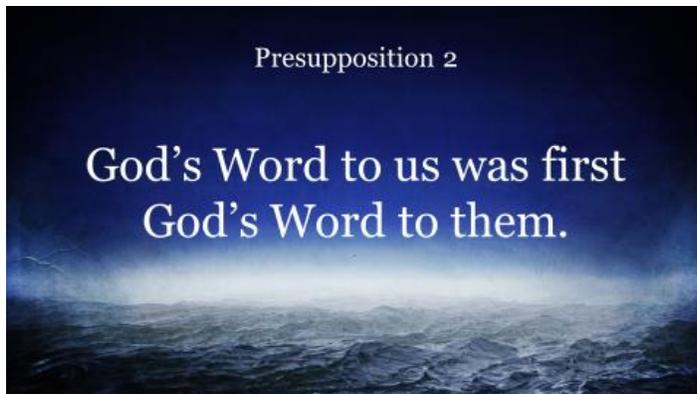
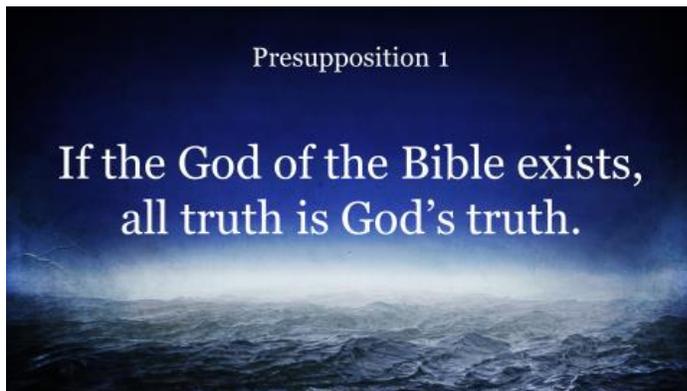
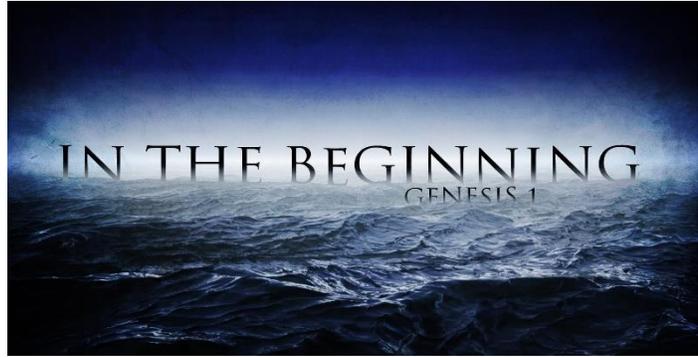


# A Proposal for Reading Genesis 1 as HIStory



**Our task:** is to read the text as the author intended it to be understood.

- The primary question for any interpreter must always be, "what does the text say?" History and science may provide interesting and helpful insights, but the focus of all interpretation must be on the text itself.
- In trying to understand the creation account in Genesis 1 and 2, we should be guided by what the text itself says not by attempts to reconcile the text with ever changing views of modern science.
- After coming to terms with the text itself, we will then be ready to allow history and science to inform our understanding of the text.<sup>1</sup>

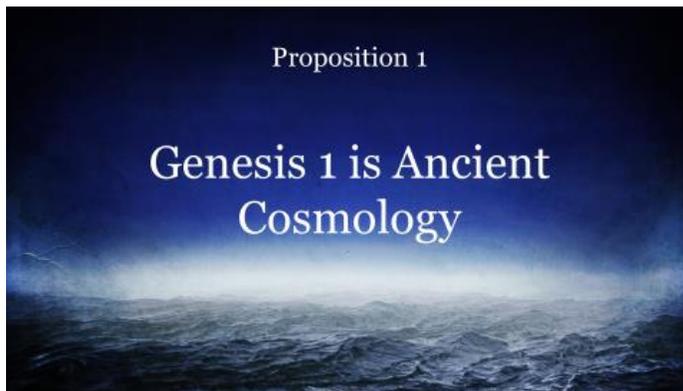
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<sup>1</sup> "It is sometimes argued that our exegesis should not be influenced by scientific observations. We believe this view is mistaken. While the Bible clearly gives more specific information about our relationship to God than one can possibly deduce from natural revelation, it does not necessarily follow that our understanding of the physical world, its origin, etc., will also be more clearly deduced from God's revelation in His word than His revelation in His world. Since both are revelations from God, and therefore give a unified story, it seems quite permissible to consider all of the evidence (scientific as well as biblical) to be significant to the degree that each revelation can be clearly interpreted."

