in 2598 TT (or 1406 BC). So, the entire Torah was written in that 40-year time span. It was written to the fledgling nation of Israel, which had just come out of 400+ years of slavery in Egypt. Genesis, specifically, was written to educate them about their past, and to remind them of their origin.

#### II. THE FLOW OF THE BOOK

- A. **Two Ways of Dividing the Content.** There are two easy ways of breaking the book into sections; by storyline, and by literary sections.
1. **The Storyline Division.** Genesis breaks itself very naturally into two parts: the origin of the nations (plural); and the origin of the nation (singular). You could also call these sections Heathen history and Hebrew history.
    - a. **The Nations.** Genesis 1 – 11 gives us the history and origin of the nations of the earth. This section revolves around **four** key **events**: creation (1:1 – 2:4); the fall of Adam (2:5 – 5:3); the flood of Noah (6:1 – 10:32); and, the tower of Babel (11:1-26).
    - b. **The Nation.** Genesis 12 – 50 gives us the history and origin of the single nation that God has chosen as His special nation: Israel. This section revolves around **four** key **people**: Abraham (12 – 23); Isaac (24 – 28:9); Jacob (28:10 – 36); and, Joseph (37 – 50).
  2. **The Literary Sections.** Genesis is quite unique among the books of the Bible for several reasons. But one of those reasons is that it divides itself cleanly into twelve literary sections. Each of these sections (except the first one) marks itself with the expression, “These are the generations of...” or some

variation on that phrase. The phrase is an English rendering of the Hebrew word *toledot* which Moses uses eleven times, to break his narrative into its distinctive sections (2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, 25:12, 25:19, 36:1, 36:9, 37:2). This reality leads us to an interesting conclusion about the authorship of Genesis.

- a. **Moses Used Sources.** Although we affirm that Moses had his hand directly on the authorship of the book, it seems equally clear that much of his work in writing Genesis was to *compile* sources already written into one cohesive whole, adding editing notes and clarifications as he went. This is not unheard of, because there are several examples in the Scripture of this kind of compiling work. For example, *The Book of Jasher* is cited in Joshua, 2 Samuel, and even 2 Timothy; *The Book of the Wars of Yahweh* is cited in Numbers; *The Book of Shemaiah the Prophet* and *The Visions of Iddo the Seer* are both mentioned in 2 Chronicles. These are just a few examples. All together, the Old Testament cites about 22 references outside of itself. These works were used by the writers of the Old Testament as sources of information regarding history and theology.

And furthermore, Jewish history affirms that Moses wrote the book of Job as well – which is interesting because Job clearly lived about the time of Abraham, more than 500 years before Moses wrote the Pentateuch...and Job was not Jewish, and did not live in the land of Canaan. In fact, he lived in the land of Edom. How did Moses come by that account? Job's descendants lived in Midian, where Moses sojourned for 40 years. Clearly, he met these descendants, and was able to copy, from their writings, the story of Job – which had originally been written by Job himself! This is another clear example of Moses functioning not only as a writer, but as a compiler and editor of the writings of others.

- b. **Who Wrote the Genesis Sources?** Obviously, if Moses used sources that had already been written, the natural question is, “Who wrote those sources?” This leads to lots of speculation. However, in a couple of instances, I think the answer is fairly clear. I believe that God Himself wrote the first section, detailing the seven days of creation (1:1 – 2:3). And I'm not alone in that conviction. Several commentators have noted that the language is very different from other writing in Tanakh; and furthermore, there was nobody else alive on Earth to tell us about those first six days.

The second section which tells us about the Garden at Eden, Adam and Eve, the fall and Cain and Abel, I believe was written by Adam, our first parent. Again, I'm not alone in this conviction. Many commentators have noted several reasons why that appears to be the case.

And if this is the case, then the opening chapters of Genesis were compiled from what are literally the *oldest* writings of all created history, written in the time of Adam himself! There are several theories about how these documents would have been preserved through the flood of Noah, and subsequently been made available to Moses. But if those things are of interest, you will have to do a bit of research on your own, since we don't have time to get into all of that tonight.

### III. OUR APPROACH TO THE BOOK

- A. **Interpretation.** As we always do, we are going to take the book literally. We are simply going to let it say whatever it says, taking into account the historical background, and using normal rules of grammar and syntax, recognizing that symbols and figures of speech will occur as well.
- B. **Divisions.** We are going to take the text in big pieces, rather than looking at each verse individually. In this way, I hope to get us through the Old Testament more quickly than if we did a verse by verse study through the entire thing. Accordingly, we are basically going to ignore the chapter and verse divisions, except as they help us to find certain passages. I am going to attempt to deal with each major story or plot thread in the book, as its own study. (Pray for me!!!)

