



Class Notes

Heaven and Earth

Genesis 1

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Explore Genesis 1-11, the Psalms, and the biblical wisdom literature to understand how the biblical authors understood Heaven and Earth. This context will give richer meaning to Jesus' words about the new creation.

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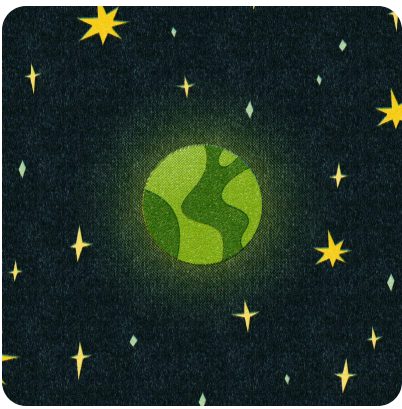
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Module 1: The Meaning of Heaven and Earth

SESSIONS 1-5

Explore the meaning of the words “Heaven” and “Earth.” Spoiler alert: Our modern views are different from those of the biblical authors. Let’s dive in.

Session 1: Our Place in the Universe

Key Takeaways

- It is helpful to be aware of our own assumptions and questions and pay attention to the intent of the biblical authors.
- These early chapters of Genesis form the introduction to the Hebrew Bible. The biblical authors crafted these stories to set the tone and expectations for what will come next.

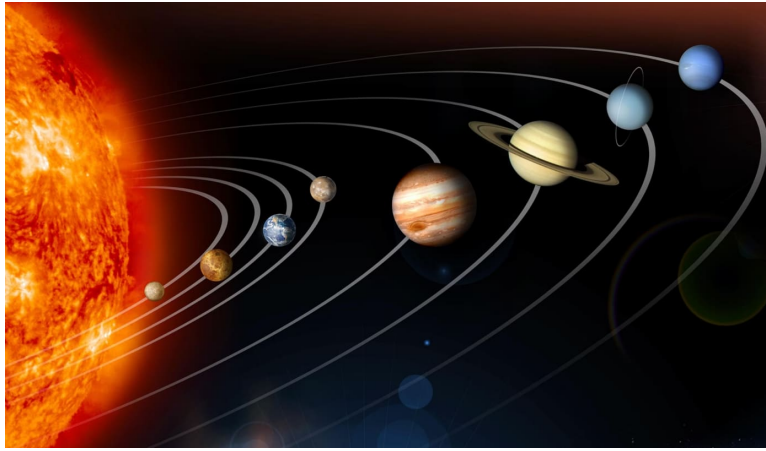
A Modern View of the Cosmos

Many of us have probably encountered satellite photos or pictures of planet Earth, the solar system, the Milky Way galaxy, or perhaps even other galaxies and other celestial bodies. This view of our cosmos affects the way that we interact with Scripture. The first step to understanding the biblical authors' view of the cosmos is to start with our own understanding of the cosmos.



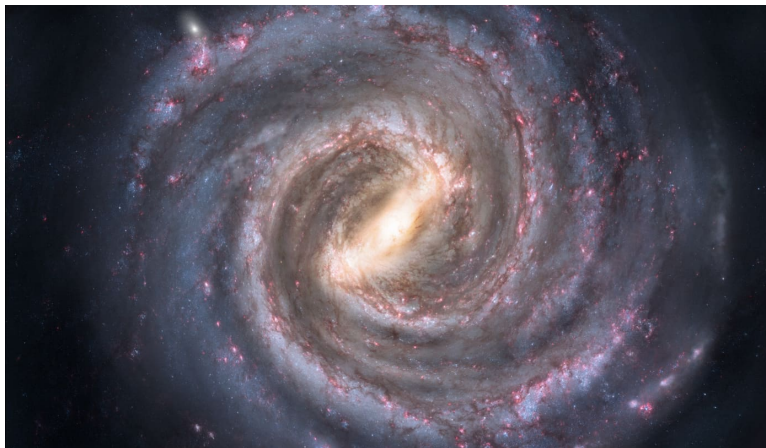
Stockli, Reto (2000). [NASA](#)

A satellite photo of planet Earth with the Moon in the background.



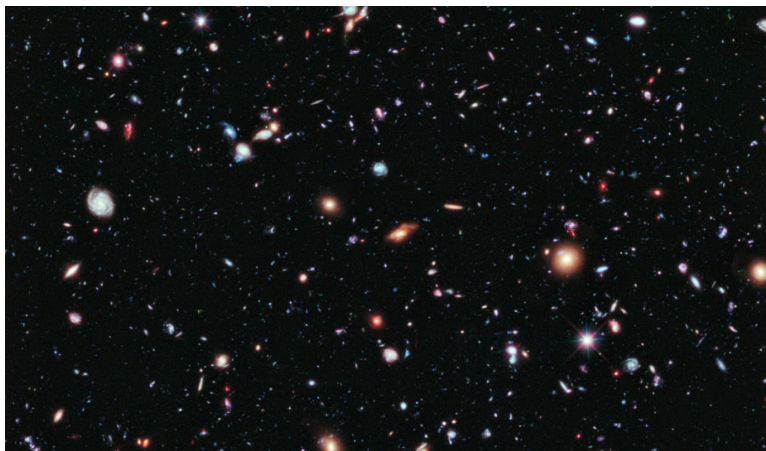
NASA/JPL (2009). [NASA](#)

A rendering of the solar system.



Risinger, Nick (2009). [Wikimedia Commons](#)

A picture of our location in the Milky Way galaxy.



Hubble Telescope (2009). *Hubble Deep Field Image*. [Wikimedia Commons](#).

A photo from the Hubble Telescope of the deep field of space, displaying a variety of galaxies in the universe.

We all have an essential view of the universe—how it was formed and our place in it. And intentionally or unintentionally, these views shape how we read the Bible. It is helpful to be aware of our preconceived assumptions as we approach Scripture.

Reflection Question

What experiences have shaped your view of the cosmos? How has that affected your faith or understanding of the Bible?

Session 2: The Words “Heavens” and “Earth” in the Hebrew Bible

Key Takeaways

- Our modern views of Heaven and Earth are different from those of the biblical authors.
- A common modern view of Heaven is that it is a blissful place you go when you die. A common modern view of Earth is that it is a planet that revolves around the sun.
- In the Hebrew Bible, “heavens” means “sky” and also represents God’s space. In the Hebrew Bible, “earth” is the space of humanity and the animals.
- In the Hebrew Bible, the waters are a third space that can represent chaos or death.

Tim’s Initial Understanding of Heaven and Earth

The modern conception of the words Heaven and Earth usually have a clear meaning: The Earth is the globe and the world as a whole. The Earth is passing away, and Jesus has opened up a way for sins to be forgiven so that Christians can go to Heaven after death. Heaven is a postmortem, spiritual dimension—a disembodied paradise of eternal life with God. Sometimes, this is shared as the “biblical” view of reality.

However, the Bible uses the words “heaven” and “earth” in a way that not only challenges the modern view but also points to a different biblical story.