Concluding: WE AFFIRM that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, biblical and extra-biblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history, or

## Audience and Purpose of Genesis 1

- Introduction to the Five Books of Moses (Torah)
- Israelites who had escaped Egyptian captivity by the work of I AM (YHWH), the God who made covenant with them at Sinai and promised to give them the land of promise.
- People formed by an Ancient Near Eastern worldview where creation cosmogonies were central to pagan worship and life.
- Explanation of Origin—the formation of a worldview:
  - Origin > Worldview > Meaning > Value > Behavior



Genesis along with all biblical history was written as a type of history. It is unlike any other history in that it claims to describe the words and actions of the living God who stands outside of history. Furthermore, the creation account is not recounting human experiences because the accounts predate any human being. The creation record is not driven by

modern presuppositions of scientific or historical method. John Walton writes:

Genesis 1... does not attempt to describe cosmology in modern terms or address modern questions. The Israelites received no revelation to update or modify their “scientific” understanding of the cosmos. They did not know that stars were suns; they did not know that the earth was spherical and moving through space; they did not know that the sun was much further away than the moon,... They believed the sky was material (not vaporous) solid enough to support the residence of the deity as well as to hold back waters. In these ways, and many others they thought about the cosmos in much the same way that anyone in the ancient world thought, and not at all like anyone thinks today. And God did not think it important to revise their thinking.<sup>2</sup>

The primary purpose of Genesis 1 is to show that I AM (YHWH) is the creator of everything and prepared “the land” as a place for man and woman to dwell in peace and fellowship with Him. In so doing, it tells us the way things were “in the beginning”, and it attempts to tell us something about the will of God for our lives today.

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anything else. We further affirm that in some cases extra-biblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations. WE DENY that extra-biblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.

Taken from, *The Proceeding of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy*, Summit II (1982).

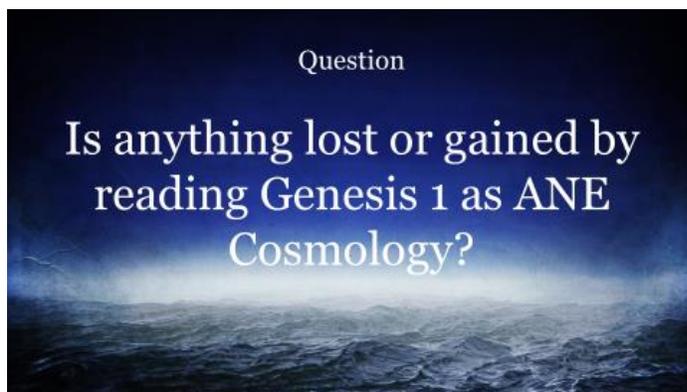
<sup>2</sup> Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 16.

Bruce Waltke writes: “In sum, the narrator has an agenda very different from the modern historian. He has a theological agenda: to tell us that God created the earth and that it is all very orderly.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, as we approach the account, we should not allow our presuppositions of history or science to dictate that way in which the creation account is to be interpreted.

“We can describe the creation account as an artistic, literary representation of creation intended to fortify God’s covenant with creation. It represents truths about origins in anthropomorphic language (the creation is explained in such a way that we can understand God’s purposes in creation) so the covenant community may have a proper worldview and be wise unto salvation. It represents the world as coming into being through God’s proclamation so that the world depends on his will, purpose, and presences.”<sup>4</sup>

John Walton provides one further clarifier on the difference between ancient and modern perspectives:

There is no concept of a “natural” world in the ancient Near Eastern thinking. The dichotomy between natural and supernatural is a relatively recent one. Deity pervaded the ancient world. Nothing happened independently of deity. The gods did not “intervene” because that would assume that there was a world of events outside of them that they could step into and out of. The Israelites, along with everyone else in the ancient world, believed instead that every event was the act of deity—that every plant that grew, every baby born, every drop of rain, and every climatic disaster was an act of God. No “natural” laws governed the cosmos or was inherent in it. There were no “miracles” (in the sense of events deviating from that which is “natural”), there were only signs of the deity’s activity (sometimes favorable, sometimes not). The idea that deity got things running then just stood back or engaged himself elsewhere (deism) would have been laughable in the ancient world because it was not even conceivable.<sup>5</sup>



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<sup>3</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 76

<sup>4</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 78.

<sup>5</sup> Walton, 20.

### Hypothesis

Reading Genesis 1 as ANE cosmology will provide the best foundation for a dialogue between the truth revealed through biblical revelation and our understanding of reality through scientific research.