### IV. FIVE INITIAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT TONIGHT'S TEXT

- A. **Initial Observations.** The text we will examine tonight is 1:1 – 2:4. If you take the first verse of this section, and read the last verse consecutively, you will get the theme of tonight's study: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they

were created, in the day that Yahweh God made earth and heaven.” There are five interesting things to note, before we get into this text.

1. **God’s Ordered Mind.** Our God is not a God of chaos and confusion (*cf.* 1 Corinthians 14:33). Even in the six days of creation, we can see the ordered logic of His mind. The first three days involved **forming**, the next three days involved **filling**. Between the first three days and the last three days, we also see an ordered, logical **transfer** of means. The first three days, things are governed and sustained by supernatural means. The last three days, things are created which can perpetuate control and sustenance by natural means (*see* Figure 2.1 *below*).

Forming		Filling		Transferring
Day 1	outer space and light	Day 4	stars and planets	light from God → light from stars
Day 2	sky ( <i>separating the waters</i> )	Day 5	birds and fish	N/A
Day 3	dry land, plants and vegetation	Day 6	land animals and man	cultivation of plants and rule of the earth

Figure 2.1

2. **The Repetition of *Min*.** Throughout this passage, whenever God creates a living, animate thing, we are told that they were created after their *min*, the Hebrew word that means “kind.” The exact meaning of this word becomes hard to translate, because of the prominence of evolutionary theory, which has led to a warped taxonomy of living things (*see* Figure 2.2 *below*).

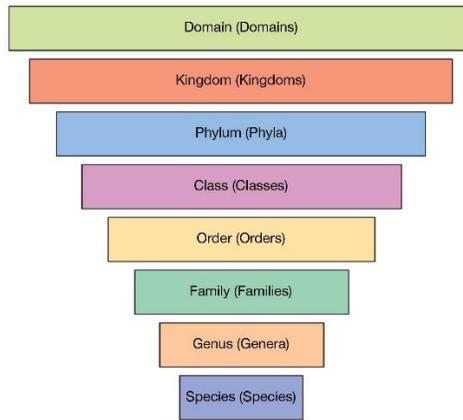


Figure 2.2

In this system, the basic unit is *species*, which has somewhat broad definitions that are a bit hard to be exact or specific about. And further, each *species* is related, theoretically, to each other species, and this relationship can be visualized by the Tree of Life (*see* Figure 2.3 *below*).

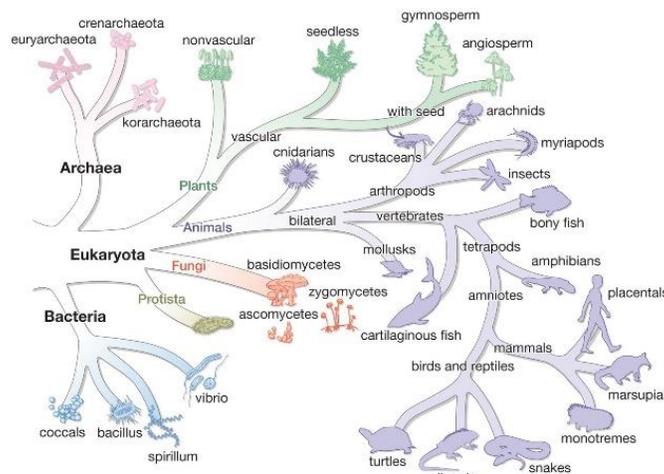


Figure 2.3

By contrast, the Hebrew word *min* expresses a division of life forms, by sexual reproduction compatibility. In other words, any two animals which can reproduce together are of the same Hebrew *min*. So, for example, by evolutionary taxonomy, a polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) and a brown bear (*Ursus arctus*) are different *species* belonging to the same *family*. But the Hebrew word *min* is a broader in its scope than this classification. Because polar bears and brown bears *can* produce offspring together, they are of the same *min*. In fact, this discovery has led creation scientists to begin a study of what is being called “baraminology,” to study the different created *kinds* (Hb. *bara* = created + *min* = kind).

So, when God created life, He did not necessarily create every imaginable animal or plant. He created each of the *mins*, or kinds, that exist. Those *mins*, or kinds, as they reproduced, would create many different variations of animals and plants. Each new variation in a given *min* is capable of reproduction with other variations in that same *min*, but living organisms are demonstrably incapable of reproduction across *mins* (a polar bear, for example, cannot produce offspring with a giraffe, a turtle or a roach).