Old Testament Texts About Heaven and Earth

Genesis 1:1 NASB

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

In this passage, notice that heavens is plural and refers to the sky in contrast to earth. Heaven, in this passage, is the literal sky above, not an afterlife dimension.

Psalms 24:1-2 NASB

¹ The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. ² For he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers.

In this passage, the earth is founded upon the seas and rivers. This is different from modern cosmology, which understands the Earth as a sphere floating in space.

Psalms 104:1-5 NASB

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty, ² covering yourself with light as with a cloak, stretching out heaven like a tent curtain. ³ He lays the beams of his upper chambers in the waters; he makes the clouds his chariot; he walks on the wings of the wind; ⁴ he makes the winds his messengers, flaming fire his ministers. ⁵ He established the earth upon its foundations, so that it will not totter forever and ever.

Here, Heaven is like a tent where God lives in the waters up above, and the Earth sits on pillars so that it won't tip over.

The Biblical Understanding of the Cosmos

The following is a helpful place to begin for our understanding of the biblical definitions of the cosmos.

- Heavens = God's space
- Earth = Human's space
- Waters = Nobody's space

Exodus 20:3-4 NASB

³ You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴ You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

This passage is one of the Ten Commandments. If Heaven is another dimension of God's space that's only for the afterlife, how does someone know how to make an idol of a creature who lives there? Therefore, "heaven above," as used here, must mean "skies." But what are the "waters under the earth"?

Jonah 2:1-7 NASB

¹ Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, ² and he said, "I called out of my distress to the LORD, and he answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; you heard my voice. ³ For you had cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me. All your breakers and waves passed over me. ⁴ So I said, 'I have been expelled from your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward your holy temple.' ⁵ Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head. ⁶ I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but you have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. ⁷ While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer rose up to you, into your holy temple."

There are a variety of terms used for "the stomach of the fish." For example: *Sheol* (an untranslated Hebrew word for "the grave"), the deep, death, the earth, the mountain roots, and the pit. Jonah's prayer "rose up" to God's temple, which we assume means the temple in Jerusalem. But why use "rise up" language when the temple is on the dry land in Jerusalem?

Reflection Question

How have you typically understood the words “Heaven” and “Earth”? How does this understanding compare to the biblical authors’ view of the heavens and the earth?

Session 3: Heaven and Earth Come Together in Jesus

Key Takeaways

- The New Testament's view of the universe is really similar to that of the Hebrew Bible.
- Jesus' message was that he was joining Heaven, the sphere of God's reign, and Earth, the space of humanity, within himself.
- Humans are to partner with Jesus in bringing Heaven to Earth by contributing to human flourishing.

New Testament Views of Heaven and Earth

The Gospel of Matthew

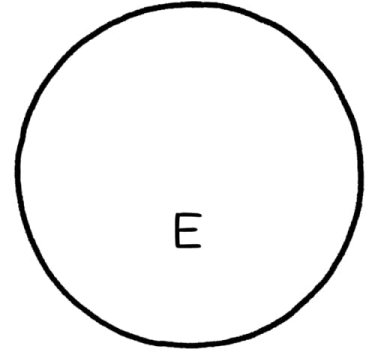
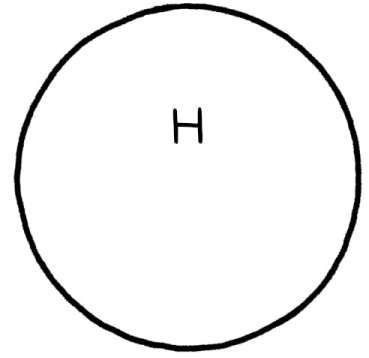
The following are examples of biblical cosmology in the Gospel of Matthew.

- Matthew 4:8: "a high mountain" from which Jesus can see all the kingdoms of the Earth
- Matthew 4:17: Kingdom of Heaven has come near
- Matthew 6:9-10: The Lord's prayer, God's Kingdom/will here on Earth as in Heaven
- Matthew 11:23: Capernaum not exalted up to Heaven but going down to *Sheol*/Hades
- Matthew 12:39-40: Sign of Jonah, belly of whale // "heart of the Earth"
- Matthew 12:42: Queen of the South comes "from the ends of the Earth"
- Matthew 28:16-20: On a mountain, the risen Jesus says, "All authority in Heaven and on Earth belongs to me"

HEAVENS = GOD'S SPACE

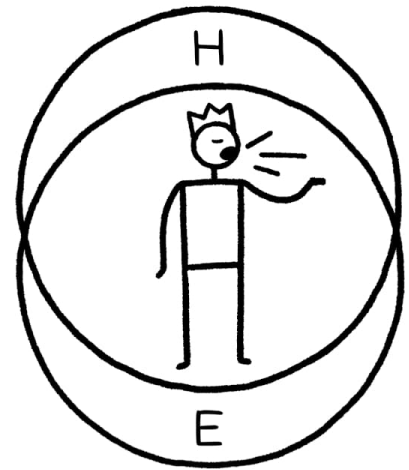
EARTH = HUMAN'S SPACE

WATERS = "NOBODY'S" SPACE



The Overlapping of Heaven and Earth. Illustration created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

HEAVENS = GOD'S SPACE
EARTH = HUMAN'S SPACE
WATERS = "NOBODY'S" SPACE



Jesus Is the Overlap Between Heaven and Earth. Illustration created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

The Letters of Paul

The following are examples of biblical cosmology in the letters of Paul.

- Philippians 2:9-10: The exalted Jesus was raised high so every knee will bow “in Heaven, on Earth, and under the Earth.”
- Ephesians: 1:19-22: Jesus’ resurrection exalted him to “sit at his right hand in the heavenly places.”
- Ephesians 2:1-7: We have been raised from the dead and “raised up and seated with him in the heavenly places.”
- 2 Corinthians 12:1-4: Paul talks about “a guy I know” (himself) who had a vision and apocalypse where he ascended up to the “third Heaven.”

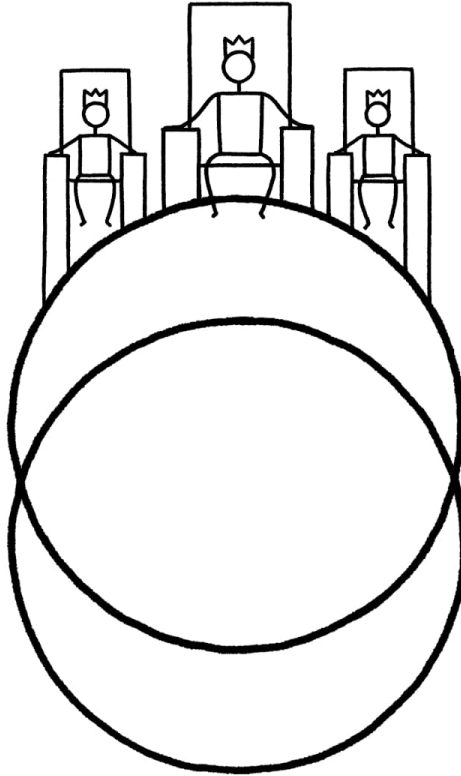
The Book of Revelation

The following are examples of biblical cosmology in the the book of Revelation.