### Proposition 2

Ancient Cosmology is  
Function Oriented.

**What does it mean for something to exist?**

**Material Existence:** A chair exists when material properties cohere to form a chair.

In speaking about the chairs origins we focus our attention on:

- What are its component parts
- How were they put together
- What was its design
- Who put it together
- How well was it constructed
- When was it constructed

**Functional Existence:** A chair company exists when it is in business, producing and selling chairs.

In speaking about the origins of a chair company we focus our attention on:

- What are its articles of incorporation?
- Does it have permission from appropriate governing bodies?
- What is the structure of the company?
- What is the process of production?
- Who does what?
- How much does it produce?
- When did it start business?

**The existence of the chair focuses on the physical ontology** – its existence is tied to its physical properties.

**The existence of the chair company focuses on the functional ontology** – its existence is tied to its functions. Functional ontology presumes the need for physical properties. There would be no company without the manufacturing plant or its workers. But if we were tell you the story of how a chair company was formed, it would be a much different story than a description of the physical components of the plant or chemical make-up of the people working in the plant.

Ancient cosmologies tended to presume the existence of material properties. They were not concerned with the chemical components of water. Instead they looked at existence in the sense of having a function in an ordered system. The question of water was where did it come from and how was it governed. (Can we know when to expect it so that the crops will grow?).

Walton explains:

In this sort of functional ontology, the sun does not exist by virtue of its material properties, or even by its functions as a burning ball of gas. Rather it exists by virtue of the role that it has in its sphere of existence, particularly in the way it functions for humankind and human society. <sup>6</sup>

Walton provides an extended analogy to understand this proposed construction of the ancient thinking:

If we think of creating a computer, we understand there are many stages in the process. At the most basic level the casing and electronics have to be manufactured, the keyboard and other peripherals designed and so forth. This is the basic production and manufacturing process---what we call the material phase of production. After someone has assembled all those manufactured parts we might say that the computer exists. But another aspect involves writing the programs. Even after those programs are written, if the software has not been installed on the computer, its “existence” is meaningless—it cannot function. So there is a separate process of installing the software that makes the computer theoretically functional. But what if there is no power source (electric or battery)? This is another obstacle to the computer’s existence. Adding a power source, we might now claim that its existence is finally and completely achieved. But what if one sits at the keyboard or knows how to use or even desires to use it? It remains nonfunctional, and, for all intents and purposes, as if it did not exist. We can see that different observers might be inclined to attribute “existence” to the computer at different stages in the process.

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<sup>6</sup> Walton, 26.

In a functional ontology, all of the above steps are important in the definition of existence. Unless people (or gods) are there to benefit from functions, existence is not achieved. Unless something is integrated into a working ordered system, it does not exist.<sup>7</sup>

### **A Functional System Requires all the Components or It Does Not Exist**



### **How do we confirm this proposal?**

- We analyze data. The biblical creation accounts and other ancient Near Eastern accounts.

### **Basic sources for comparison:**

- **Hebrew**
  - Genesis
- **Egyptian**
  - Memphite Theology
  - Papyrus Leiden I 350
  - Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts and the Book of the Dead
- **Babylonian**
  - Atrahasis
  - Enuma Elish
- **Sumerian** (see Richard Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and the Bible*)

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<sup>77</sup> Walton, 26-27.

## Summary of Evidence

- **Shape of the Cosmos**

Old world cosmology appears to be based on vantage point and analogy. If water comes down, something must hold it up. If something is up there, something must be holding it in place. If water comes from the ground there must be water under the ground, yet something must hold the ground steady.

Ideas about structures are developed to understand the functions and operations as they are experienced and observed.

Walton states: "Creation texts described these structures being put into place so that the operations would commence or continue."<sup>8</sup>

- **Role of deities/Deity**

In Egyptian cosmology, all the elements we might consider cosmic structures (firmament, sun, moon, sky, earth, etc.) are depicted as gods.

