

Understanding the Old Testament Week 1: Genesis 1 and 2, Day 1-7, Rest, and Eden as “Sacred Space”.

Day 1: Light - Genesis 1:3–5

The Light was called good, the darkness was not.

Theology: Yahweh determines what is light and what is darkness. Light is good, and darkness is not.

John 1:4–11; John 3:16–21

Polemic: Yahweh controls the light and dark cycles.

Many cultures worshipped gods whom they worshipped believing they could control things like the day and night cycle.

Day 2: Separation between Earth and Heaven - Genesis 1:6–8 ESV

Theology: Whether heaven in this passage means Heaven as in the dwelling place of Yahweh, or Heaven as in the sky, it doesn't matter as even today we still think and speak of Heaven as “up there” which is contrary to Hell which is “down there”. What is clear from this passage is there is a clear separation between “up there” and where we are. And it is Yahweh alone that defines its borders and who can enter which area.

Polemic: Many worshipped gods whom they believed to be lord of the heavens. Babylon for example worshipped Marduk who was king of the gods after he defeated the chaos dragon Tiamat. The polemic here is that it's not Marduk of Babylon, Baal of the Canaanites [Ugaritic], or Re of the Egyptians who is king of the heavens. It is Yahweh alone, the uncreated God of the universe.

Day 3: Land and Vegetation

Genesis 1:9–13 ESV

Theology: Yahweh not only created the land we live on, but the Sea as well. Yahweh alone is the cause of growth, Yahweh alone is the one who can keep the Sea where it is supposed to be, who can cause rain on the earth, who causes plants to grow and reproduce.

Polemic: Identical to the theological point, most of the main gods worshipped where gods believed to be over fertility of the land. Pharaoh of Egypt for example was worshipped as the god Horus. Horus/Pharaoh was in charge of the Nile, making sure it flooded properly in the Spring to prepare the land for planting and make sure the Nile didn't flood during the growing season. Genesis 1 declares it is Yahweh alone who control Sea, who controls the waters, the land, and causes plants to grow.

Day 4: Sun, Moon, Stars, and Seasons - Genesis 1:14–19 ESV

Theology and Polemic: The Sun, Moon, and Stars are very important to nature. They keep us warm, they provide light, and they helped with navigation. Without proper cycles and seasons things don't grow correctly. These were all objects of much pagan worship of false gods. Stars are often spoken of as metaphors for angels, fallen angels being the false gods these nations served. Egypt's main God was the sun god, Ra (or Re). The setting of the Sun and the rising of the Sun also represented death and life respectively in many pagan cults. The Egyptians believed that Ra died every night and resurrected every morning. The declaration that Yahweh created the Sun, Moon and Stars declares that He is above them all. He is the uncreated one. He controls the Sun, the Moon, and Stars. Life and death are in His hands. Likewise, He is the one who controls the seasons and cycles of life.

Day 5: Sea Creatures - Genesis 1:21–23 ESV

Theology: There are several possibilities for both Day 5 and Day 6. Animals played an important role in the everyday lives of ancient humans. Whether food, clothing, materials, sacrifices, etc. God is the creator of everything and therefore our provider of all our needs. *Matthew 6:25–34 ESV*

Polemic: The Sea and sea creatures were often associated with Chaos. As the creator and tamer of the Sea and it's creatures Day 5 declares that Yahweh is above all. *Psalms 74:14–17 ESV; Psalm 104:26 ESV; Job 41:1–3 ESV*

Chaos Narrative - Genesis 1:1–2 ESV

- Faithlife Study Bible – “the deep” - The Hebrew word used here, tehom, refers to the primordial or primeval sea—the cosmic waters of chaos. Tehom is similar to the Babylonian words tamtu and Tiamat. Tiamat refers to a chaos deity, and the slaying of a chaos monster is described elsewhere in the OT in the context of creation (Psa 74:12–17).

- Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible Tiamat - Têhôm, usually translated “the deep”, occurs in Gen 1:2 as a designation of the primeval sea, and is frequently used in the OT to denote the cosmic →sea (Yam)

Thus, the sea, particularly the deep sea is viewed as a metaphor for Chaos, Death, and the Grave. Ex: baptism, we go under the water as “dying to our old self” and come up out of the water as “being born of the Spirit”.

Jesus is the one who calms the chaos: Mark 4:35-41. Revelation and the end of the “sea”: Revelation 20:13, 21:1. Be on a look out for this theme as you read the OT and NT. Examples: the parting of the Red (Reed) Sea. Jonah.

Day 6: Animals of the land. Mankind, male and female, in the image of God. - Genesis 1:24–31 ESV

Theology and Polemic 1: Similar to Day 5. Yahweh created the animals, who provided food, materials, and were used for sacrifices. Certain animals were used in pagan cult rituals, many of these rituals were used to get the gods to bless their herds and livestock. This should not be done as they didn't create the animals, not do they sustain the animals, Yahweh does.

Theology 2: Yahweh is the creator of mankind. He created them male and female, He created them to fit together. Mankind should serve only Him as He is creator. Yahweh is also the creator of sex. It is given to mankind to procreate and to enjoy, it should not be used outside the context of one man and one woman, according to its design.

Polemic 2: Sexual acts and rituals were often done in pagan worship. The sacrifice of humans, particularly children also took place in worship of false gods. This is an abomination. Sex is for life, and life alone [procreation and marital intimacy]. All human life is sacred from the moment of conception. Psalm 139:13-16

Day 7: Rest

Genesis 2:1–3 ESV

Polemic: Many stories of creation including Babylonian (Akkadian), Assyrian, and Canaanite (Ugaritic) have their gods creating everything in 7 days. A perversion of the true creation story (similar to how many ancient cultures have a flood narrative, as believers we know the Bible's flood narrative is the correct narrative) the Bible corrects the theology of neighboring nations with the true creation story. It also states that while the gods of the nations needed 7 days, Yahweh needed only 6, He rested on the 7th day. Not dissimilar to a “my dad can beat up your dad” kind of brag. Yahweh is greater than all the gods, the gods of the nations cannot compare and are themselves created by Yahweh.

Theology: Day 7 of creation is the day of rest. Note the narrative of Day 1-6 end with “there was evening, there was morning Day 1-6”, Day 7 however never ends. The writer of Hebrews explains the theology here for us:

Hebrews 3:7–4:13 ESV