- Revelation 21:1-3: A new Heaven and Earth, a city descending from Heaven (presumably the new one coming to a new Earth), but it’s called a tabernacle
- Revelation 21:10: The city coming down again, described as a temple-Jerusalem-garden-throne of God

What is going on in these passages? Over time, it became clear that the authors of the Hebrew Bible, Jesus, and the apostles imagined a universe that is very different from our modern conception of the universe.

It is crucial to understand the Bible on its own terms, which may require unlearning and relearning the biblical conception of the cosmos, that is, Heaven and Earth.



The Final Overlapping of Heaven and Earth. Illustration created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

Reflection Question

The New Testament's view of the universe is really similar to that of the Hebrew Bible. Why does this matter when it comes to understanding Jesus and his message?

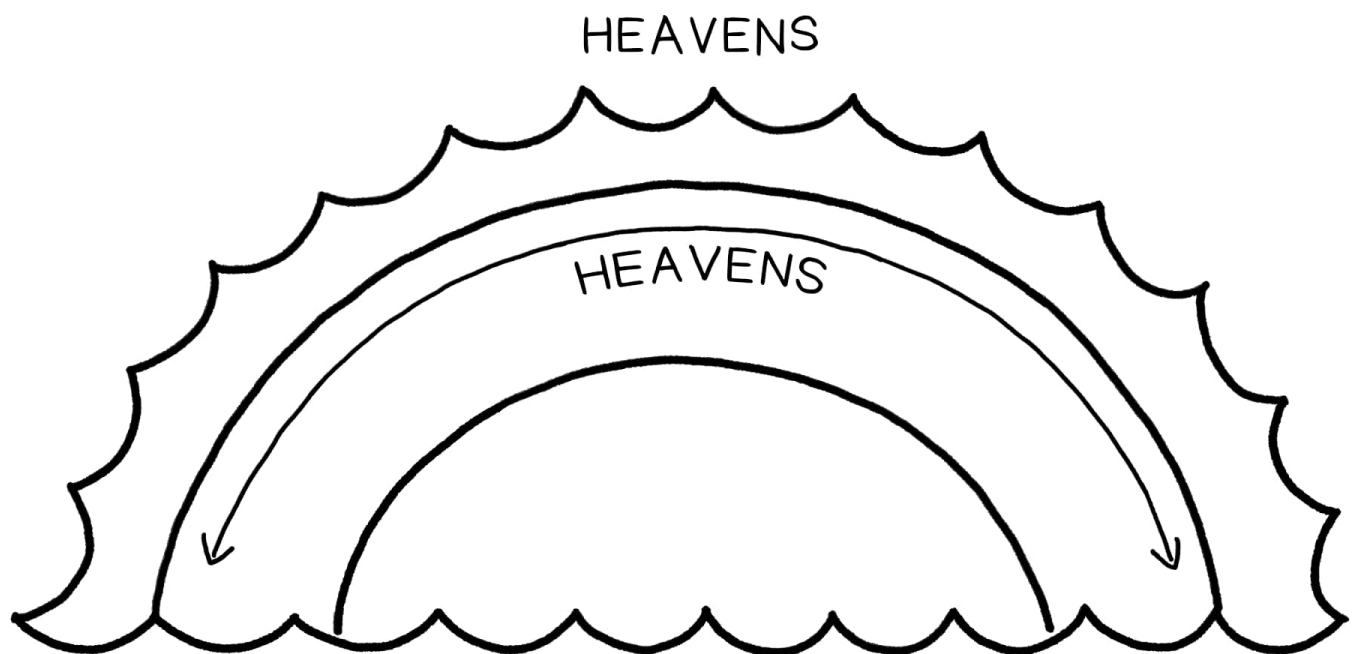
Session 4: Reflections on the New Testament's View of Heaven and Earth

Key Takeaways

- All of our language about God, even the biblical authors' language about God, has certain limitations. But those limitations can be the vehicle for communicating what God wants his people to hear.
- The Bible is not science fiction, but it is an ancient text. Reading the Bible is a cross-cultural experience. And part of respecting and loving our biblical author "neighbors" well is opening our eyes to their way of seeing the world.

Reflection on Our Own Cosmology Versus Biblical Cosmology

If we only import our cosmology into the Bible, we are going to misunderstand what the biblical authors are communicating. What thoughts, questions, or observations do you have about this?



The Separation of the Heavens. Illustration created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

The Bible as a Source of Knowledge

The Bible is not science fiction, but it is an ancient text. Reading the Bible is a cross-cultural experience. And part of respecting and loving our biblical author “neighbors” well is opening our eyes to their way of seeing the world.

Reflection Question

What thoughts or questions do you have so far? Write them down and revisit them at the end of this class to see if you have gained further clarity.

Session 5: Scripture, Communication, Language, and Culture

Key Takeaways

- Although it can be a difficult task, it is valuable to remain open to perspectives different from our own.
- The Bible is an ancient text produced within a specific culture, but this does not diminish its capacity to speak to us.
- Awareness of the ancient cultural context of the Bible begins with maintaining intellectual humility, identifying our assumptions, opening ourselves to other perspectives, being aware of cultural differences, and having some understanding of how biblical literature works.

Scripture, Communication, Language, and Culture

Revolutionary Fact #1: The Bible is an ancient text, but some people don't treat it like one when it comes to interpreting Genesis chapter 1.

Revolutionary Fact #2: Any act of communication, including God's communication in Scripture, can only convey meaning within a particular language and historical/cultural context.

"Effective communication requires a body of agreed-upon words, terms, and ideas, a common ground of understanding. For the speaker, this often requires accommodation to the audience by using words and ideas they will understand. For the audience, if they are not native to the language and cultural matrix of the speaker, this means reaching common ground may require seeking out additional information or explanation. In other words, the audience has to adapt to a new and unfamiliar culture."

Walton, John H. (2006). [*Ancient Near Eastern Thought And The Old Testament*](#). Baker Academic. 19-20.

Reading the Bible, including Genesis 1, is a cross-cultural experience. We have to step into a different cultural worldview in order to understand what its authors are trying to communicate. It is only when we step outside the controversial debates of our contemporary culture and try to read Genesis 1 in its ancient context that we can make headway in true understanding of this chapter's meaning.

Reflection Question

If you were traveling to a foreign country you'd never visited before, you would expect different customs and prepare accordingly. Apply this idea to reading the Bible. How can you engage it on its own terms as an ancient and foreign text?



Module 2: Genesis 1 in Its Ancient Context

SESSIONS 6-12

Dive into the ancient context of Genesis 1 and explore some key Hebrew words and ancient cosmology accounts.