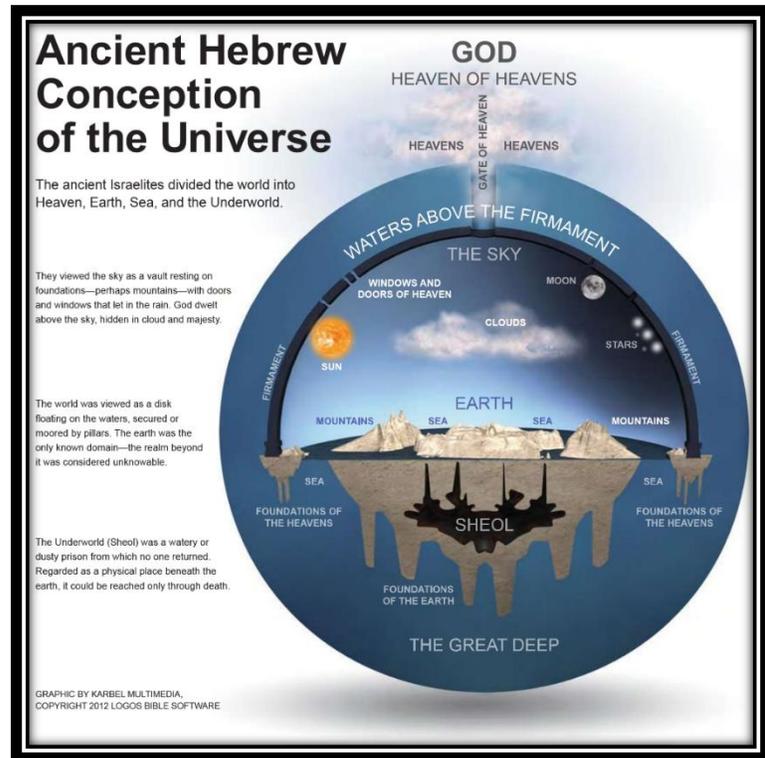
They were more interested in the functions of these gods than material structures.

The cosmos functioned as an extension of the gods and the gods functioned within the cosmos.

In Mesopotamian texts the divine assignments dictate the roles and functions of the various elements.

- **Origins of the Cosmos and Deity**

The origins of the gods (theogony) connected to the origins of the cosmic elements. This coinciding of origins points towards origins that are functional in nature.



<sup>8</sup> Walton, 29.

- **Divine Conflict**

In the Babylonian creation epic, *Enuma Elish*, creation is accomplished in the aftermath of battle for control of the pantheon and the cosmos (i.e., who's in charge?)

- **Features of ANE Creation Accounts**

- **Nonfunctional**

Nearly all creation accounts of the ancient world start their story with no operational system in place. Egyptian and Sumerian texts talk about a singularity with no separation. Creation happened through the separation and placement of functions.

- **Primeval waters**

Creation often begins with that which emerges from the waters. In Egyptian texts, these primeval waters are designated the non-existent. Out of these non-functional waters comes that which is.

- **Naming**

Names in the ancient world were associated with identity, role and function. Naming is a significant part of existence and therefore of its creation.

- **Separating**

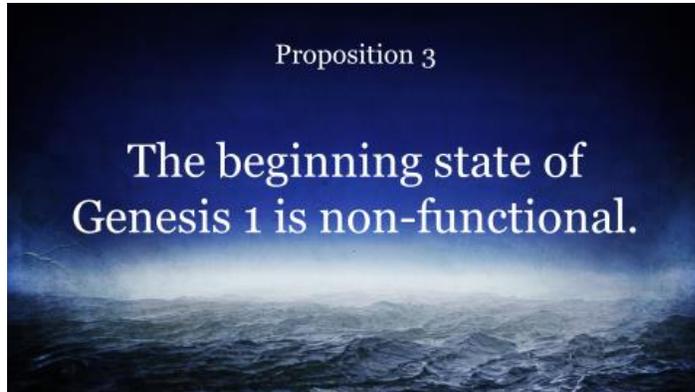
Common feature through ancient Near Eastern texts. An act that puts things in their proper place in relation to the whole.

- **Creatures**

It is interesting to note that living creatures are almost never included in creation accounts.

- **Human Beings**

Many accounts include the creation of human beings. They speak of what they are made: (e.g., clay, blood of deity, breath of deity). They communicate identity and relationship, but the focus on humans is their functions in the system (e.g., slave of the gods).



The word *bara* “create” concerns the creation of functions.

- The verb occurs 47 times in the OT. God is always the subject or implied subject of the verb. It is an inherent divine activity. Humans do not *bara*. Only God does this according to biblical revelation.

- The objects are significant in helping understand the meaning of the verb. What does God create?
  - Cosmos (10) (to produce salvation and righteousness, to be inhabited)
  - People in general (10) (male and female, in his image, likeness of God, for fertility, to praise the Lord)
  - Specific groups of people (6) (for my glory, to be a delight)
  - Specific individuals or types of individuals (5) (to forge a weapon, to work havoc)
  - Creatures (2)
  - Phenomena (e.g., darkness, wonders, praise)
  - Components of cosmic geography (3)
  - Condition (1, pure heart)

### Summary of Evidence for Bara

The examination shows that grammatical objects of the verb are not easily identified in material terms, and even when they are, it is questionable that the context is highlighting their material property. No clear example occurs where the point of creating was to describe the substance that was created. In contrast, a large percentage of the contexts require a functional understanding. I AM *bara(s)* so that “His name might be praised”, “His image might be projected”, “His glory might be revealed” and “salvation and righteousness might be produced.”