This classification of living organisms by *mins*, destroys the credibility of evolutionary theory, as it relates to *macroevolution* (the transformation of one kind of animal into another over time). However, it distinctly provides for *microevolution* (the development or transformation of adaptive traits over successive generations, within a certain *kind* of animal).

3. **The Distinctness of Human Life.** Over and over, in every instance where God creates animate life, we are told He did so “after their kind.” The one, distinct exception to this is the creation of man on day six. Where the other life forms are created “after their kinds,” man is created “in the image of God.” This clearly sets mankind apart from anything else God created. More on that in a moment.
4. **The Repetition of *Yom*.** Another important observation that ought to be noted before we look at the text, is the usage and repetition of the Hebrew word *yom* (“day”). There *are* times in the Old Testament when this word is used to mean something other than a normal, literal, 24-hour day (cf. Genesis 5, where the word *yom* is consistently used to express the lifespan of each patriarch listed there). Given that reality, how are we to take it here? Are these literal, 24-hour days? Or are they units of time longer than a day?

Several indicators have been noted by various commentators. But the most convincing, and clearest evidence, at least to my way of thinking, is this: at the end of each paragraph that describes a creation day, Moses explains what constitutes a “day” before he even uses the word. “And there was *evening* and there was *morning*, one day,” (cf. 1:8, 13, 19, 23, 31). In fact, it is most interesting that the Day Age Theory (the view that each day represents a geological age) did not come into existence until the mid 1800s...exactly when Darwin’s evolutionary theory was introduced to the world. My own conclusion is that when Darwin began to tell people that life on earth had developed over long ages of time, the world of Christianity scrambled to reinterpret Genesis to allow for all those millions of years.

5. **The Relationship between Chapter One and Chapter Two.** At first reading, some people have gotten confused when they finish Chapter 1 and start into Chapter 2. It seems as though God is detailing two separate creation accounts, perhaps of two different men or races of man.

But these are not two separate events. Chapter 1 gives us the broad overview of Creation Week, including day six. Chapter 2 goes back to day six, and fills in more specifically what happened.

And with all of that, let’s get into this text!

## V. TEXT: GENESIS 1:1 – 2:4

- A. *verses 1-2* = These two initial verses serve as a very general statement about God’s creative work. There is so much that can be said about these verses, but if I try to say it all, we will not get out of these two verses for several weeks. So instead, I will make some general observations and we will move on.
  1. **“In the beginning...”** = The year was 0 TT (the discussion surrounding the origin of BC/AD is long, complexed and irrelevant entirely to this study...for now, suffice to say that the year of creation, if rendered in this construct, was 4004 BC). We are now living in the year 6026 TT (or 2022 AD). However, time as a construct did not exist before 4004 BC, and neither did anything else except for God Himself. So, the phrase, as it is used here, doesn’t only mean that God picked a moment and

started creating. It means that the first thing God created was...time itself, which began to exist on day one of creation week. If you can wrap your mind around that, you're much brighter than I am!

2. **"...God created..."** = This phrase is grammatically incorrect in Hebrew. The verb and its subject don't agree in number. The verb is the Hebrew third person singular (he/she/it creates). The subject is the Hebrew intensive plural (they all creates). So, while the doctrine of God as a Triunity does not appear explicitly in the Old Testament, it is very clearly hinted at (*e.g.* Genesis 1:26).
  3. **"...the heavens and the earth...formless and void..."** = A general statement that reveals two key truths.
    - a. All that exists in the time/space/matter continuum was created by God (**time** = in the beginning / **space** = the heavens / **matter** = the earth). In other words, everything that exists or has ever existed (apart from God Himself) was created by God.
    - b. The creation began with forming, and was then subjected to filling. It had raw material before it had shape, and substance before it had identity.
  4. **"...the Spirit of God was hovering..."** = This Hebrew word means to tremble or flutter. Energy moves in waves, and here Moses tells us obliquely that energy was imparted to the raw material of creation by the powerful, energizing Holy Spirit.
- B. *verses 3-5* = The details of "Sunday," the first day of Creation Week.

1. **"...‘Let there be light’...the light was good...God separated the light from the darkness...God called the light day..."** = Four separate acts of God are described here. First, after having created the raw matter that would be Earth (but none of the other astronomical bodies, yet!), and the vast emptiness of space (as yet unpopulated by anything!), God created light. As to how God called light into existence, three days before He would call the sun and stars into existence to give that light, I would only say this: I don't know. God is light, so it may have been a personal emanation from Him. But ultimately, God can solve His own problems without my help. I don't know how this worked, and I don't need to know how. This is how He told me He did it.