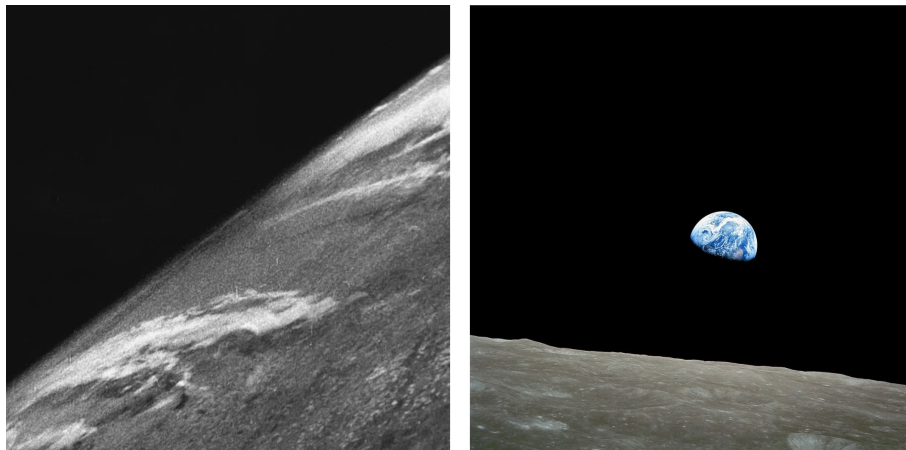
Session 6: Genesis 1 Is an Ancient Israelite Cosmology

Key Takeaways

- In Hebrew, the word for “earth” typically means “land,” rather than a globe or sphere floating in space. So when you read Genesis 1, imagine the story communicating about the land the people live on.
- God names the *raqiaʿ* the *shamayim*—the Hebrew word for “skies” or “heavens.”
- In the Bible, the *raqiaʿ* is the solid dome above the land that holds back the waters above, and the creation of the *raqiaʿ* creates a place where life can flourish.
- In the biblical view, God graciously sustains the *raqiaʿ*, keeping its floodgates closed so that the Earth will never again be destroyed (Gen. 9:11).

“Earth” in Genesis 1:1-2

In Hebrew, *ʾerets* (אֶרֶץ) does not mean “globe-earth.” This is a modern meaning of the English word “earth” that depends on the concept of the planet as a sphere. This concept was not available to the biblical authors at the time.



Left image: U.S. Army (1946). [Wikimedia Commons](#). Right image: Anders, William (1968). [Wikimedia Commons](#)

These photos are fascinating but totally irrelevant for understanding what the ancient Hebrew word *ʾerets* means in Genesis 1.

There are no uses of *ʾerets* in the Hebrew Bible that describe the land as a sphere. Rather, the word’s meaning describes the land that is below the skies and the clouds.

For [God] looked down from his holy height; from heaven the LORD gazed upon the **'erets**.

Psalms 103:11 NASB

For as high as the heavens are above the **'erets**, so great is his lovingkindness toward those who fear him.

By looking at the biblical usage of *'erets*, we can see that a more appropriate English word for translating *'erets* would be "land."

"Firmament/Expanse/Vault/Dome" in Genesis 1:6-8

In Hebrew, *raqia'* refers to a solid blue dome above the land, above which are presumed to be waters. The English word "dome" is an accurate rendering of the word based on its other uses in the biblical text.

The Noun *Raqia'*

Genesis 1:6-8 NASB*

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a ***raqia'*** in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the water." ⁷ God made the ***raqia'***, and separated the water which were below the ***raqia'*** from the waters which were above the ***raqia'***; and it was so. ⁸ God called the ***raqia'*** "heavens." And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Genesis 1:20 NASB*

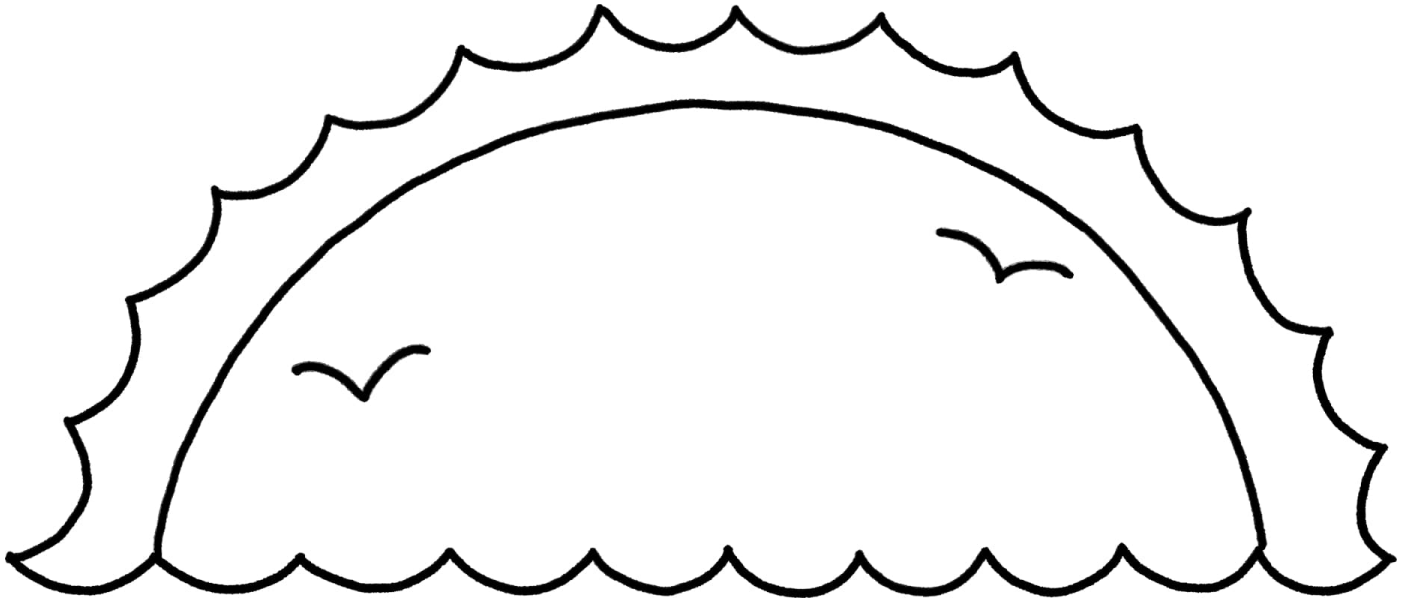
And God said, "... and let the birds fly over the land against the surface of the ***raqia'*** ..."

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Ezekiel 1:22, 26 NASB*

²² And there was something like a ***raqia'*** over the heads of the living creatures, like the appearance of ice, stretched out over their heads above ... ²⁶ and above the ***raqia'*** that was over their heads something like blue sapphire, the appearance of a throne ...

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher



Separation of Waters. Illustration created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

The Verb Raqa'

In Hebrew, *raqa'* means "to hammer out, smooth, spread out."

Exodus 39:3 NASB*

And they [the craftsmen] **raqa'd** smooth sheets of gold, and they cut them into cords to be woven together with blue and purple and scarlet ...

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Numbers 16:39 NASB*

So Eleazer the priest took the bronze censers which the men who were burned had offered, and they **raqa'd** them out as a plating for the altar ...