Walton writes, “These data cannot be used to prove a functional ontology, but they offer support that existence is viewed in functional rather than material terms, as is true throughout the rest of the ancient world. If the Israelites understood the word *bara* in functional terms, then that is the most “literal” understanding that we can achieve.”<sup>9</sup>

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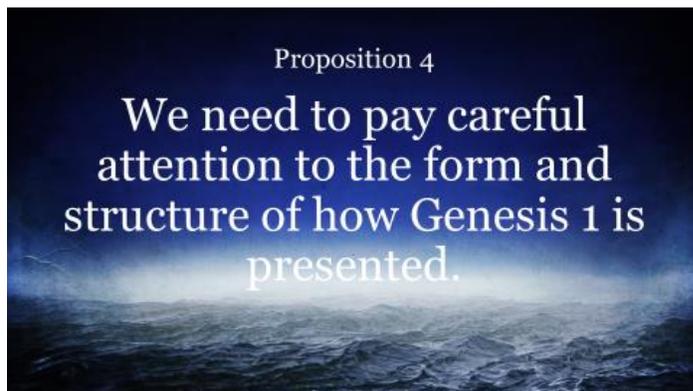
<sup>9</sup> Walton, 41.

The Negative State is described as *tohu wabohu*.

*tohu wabohu*: unformed and unfilled.

1. *tohu wabohu* - regularly translated “formless and void” and commonly pictures for contemporary readers a formless mass of gases slowly cooling and coalescing or simply primeval chaos.
2. In ancient Hebrew, it expresses a place of desolation without human beings or beast, void of all cultivation of plants and trees, a place uninhabitable and inhospitable to human life. Later in the Pentateuch *tohu* will be used to describe the wilderness in which the Israelites were forced to wander because of their transgression at Sinai, as does the later prophets, e.g., Jeremiah 4:23-26 “I looked at the land and it was formless and empty (*tohu wabohu*) and at the heavens and their light was gone...the fruitful land was a desert.” It is that stretch of land that is not good for human life.

This negative state is a common feature of ANE cosmologies. This negative state across the different accounts features a negative state that lacks form and functionalities to set up a system in which to live. The way Genesis begins points to assumptions of a shared world view.



## A. The Creation of the Universe: 1:1

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

1. *bereshit*: “In the beginning”
  - **Genesis 1:1 speaks of an indeterminate period of time, not a single moment of time, but duration of time.**
  - The author’s choice of the word

- allowed him to state that God created everything while not going into details.
- In Job 8:7, the word *reshit* refers to the early part of Job’s life, before his fortunes overtook him.
- In Gen. 10:10, the word is used to refer to the early part of Nimrod’s kingdom.
- Also used to refer to the time of King’s reign before they officially started counting the years of the Reign.
- There were other words available to Moses, which he could have used if he meant to specify the beginning as a specific point and what preceded as the elaboration of God’s creation from that point: for example *reshonah* or *techillah* which mean beginning as the in the sense of start or first in a series.
- In opening his account of creation with the phrase “in the beginning” the author has identified the creation as prelude to the history of God’s dealings with humanity.

2. *Elohim* - This name of God represents his majesty specifically in relationship to the creation. God unlike the creation is without beginning, begetting, opposition, or limitations of power. Gordon Wenham observes, “Thanks to secularism, God has become for many people little more than an abstract philosophical concept. But the biblical view avoids such abstractions. God is the one who acts and speaks.” Even though *Elohim* is not the personal name *Yahweh* given to Israel, God should never be understood as being less than a personal being.
3. *bara* - “To Create” a verb used only of God (See above.)
4. “heavens and earth”
  - The term “the heavens and the earth” is a merism, a literary device that states the extremes in order to infer the totality. Thus “heavens and earth” = the entire cosmos.
  - *Eretz* means “earth” in the sense of land, the place where humans dwell. Depending on context it can refer to region of land or the whole world.
  - *Shamayim* means “heavens” in the sense of sky, the place above the land, including the place that contains the clouds, the birds that fly and the sun, moon, and stars.