Second, He gave that light His divine pronouncement: ("It's good," as Martha Steward loves to say!).

Third, He separated light from darkness. Again, I'm not sure how He did this, since the light was not yet coming from a clear source. But also again, God says this is what He did, so somehow, He did it!

And fourth, He called light "day," and called darkness, "night." This indicates two things: first, the Hebrew word *qara* means more than naming something. It means declaring ownership or possession of it. So, God calls both day and night, light and darkness, His own possession (*cf.* Isaiah 45:7). Second, because He calls them both His own possession, He indicates that both serve a good purpose, that both darkness and light have good reasons to exist (in a physical sense), and God's purposes to fulfill.

- C. *verses 6-8* = The details of Monday, creation day two.

1. **"...and expanse in the midst of the waters...let it separate the waters...below...from the waters...above...God called the expanse heaven."** = The Hebrew word *raqia* ("expanse") means to spread a thing out, like molten metal could be poured and spread. By the description given, it could be very hard to know exactly what this "expanse" refers to...except that Moses tells us exactly what it refers to: Earth's atmosphere. But if this is true, then the world which was created was vastly different from the world we live in now. There was an ocean *below* the sky, and an ocean *above* it. What happened to that *above* ocean? Helpfully, Moses gives us that information later in the book (*see* Genesis 7:11). We'll talk about that when we get there in the book. For now, note that there is, as of yet, no hydrological cycle. Nothing evaporates, and nothing precipitates (*cf.* Genesis 2:5-6).

- D. *verses 9-13* = The details of Tuesday, creation day three.

1. **"...‘Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let dry land appear’..."** = When dry land first appeared, there were not seven continents. If the **waters were gathered into one place**, the land also only existed in one place. So, our early earth was one, large land mass. This also means that plate tectonics, as they operate today, did not exist on the early earth. Again, Moses tells us later what happened, that caused the explosive shattering of the inner earth (*see again* Genesis 7:11).

2. **“...vegetation...plants yielding seed...fruit trees...bearing fruit with seed in them...”** = God creates vegetation of all kinds on that massive formation of dry land. Here we are told that plant life essentially exists in two forms: plants that yield seed directly, and plants that grow fruit (which contain seeds). In the former case, the plant itself is edible. In the latter, the fruit of the plant is edible. At this point, every plant is edible and nutritious...but no animals will be considered food yet (*cf.* Genesis 1:29-30 and 9:3).
  3. **“...after their kind...after their kind...”** = These are the first uses of the word *min* in this text.
- E. *verses 14-19* = The details of Wednesday, creation day four.
1. **“...lights in the expanse...to separate...for signs and for seasons and for days and for years...”** = Every essential human unit of time has its basis in astronomy...with one notable exception which we'll see momentarily. The **day** is the amount of time it takes the Earth to spin on its axis. The **month** is the length of time it takes the moon to orbit the Earth (in fact, that's where the word month comes from...moon-th). The **year** is the amount of time it takes the Earth to orbit the sun. The one exception is the **week**, which has always been comprised of seven days, but which has no reason to be seven days except that God gave us this unit *as a unit*, demonstrated by His example in this first week (*see* Genesis 2:2-3).
  2. **“...for lights in the expanse...to give light on the earth...”** = Here is the secondary function of these astronomical bodies! They are now given the natural, sustaining function of providing light, which before had been the sole province of God's supernatural power.
  3. **“...the greater light...the lesser light...the stars...”** = That is: the sun, the moon, and everything else that is out there.
- F. *verses 20-23* = The details of Thursday, creation day five.
1. **“...‘Let the waters swarm...and let birds fly...’”** = God now populates, with birds, the expanse He'd created on day two. And He populates, with fish, the waters He'd separated from one another on that day, as well.
  2. **“...great sea monsters...”** = This is a strange Hebrew word, *tannin*, used only 14 times in the Old Testament. It's difficult to translate, but is sometimes translated “dragon” (*cf.* Isaiah 27:1, 51:9), “monster” (*cf.* Psalm 74:13, Jeremiah 51:34), or “serpent” (*cf.* Exodus 7:9, Deuteronomy 32:33, Psalm 91:13). Whatever they were, they were huge and powerful, as the Hebrew adjective *gadol* (“great”) clearly indicates. And they were distinctive enough to be mentioned separately from the other living creatures of the sea.
  3. **“...be fruitful and multiply...”** = This is a clear statement that God created fish *once* and birds *once*. After that initial act, His direct creation of them was finished. They had been given the necessary means to procreate on their own, and they are expected to do so. In other words, God is no longer creating fish and birds directly. They are now reproducing after their own kinds, by the natural means God has given them.
- G. *verses 24-25* = The first details of Friday, creation day six. The rest of Chapter 1, and most of Chapter 2 will be taken up with Friday, as well.
1. **“...living creatures...cattle...creeping things...beasts of the earth...”** = In other words, if it lives on land, it was created on Friday (with the exception of birds). So, land animals of all kinds, including insects and land “dinosaurs” (a made-up word, coined at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century...before that, they were just “beasts” like all the other animals), and everything in between, were all created on Friday. Bear in mind that not every species was created on this day. But every *baramin* was.
- H. *verses 26-31* = The final details, in this opening summary of Creation Week, of Friday, day six.
1. **“...man...”** = The Hebrew word for “man” used here is *adam*. That explains great-great-great-grandpa's (great to however many generations he is in our history) name! This word is not the normal word used for “man” as distinct from “woman.” In other words, the word *adam* does not usually express the **maleness** of man (as opposed to **female**), but rather to the *race of mankind*, as distinct from all other created life forms. Mankind is not related to the rest of the animal kingdom. The rest of the created life forms were *spoken* into existence, and were created “after their kind.” Man was shaped from the dust by the very hands of God, received His *nephesh* (we'll talk about that word next week!)