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Isaiah 40:19 NASB*

As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, a goldsmith **raqa's** it with gold ...

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Isaiah 42:5 NASB*

Thus says God the LORD,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who **raqa'd** the land and what springs up from it,

who gives breath to the people on it
and spirit to those who walk in it ...

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

The Windows of the Raqia'

The *raqia'* is a solid blue dome between the land and the cosmic waters, which are released over the land through windows in the *raqia'*.

Genesis 7:11 NASB*

In the sixth hundreth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and **the windows of the skies** were opened.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Reflection Question

What does the word "earth" mean in the biblical text? What is the *raqia'*, and what does it do?

Session 7: The Purpose of Light on Day One

Key Takeaways

- The creation of light and its separation from darkness generates the fundamental order of time that governs the rest of the chapter—day and night.
- The light of Genesis 1 is called “day.” Day is a period of time that then gets used throughout the rest of the chapter. For example, “It was evening, it was morning, day one.”
- Rather than recounting the creation of photons, the narrative portrays the creation of light as the fundamental order of time so that life can flourish and the narrative can progress.

The Creation of Light in Genesis 1:3-5

In [Genesis 1:3-5](#), we read about the creation of light. Genesis 1:3 reads, “Let there be light” (יהי אור). But what is actually being created here?

In modern cosmologies, light consists of photons, tiny packets of energy that behave like a wave and also as particles. When we (living in modern society) read that light is created in Genesis 1, this is what might come to our minds. But is that how the biblical authors understood light? Let’s take a closer look.

In Genesis 1:5, we are told what is being created. The light is called “day,” and the darkness is called “night.” Are day and night material entities? We likely wouldn’t describe these as material entities, such as protons and particles, but as periods of time. Light here is not a thing that is brought into existence at a specific moment in time. Rather, on day one, the order of time is named into meaningful and functional existence.

Think for a moment about what is missing. According to the text, have the sun, moon, or stars been created yet? They haven’t! So where does this light come from? The light is emanating from God himself. Later biblical authors understood that the light of Genesis 1 is God’s glorious being, emanating into the darkness to bring order (e.g., [Ps. 36:5-9](#); [Isa. 60:19-20](#); [Rev. 22:5](#)).

A Thesis on the Meaning of Genesis 1

“The early chapters of Genesis accurately present accounts of cosmic and human origins in the language and conceptual categories of the ancient Israelite authors of the Bible. These texts should not be removed from their ancient context and read as if they describe cosmic or human origins in 21st century scientific terms. They speak in terms of an ancient Near Eastern perception of the world, and should be interpreted within that setting. When we discern the meaning of the texts in their ancient context, we find that they constitute a worldview statement about God and his relationship to the world, and about humans and their relation to God and the world. This basic worldview statement transcends its ancient cultural setting, and commands the attention of God’s people in all places and all times.”

Adapted from Carlson, Richard and Longman, Tremper (2010). [*Science, Creation, and the Bible: Reconciling Rival Theories of World Origins*](#). InterVarsity Press.

Worldview

A worldview is a comprehensive and cosmic story through which a cultural group orders and makes sense of their life experience. Worldviews answer the basic questions of human existence. Questions such as:

1. Who are we?
2. Where are we?
3. What is the problem?
4. What is the solution?
5. Where are we located in the story?

Genesis 1 is designed to answer these core questions. And we are going to tackle these questions in three large steps.

1. “*Where are we?*” We will examine this question by observing the world picture of Genesis 1 (i.e., cosmology).
2. “*Who are we?*” We will examine this question by observing the creation of humanity in Genesis 1 (i.e., anthropology).
3. “*Where are we located in the story?*” We will examine this question by observing the creation of time in Genesis 1 (i.e., eschatology).

Seeking to understand the worldview of the biblical authors is an important step in discerning the meaning of the biblical texts in their ancient contexts.

Reflection Question

In Genesis 1:3-5, light is created. What is this light named? And is the account of light’s creation about material being created (like photons) or the purpose of light?

Session 8: Ancient Egyptian Cosmology

Key Takeaways

- Israel existed in the same cultural environment as its ancient neighbors. So the biblical authors speak from within their ancient Near Eastern perceptions of the world.
- They are making worldview claims about the God of Israel through their cultural constructs. Because of this, it can be helpful to compare Israel's cosmology with its neighbors to see what stands out.

Genesis 1 in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context

Genesis 1:1-2 NASB

¹ In the beginning, God created the skies and the land. ² Now, the land was wild and waste (*tohu va-vohu*/תהו ובהו) and darkness was over the face of the deep abyss (*tehom*/תהום) but the breath of Elohim was hovering over the face of the waters (*hamayim*/המים).

“The framers of creation in the Bible inherited a treasure trove of venerable traditions from their cultural neighbors. Instead of creating their accounts ex nihilo, the composers of Scripture developed their traditions in dialogue with some of the great religious traditions of the surrounding cultures, particularly those originating from Mesopotamia and Egypt, as well as those of their more immediate Canaanite neighbors.”

Brown, William (2010). [*Seven Pillars Of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder*](#). Oxford University Press.

A key point to remember is that the Bible's creation narratives are not in dialogue with modern scientific ideas about world origins. Rather, they are in dialogue with Egyptian, Babylonian, and Canaanite cosmologies. And within that dialogue, Genesis 1-3 shows many similarities with other ancient Near Eastern cosmologies, along with many key differences. But before we get into this, we need to answer this question: What is an ancient Near Eastern cosmology?

As we've looked at previously, a cosmology is an account of the origins of the universe as humans experience it. So an ancient Near Eastern cosmology is an account of the origins of the universe according to those living in the ancient Near East, including the biblical authors.

How are ancient cosmologies different from modern cosmologies? The primary purpose of ancient cosmology narratives is not to describe the physical-material processes by which the universe came into being in language or categories that make sense to a modern audience.

A Quick Survey of Egyptian Cosmology

Modern Egyptology began after Napoleon overtook Egypt in the early 1800s, opening it to European colonial powers. Jean-Francois Champollion, the first famous Egyptologist, deciphered the Rosetta Stone and unlocked the Egyptian hieroglyphic system.

Key texts containing Egyptian cosmologies are:

- The Pyramids Texts (Old Kingdom, 2600-2100 B.C.E.)
- The Coffin Texts (1900s-1600s B.C.E.)
- The Book of the Dead (1500s-1000s B.C.E.)

“The waters speak

I am the Waters, unique, without second.

Atum speaks

That is where I evolved, on the great occasion of my floating that happened to me.

I (Atum the creator) am the one who once evolved—

Circlet, who is in his egg.

I am the one who began therein, (in) the Waters.

See, the Flood is subtracted from me:

see, I am the remainder.

I made my body evolve through my own effectiveness.

I am the one who made me.