## **B. The negative state of the earth/land before it was habitable for humans to live: 1:2**

*Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

Genesis 1:2 plays a central role in the creation account. It focuses people from the universe as a whole and onto the earth/land, the central setting of God’s dealing with humanity. It pictures a fully formed world, but a world that has not been blessed and made habitable for humans to flourish. The story of creation will be the story of God establishing the earth/land as the place God will dwell with and bless His people.

1. “Now”, a disjunctive *waw* separating v.2 from v. 1.
 

The story of Genesis 1:2 pictures a world covered in water, but the earth was without form or content. Through God’s creative power He will give form and content.
2. Three clauses
  - a. *tohu wabohu* (See above)
  - b. Darkness upon the Abyss (Deep Waters)
  - c. Spirit of God upon the waters

## **C. Creation by the word of God: 3-31**

*And God said...*

## PROCESS OF CREATION: 6 PANELS WITH FOLLOWING FORM

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ANNOUNCEMENT: “And God said”: according to God’s expressed will and through agency of God’s word.

COMMANDMENT: “Let there be” or its equivalent (His word in conjunction with His Spirit is irresistible and creative and overcomes chaos by bringing life and beauty out of desolation and emptiness.)

REPORT: “And so God made” or its equivalent.

NAMING: “And he called” with the first three days: He is supreme ruler over all the functions of the universe. All the things that the nations around them worship as gods, are not gods at all, but were created by the Lord God. They are under God’s dominion and brought within His protective restraints.

EVALUATION: “And it was good.” It satisfied His purpose and man had nothing to fear from creation.

CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: God created not in time but with time; there is a logic and order to His use of time. The week becomes the basic unit of time: six days of work and one of rest.

## The Six Days of Creation

### *Day 1*

Announcement: And God said,

Commandment: Let there be Light

Report: and there was light...he separated the light from the darkness

Evaluation: God saw that the light was good

Naming: God called the light “day” and darkness he called “night”

Chronological Framework: And there was evening, and there was morning—day 1.

### *Day 2*

Announcement: And God said,

Commandment: Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.

Report: So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it and it was so.

Naming: God called the expanse “sky”

Evaluation: None

Chronological Framework: And there was evening, and there was morning—day 2.

### *Day 3*

Announcement: And God said,

Commandment: Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.

Report: And it was so.

Naming: God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered water he called “seas.”

Evaluation: And God saw that it was good.

Announcement: Then God said,

Commandment: Let the land produce vegetation: seed bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.

Report: And it was so...

Evaluation: And God saw that it was good.

Chronological Framework: And there was evening, and there was morning—day 3.

### *Day 4*

Announcement: And God said,

Commandment: Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days, and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.

Report: And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made stars. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness.

Evaluation: and God saw that it was good.

Chronological Framework: And there was evening, and there was morning—day 4.

### *Day 5*

Announcement: And God said

Commandment: Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.

Report: So God created the great creature of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.

Evaluation: And God saw that it was good.

Report of God's speech: And God blessed them and said, "be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth."

Chronological Framework: And there was evening, and there was morning—day 5.

### *Day 6*

Announcement: And God said

Commandment: Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creature that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind."

Report: And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds.

Evaluation: And god saw that it was good.

Announcement: Then God said

Commandment: Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

Report: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

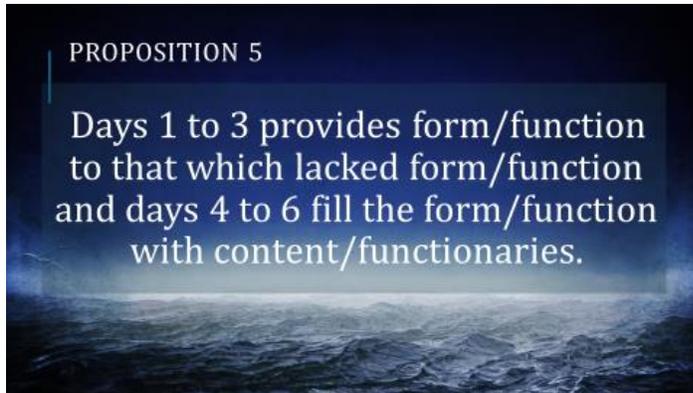
Report of God's speech: God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Report of God’s speech: The God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.

Report: And it was so.

Evaluation: And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Chronological Framework: And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.



Structure: God’s creative Word bringing form (function) and content (functionaries) to the earth/land that lacked form and content necessary for humanity’s existence.