- through his nostrils from the very breath of God's lungs, and was made "in the image of God." We are distinct from the rest of the animate creation. There is much more to be said about this, but we will look at it next week!
2. **"...dominion over the earth...over every living thing..."** = One remarkable feature of man's divine-image-bearing nature is his ruling stewardship over everything that God created on the earth, including the physical earth itself. We were born to reign. We subsequently deviated from that role, and gave it to the enemy (stay tuned for Chapter 3, coming up soon!). We will be given that role again when the enemy is vanquished (stay tuned for our study for Revelation on Wednesday nights!).
  3. **"...every green plant...shall be food for you..."** = As we noted briefly earlier, mankind was created to be vegetarian. And so were all the other animals. This changed after the flood (*see again* Genesis 9:3). But in the kingdom which Christ is soon to establish on this earth, the vegetarian condition will resume (*e.g.* Isaiah 11:6-9). This is because eating meat requires the *death* of an animal. Death is a result of the curse of sin (*cf.* Genesis 2:16-17). In the coming kingdom, sin will be abolished, and so will the curse brought about by sin (*cf.* Isaiah 65:17-25, Revelation 21:1-5).
  4. **"...it was very good."** = This is the repeated statement of God (*cf.* Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). But it therefore stands in stark contrast to the one thing in all creation that is "not good," which is coming in our study next week ("Then Yahweh God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him,'" Genesis 2:18).
- I. *verses 2:1-4* = The final day of the week, Saturday (if you will) is here detailed.
1. **"...the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts."** = Everything that God had intended to create had now been created. Which means that His creative work is done. There is nothing left for Him to create. Everything is now able to sustain itself by the natural ability He has given it. This, again, speaks explicitly against the theory of evolution, at least in the realm of macroevolution.
  2. **"...God completed His work...and He rested..."** = God is not resting because He is tired. He does not get tired (*see* Isaiah 40:28)! He is resting because His work is finished. It is a demonstration of the orderliness of God's mind, and an example for His crowning creative achievement, mankind (*cf.* Exodus 20:8-11).
  3. **"...God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it..."** = This day of rest is an essential part of the week. Understand this clearly! The week God has given us is seven days...and yet He only worked on six of those days. So why not just call the week six days and be done with it? If God is building the construct, and creating the system, six days would work as well as seven. Why is a seventh day even there?

Do you see that in all the other days of creation, the things *created* on those days were "good." But on this seventh day, the *day itself* is blessed and holy. It is unique among all the days of that creation week in this regard. It is good, not because of what was created on that day (because the creation work was done!), but because it is a day set apart to REST from the work accomplished.

Here's one point of application for us all: if you are so busy during your work week that you don't have a day to devote to your God, and to REST from your good work, then you are far busier than God intends you to be. Time to set priorities straight, and establish better boundaries!

## VI. ONE FINAL THOUGHT

- A. *Romans 1:18-32* = Here, Paul states clearly that God's eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen in His creation. This revelation is so clear that any who suppress it, do so without excuse, and to their own destruction. He also clearly states that the God of creation is to be worshiped...but that the creation of God is never to be worshiped! My perception of the created world around me ought to lead me to praise and worship the God who has made it all by His mighty power.

## VII. PRAYER