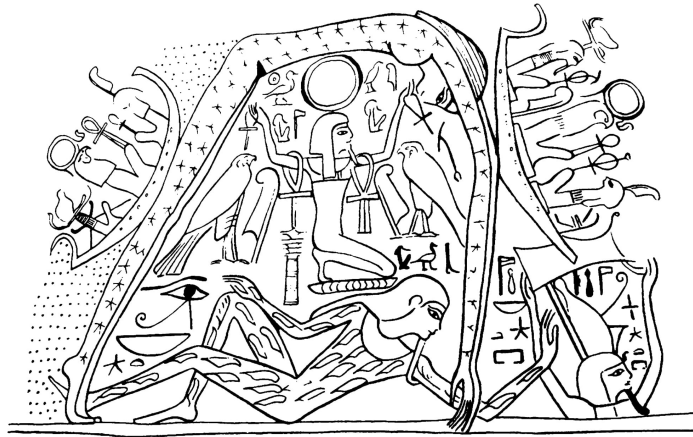
I built myself as I wished, according to my heart.”

Hallo, William W. (1997). “The Coffin Texts 714.” [*The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World, Vol. 1*](#). Brill. 6-7.

Egyptian Heliopolitan Cosmology

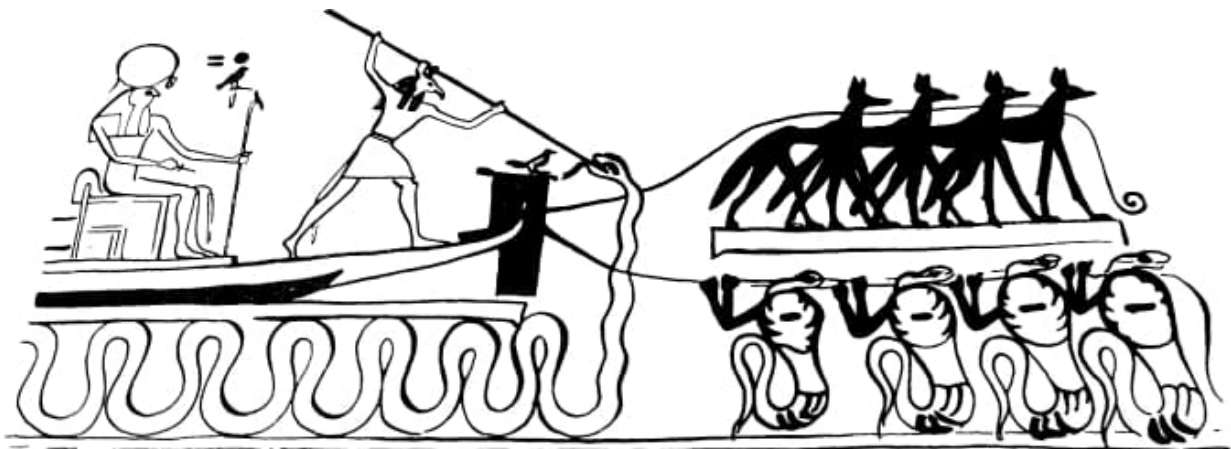
The following is Egyptian Heliopolitan cosmology as summarized by Bernard Batto in his book *In the Beginning: Essays on Creation Motifs in the Ancient Near East and the Bible*.

- The primeval creator is called Atum, who is equated with Nun, the unordered watery substance from which all things emerged. This state of non-creation was a chaotic watery condition devoid of elements or structures necessary for life, but it possessed the potential for development.
- Atum began to evolve and differentiate himself from his watery incubation onto a primeval mound of dirt, which is symbolized as the prototypical pyramid, and from there he began a process of self-development or “creation.”
- He generated the rest of the Ennea (a cluster of eight other deities) by self-impregnation: He swallows his own reproductive fluids and generates Shu (goddess of air) and Tefnut (goddess of moisture), from whom come Nut (goddess of sky) and Geb (god of earth).
- Atum took his role as the “eye” of all creation, the sun god Re, and they all worked together in a form of order called Ma’at, the eternal divine order that undergirds all creation.



Keel, Othmar (2016). "Figure 32" (p. 36). *Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*. Eisenbrauns.

Nut is the sky goddess who is the sky-dome full of stars. Geb is the land god, and Shu, the god of air, kneels on Geb and supports Nut. The sun god Re travels in the waters above the Nut, riding his boat across the sky (upper left) and descending into the realm of darkness and death to the waters under the land.



Keel, Othmar (1997). "Figure 55" (p. 55). *Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*. Eisenbrauns.

The sun god Re is pulled through the underworld sea at night. The god Seth spears and defeats the death god Apophis (a snake), while the boat is pulled by subjugated night demons (jackals and snakes).

Reflection Question

How do you make sense of Israel's creation story having similarities to other ancient Near Eastern creation stories?

Session 9: Ancient Babylonian Cosmology

Key Takeaways

- The ancient Babylonians and Egyptians believed that everything was in a chaotic, water state before the ordering of the universe. As in Israelite cosmology, creation is about ordering chaos.
- The ancient Babylonians also had a view of a multitiered universe, much like Israel.
- One of the most significant differences between Israel and Babylon is that in the biblical view, Yahweh is the God over all. In the Egyptian and Babylonian views, everything is god (a form of pantheism).

A Quick Survey of Babylonian Cosmology

A key text within ancient Babylonian cosmology is the Enuma Elish (i.e., the Babylonian Genesis or “the combat myth”). The Enuma Elish is an ancient cuneiform tablet text that adopted the Egyptian and Sumerian traditions of the primeval waters generating the pantheon of old deities. These deities are then to be taken over by a young upstart god named Marduk, patron god of Babylon. The narrative begins with the uncreated state.

“When on high no name was given to heaven, nor below was the netherworld called by name, Primeval Apsu (deep abyss) was their progenitor, and creator Tiamat (salty ocean) was she who bore them all, they were mingling their waters together, when no gods at all had been brought forth, none called by names, none destinies ordained, then were the gods formed within these two ...”

Excerpt from Enuma Elish

Eventually, the gods all develop with Ea and his son Marduk at the head of the pantheon. Tiamat threatens to take over with her chaos waters, and she becomes a giant sea dragon. Marduk battles and destroys her, using half her body to make the waters above and the waters below.



Keel, Othmar (2015). *Creation: Biblical Theologies in the Context of the Ancient Near East*. Eisenbrauns.

Monumental carving from the Assyrian Nimrud palace in Iraq (ca. 870 B.C.E.). The deity Ninurta is the storm god arriving to banish the lion-dragon from his land.

Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology

“Reading Genesis 1 as ancient cosmology requires that the cognitive environment, that is, how people thought about themselves and their world, be taken into account within the broad spectrum of ancient Near Eastern cosmological texts. This opens the question of whether the biblical authors used any other ancient texts as 'sources,' whether as templates, patterns, or foils ... However, many attempts to trace the trail from other ANE texts to Genesis have been too simplistic ... They come from separate centuries and very different geographical locations. Rather, our efforts should be to use all the literature at our disposal to reconstruct the variety of cosmological pictures within the ancient cognitive environment, which can serve as a backdrop for understanding each literary work.”

Walton, John H. (2011). [Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology](#). Eisenbrauns. 2.