Days 1 - 3	Form/Function	Days 4 – 6	Content/ Functionaries
Day 1	Light and Darkness	Day 4	Sun to govern day; the Moon and stars the night
Day 2	Sky (expanse above) and Sea (expanse below)	Day 5	Sea Creatures Birds
Day 3	Land separated from sea	Day 6	Animals
(2 Acts of Creation)	Creation of vegetation	(2 Acts of Creation)	Creation of Humanity, male and female to govern the earth

- First triad involves separations of boundaries to give form to the formlessness.
- The second triad fills the corresponding form with content to the emptiness.
- Two acts of creation on the third day, corresponding to the two acts of creation on the sixth Day.
- Progression in each triad from the Sky/Heaven to the Land.
- The First Triad establishes Realms (functions). The Second Triad establishes Regents (functionaries).
- Each triad ends with the earth bringing forth.
- The unity of the whole; the week becomes the basic element of time, 6 days of work the seventh day set apart for God as a Sabbath rest.



### Question: Where does the divine rest?

In the ancient world, a deity rests in a temple and only in a temple. This is what temples were built for.

Psalm 132:7-8, 13-14

<sup>7</sup> *“Let us go to his dwelling place, let us worship at his footstool, saying,*

<sup>8</sup> *‘Arise, LORD, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might...*

<sup>13</sup> *For the LORD has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling, saying,*

<sup>14</sup> *“This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.*

### What does divine rest entail?

Modern presumption: Rest is the disengagement from cares and, worries, and tasks of life. What comes to mind is sleeping, napping, and lounging.

Ancient world: Rest is what results when crisis is resolved, stability is established, when the normal routines of living can be established and enjoyed. It isn't about disengagement without responsibility but engagement without obstacles.

### What is the logical progression of divine rest?

**Sabat (ceasing).** God ceased from his activities of creating. This ceasing leads to a new state of affairs where God **nuha (ed)** to find **menuha**. The verb involves entering a position of safety, security, or stability and the noun refers to the place where this is found. It does not imply stopping all activity but implies the conditions in which life can flourish.

**Deuteronomy 12:10**

*But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you **rest** from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety.*

## Who is the temple for?

The role of the temple in the ancient world was not primarily for the people to gather for their worship. It was a place for the deity—sacred space. It was the deity’s abode, but more importantly it represented the place from which he exercised dominion. Now that the setup of the cosmos is complete, God can engage in his main activity engaging with His creation (through His image bearers).



**Isaiah 66:1**

*This is what the LORD says:*

*“Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.*

*Where is the house you will build for me?*

*Where will my resting place be?*

**1 Kings 8:27**

*“But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!*

**Isaiah 6:3b**

*“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

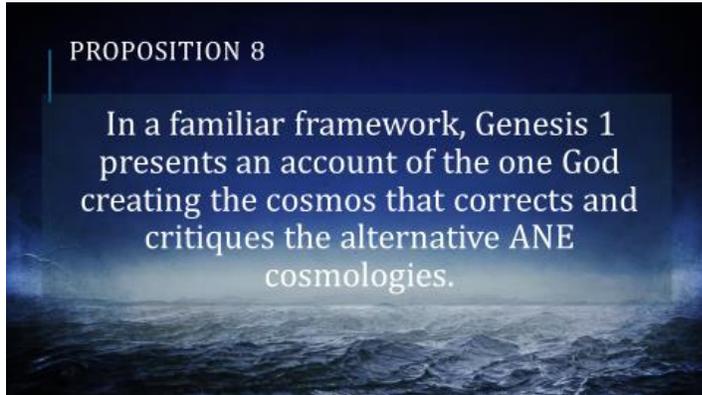
### Observations:

1. In the Bible and in the ANE, temples are often depicted as a microcosm of the universe.
2. Tabernacle and temple is designed with the imagery of the cosmos
3. Good arguments have been made that creation texts can and do follow the model of temple-building texts. (See, Victor Hurowitz, *I Have Built You and Exalted House*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 115).
4. In the Bible, the cosmos can be viewed as a temple.
5. In the ANE Deity rests in a temple

Walton makes this significant observation:

Genesis 1 can now be seen as a creation account focusing on the cosmos as a temple. It is describing the creation of the cosmic temple with all of its functions and with God dwelling in its midst. This is what makes day seven so significant, because without God taking up his

dwelling in its midst, the (cosmic) temple does not exist. The most central truth to the creation account is that this world is a place for God's presence.