In his book *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*, John Walton shares examples from a spectrum of explanations for how different cosmology texts relate to one another.

Walton proposes the following spectrum of interaction.

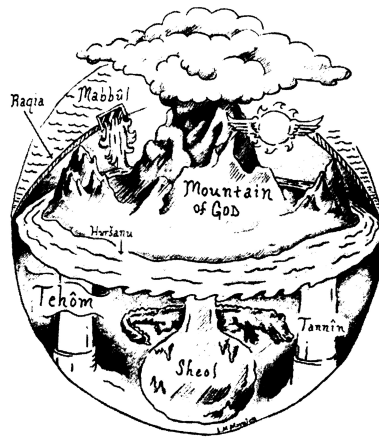
- At times the biblical text **ignores** a dominant ancient Near Eastern tradition by wholly excluding such ideas as theogony (creation as “birthed” by God).
- The biblical text **shows familiarity** with a traditional idea but **rejects** it, as when the concept that creation is the result of rival gods is rejected because Yahweh is shown to have no rival.
- The biblical text **shares one part** of a traditional idea but **rejects other parts** by giving an alternative perspective. The biblical account shares with other cosmology the idea of humans made of clay, but it rejects the idea that humans are created to be slaves of the gods.
- The biblical text sometimes shows awareness of a tradition and **adapts/transforms** it in light of biblical monotheism. In the biblical account, creation is not the result of a battle with the chaos monster, and the water dragon is not a true rival to Yahweh but a rebel creature.

- Finally, the biblical text sometimes **shares and subconsciously reflects** a traditional conception with its neighbors, such as creation taking the form of a macro-temple.

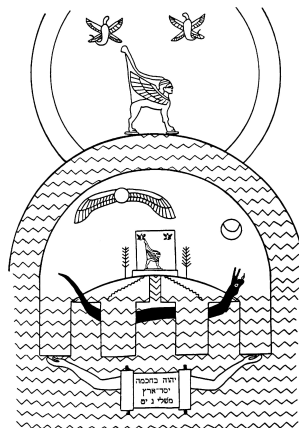
“This common creation model suggests that the Israelite shared a similar conception of reality, rooted in basic experiences of the human body and the earth, as their ancient Near Eastern neighbors. Indeed, the Israelites were part of the larger ancient Near Eastern cultural environment in that they shared similar understandings of the world ... The differences between the Bible and other Near Eastern literature can only be understood from within the context of their similarities. These differences reflect the cultural particularities of each people, not extensively and unrelated cultures.”

Adapted from Simkins, Ronald A. (1994). [*Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel*](#). Hendrickson Pub. 89.

Visualizations of the Biblical Cosmos



Morales, L. Michael (2015). *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*. IVP Academic.



Keel, Othmar (1997). "Figure 14" (p. 161). *Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*. Eisenbrauns.



Walton, John H. (2004). *Old Testament Today: A Journey from Original Meaning to Contemporary Significance*. Zondervan.

“It should be evident that within the worldview of the ancient Near East, including the Hebrew Bible, their physical-technical and poetic-mythical statements and conceptions are not susceptible to consistent separation. To people in the ancient Near East, the empirical world, as manifestation and symbol, points beyond its superficial reality. A blurring occurs between the actual and the symbolic, and conversely between the symbolic and the actual. This openness of the everyday, earthly world to the spheres of divine life and bottomless, devastating lostness is probably the chief difference between ancient Near Eastern conception of the world and our own, which views the world as a virtually closed mechanical system. The principal error of conventional representations of the ANE view of the world lies in their profanity and lifelessness. In the biblical and ANE conception, the world is open and transparent to things above and beneath the earth. It is not a lifeless stage. The universe is thoroughly alive, and, therefore, the more capable of sympathy with humans and of response to the rule of its creator, on whom both humanity and the universe directly depend. Certainly we have here more than a poetical personification of the cosmos, when it is invited to shout for joy!”

Keel, Othmar (1997). [*Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*](#). Eisenbrauns. 56.

Reflection Question

Where is there common ground between ancient Babylonian cosmological accounts and the Hebrew Bible?

Session 10: The Beginning and Nothingness

Key Takeaways

- Ancient creation accounts are about function rather than material existence.
- Things are thought to exist only when they are given a purpose and a name.
- Genesis 1 then is mainly about the purpose of the universe rather than its material creation. (While Yahweh is the creator of all things out of nothing, this may not be what Genesis 1 is about.)

Genesis 1:1-2: The Introduction and the Pre-Creation State

Genesis 1:1 NASB*

In the beginning, God created the skies and the land.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

In this verse, “beginning” (Hebrew: *reshit* / ראשית) refers not to a first point in time but to a preliminary period of time.

Job 8:6-7 NASB*

⁶ If you are pure and upright, surely then [God] will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation. ⁷ Even though your **reshit** was insignificant, your end will be very great.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Here, the entire period of Job’s life before his suffering is called the **reshit**, the beginning period.

Jeremiah 27:1 NASB*

In the **reshit** of the reign of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying ...

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Jeremiah 28:1 NASB*

Now in the same year, in the **reshit** of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, in the fifth month, Hananiah the son of Azzur, the prophet, who was from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the LORD in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying ...

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Notice how the *reshit* of Zedekiah's reign extends over four years. The word here refers to the initial period of his reign before the crucial events of his downfall began.

"In Genesis, the 'beginning' (*reshit*) refers to a preliminary period of time rather than a first point in time ... This leads us to conclude that the 'beginning' is a way of labeling the seven-day period of creation described in the remainder of Genesis 1 rather than a point in time prior to the seven days ... It provides a literary introduction to the period of creativity that then flows into the ... rest of the book."

Walton, John H. (2011). [*Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*](#). Eisenbrauns. 126-127.

Genesis 1:2 as the pre-creation state is described by the use of waters, darkness, and wilderness. Specifically, the land is described as wild and waste or in Hebrew, *tohu vavohu*. What is meant by *tohu vavohu*?

Other Uses of *Tohu* or *Vohu*: "Empty/Uninhabited/Wasteland"

Deuteronomy 32:9-10 NASB*

⁹ For the LORD'S portion is his people;
Jacob is the allotment of his inheritance.

¹⁰ He found him in a desert land,
and in the howling **tohu** of a wilderness;
he encircled him, he cared for him,
he guarded him as the pupil of his eye.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Isaiah 24:10-12 NASB*

¹⁰ The city of **tohu** is broken down;
every house is shut up so that none may enter.
¹¹ There is an outcry in the streets concerning the wine;
all joy turns to gloom.
The gaiety of the earth is banished.
¹² Desolation is left in the city
and the gate is battered to ruins.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Isaiah 45:18 NIV*

For this is what the LORD says— he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be **tohu**, but formed it to be inhabited—he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other."

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalms 107:40 Instructor's Translation

[Yahweh] pours contempt on nobles,
and he makes them wander in a **tohu** that has no road.

This verse is related to Job 12:21, 24.

Uses of *Tehom*

The text continues with "... and darkness was over the face of the deep abyss" (Hebrew: *tehom*, Gen. 1:2). Below are other biblical passages that use *tehom*.