**Genesis 1:**

- Affirms the goodness of God and His creation
- Dethrones the gods of ancient world – they are not gods at all. All those things you assume to be gods were created by command of our God
- Affirms that God establishes form and function, order and agency.
- Affirms that God wants to fill the void with life.
- Establishes Humankind, male and female as God's image-bearer/vice-regents
- Affirms both work and rest, worship and blessing, service and provision
- Establishes a basic rhythm for living, six days of work and a seven day of rest.
- Establishes our proper place in the universe, near the center but not the center.
- Claims that God alone is to be worshiped.



- The nature of the governing verb leans towards a functional account.
- The context is functional (it starts with a non-functional system) and it progresses where form is given to formless and the emptiness is filled with functionaries.
- The ANE context leans towards a functional interpretation.
- It establishes a theological framework that explains who as opposed to what.

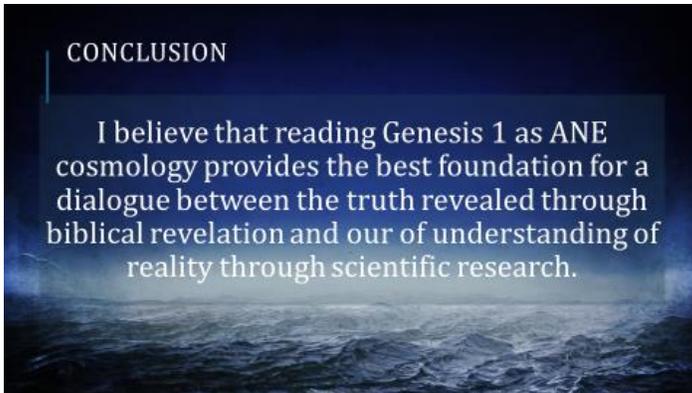
Who is God, who are we, what are we and what should we do.

- It does not try to correct the ANE conception of structural component of the cosmos.

## PROPOSITION 10

Reading Genesis as a functional account of God establishing His cosmic temple does not necessarily exhaust the meaning of the text, but it should be understood as the main meaning of the text.

- God's Word to us was first God's Word to them. The main meaning of the text is what God was trying to say when He said it.
- Part of the argument of this reading of the Genesis 1 is that while God was providing truth and correction to people about the universe in which we live, he was not trying to provide for them a scientific (material) account of creation. He did not try to correct the way they viewed cosmic geography (e.g., firmament above and below). He worked within their conceptual framework to provide for them the truth they needed to trust in His wisdom and promises. He prioritized giving them that which was most important, meaning and purpose. Providing truth of his provision in a way they could comprehend.
- Could there be deeper truths given in Genesis 1 that becomes clearer as we are able to read the OT in the light of more truth? I think the answer is yes, but with cautions.
- First, justifying the yes.
  - We believe special revelation (God's Word) is also progressive in nature. We read the OT through the NT and have greater clarity on understanding the purpose of OT teaching because Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT.
  - There are many instances where Jesus was in some way pre-figured and referred to through people and events that predated His first advent. For example the promise of Emanuel.
- Cautions: avoiding over-reading the Truth being given.
  - Typology is a valid principle of interpreting the OT through the NT, where we look for places where Jesus is prefigured in certain people (Adam, Moses, Joseph, Job, and David) and events (Exodus, Exile, Suffering Servant). Shining light from both history and science, looking for possible deeper, truth is less secure and should be conducted with greater conditionality.
  - We should always major in the majors. The main point should be the main point, and if we spend all of our time possible secondary meanings we can actually be hiding the light that God wants to be shining forth from His Word.



- It provides the clearest face-value reading of the text.
- It functions off the principle that the literal interpretation of the Scripture is the literary interpretation of Scripture.
- It affirms all the foundational principles of belief and understanding that allow science to

be a successful pursuit of truth. We should explore the creation because it is good, and it reveals God's glory. We can expect order and rationality because, the creator brings order out of chaos and has intelligently and intelligibly constructed His Cosmic Temple. Scientific exploration is inherently worshipful (though you can do it and still not offer God His glory).

- Since Genesis 1 is offering a functional explanation of how God constructed His cosmic temple, we do **not have to try** to fit the biblical account into our provisional understanding of the material origins of the universe. This helps us avoid placing too high a value on our provisional understanding the physical world and not enough trust into God's promises given through His Word.
- This reading of Genesis helps clarify that there are different kinds of stories that can be both complementary and different. Genesis 1 focuses on communicating theological, anthropological and teleological concerns. Science focuses on communicating mathematical and materialistic concerns. To provide a minor correction to Galileo, the Bible tells the story of how God is transforming heaven and earth into a new heavens and a new earth. Science tells us how the heavens are going right now, at least to the best of our understanding.