Job 38:16-17 NASB*

¹⁶ Have you entered into the springs of the sea,
or walked in the recesses of the ***tehom***?

¹⁷ Have the gates of death been revealed to you,
or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Jonah 2:5-6 NASB*

⁵ Water encompassed me to the point of death.

The ***tehom*** engulfed me,
weeds were wrapped around my head.

⁶ I descended to the roots of the mountains.
The earth with its bars was around me forever,
but you have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

In modern cosmologies, water is "something," but in ancient Near Eastern cosmology, the "cosmic sea" belongs to the pre-creation state, which is a neutral, functionless state of non-organization and lifelessness.

The Pre-Creation State and Biblical Ontology

Take a look at the following quotes from Dr. John Walton as he describes how the pre-creation state connects to biblical ontology.

"Genesis 1:2 ... describes the pre-cosmic condition as it was understood in Israelite thought. As in the rest of the ancient world [the pre-creation state] is not absent of matter, as the primordial waters are already present ... [T]hey are the functionless cosmic waters ... where order has not yet been imposed, the desert and cosmic waters above and below."

Walton, John H. (2011). [*Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*](#). Eisenbrauns. 139, 143.

“Very little in ancient Near Eastern cosmologies [including Genesis 1] relates to the manufacture of the material cosmos ... Rather, they recount the organization and ordering of the elements of the cosmos as a functional whole. If we are going to understand ancient views about how the cosmos came into existence (creation cosmology), it is essential that we understand ancient views about what constitutes existence (creation ontology). In the ancient world, something came into existence when it was separated out as a distinct entity and given a function and a name ... this is a function-oriented ontology. This is in stark contrast to modern ontology, which is focused on the material existence or structure of something. For us, the existence of the world is perceived in physical, material terms ... this is a substance-oriented ontology. ... [For the ancient biblical authors,] creation was about the establishment of the functioning cosmos, not about the origins of the material structure or substance of the cosmos.”

Walton, John H. (2006). [Ancient Near Eastern Thought and The Old Testament](#). Baker Academic. 180-181.

Three Elements of Disorder in Genesis 1 Solved

In the chart below, notice that the three elements of disorder in Genesis 1:2 all find parallels in ancient Near Eastern cosmologies, and each one is separately addressed in days one through three of Genesis 1.

Now, the land was wild and waste and darkness was over the face of the deep abyss	
	Day 1: Light contains the darkness
	Day 2: Waters separated and ordered
	Day 3: Dry land and edible plants emerge from the waters
<i>Three Elements of Disorder in Genesis 1. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).</i>	

Reflection Question

According to John Walton, what are ancient Near Eastern “beginnings” stories about? The universe’s material existence or something else? If something else, what?

Session 11: Genesis 1 Imagery in Jeremiah 4

Key Takeaways

- The words used to describe the pre-creation state in Genesis—*tohu va-vohu*—mean “wild and waste” (e.g., Jer. 4:23).
- Wild and waste, darkness, and the deep waters are images for the pre-creation state of non-order.
- Jeremiah is activating day one of Genesis, but reversing it. He’s talking about the ruin of their city and calling it an undoing of creation—a lack of order and of human flourishing.
- Using these Genesis 1 images heightens the sense of disaster. God is allowing humans to de-create Jerusalem.

Exploring Wild and Waste in Jeremiah 4

Let’s focus on the Genesis 1 imagery in Jeremiah 4, specifically the concept of wild and waste. Consider how Jeremiah 4 helps us to better understand wild and waste in Genesis 1.



This session expands on the notes found in Session 10

Reflection Question

How is Jeremiah 4 using ideas and words from Genesis 1? Does the use of *tohu va-vohu* (wild and waste) in particular help us understand what this phrase means in Genesis 1?

Session 12: Genesis 1 Imagery in Psalm 104

Key Takeaways

- Creation is more about giving order, purpose, and function than it is about material origins (see Ps. 104).
- In Psalm 104, creation is ongoing, sustaining work.
- Creating can be used to describe the beginning, the middle, and the whole sustaining process.
- In Genesis, this means that “created” doesn’t necessarily have to mean made out of nothing. It could also mean giving life and purpose to something.

Exploring Creating in Psalm 104

We’ll explore the connection to Genesis 1 imagery in [Psalm 104](#), specifically the concept of creation. How does Psalm 104 help us to better understand creation in Genesis 1?

The *Ruakh* in Genesis 1

Genesis 1:2 NASB

The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the **Spirit of God** was moving over the surface of the waters.

In Hebrew, *ruakh Elohim* means Spirit of God, while *ruakh* means breath, wind, or spirit. It’s an invisible energy working through a personal, impersonal, or disembodied agent.

The *Ruakh* in Psalm 104

In Psalm 104, creation is ongoing, sustaining work. “Creating” can be used to describe the beginning, the middle, and the whole sustaining process.

Reflection Question

What does the word “create” mean in Psalm 104? What might this mean for Genesis 1, where it says “God created the heavens and the earth”?



Module 3: The Literary Design of Genesis 1

SESSIONS 13-15

The literary design and symmetry of Genesis 1 is some of the most exquisite in the Hebrew Bible. Let's dive in!

Session 13: The Structure and Message of Genesis 1

Key Takeaways

- The six days of creation are framed by summary statements (1:1; 2:1) and descriptions (1:2; 2:2-3) that bring us from chaos to completion.
- Both parts of the frame begin with a summary about how God created “the skies and the land” (1:1 and 2:1). This clarifies for us what days one through six are all about.
- Both summaries are followed by an exposition or further description (1:2 and 2:2-3). The first one talks about the pre-creation state, and the second shows God resting on the seventh day after all has been completed.

The Literary Design of Genesis 1

The prologue (Gen. 1:1-2) and epilogue (Gen. 1:31-2:3) of Genesis 1 have been designed as a macro-frame around the internal sequence of six days.

1:1 Summary Prologue In the beginning, God created the skies and the land [7 words]	
1:2 Exposition of Prologue in 3 Lines Now, the land was wild and waste (תהו ובהו <i>tohu va-vohu</i>) and darkness was over the face of the deep abyss (תהום <i>tehom</i>) but the breath of Elohim was hovering over the face of the waters (המים <i>hammayim</i>) [7 x 2 words]	
Day 1	Day 4
Day 2	Day 5
Day 3	Day 6
2:1 Summary Epilogue Thus were finished the skies and the land and all their host	
2:2-3 Exposition of Epilogue in 3 Lines 1. And God completed on the seventh day his work which he had made [7 words]	
Genesis 1 Themes. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Adam to Noah (2020).	

2. And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had **made** [7 words]
3. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it [7 words]
because on it he rested from all his work which God **created to make** [key word of 1:1]

Genesis 1 Themes. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Adam to Noah (2020).

Notice how the key words of the opening prologue (i.e., “created,” “skies,” “land”) as well as the 1x7 and 2x7 design of 2:1-2 are taken up and completed in the prologue with the same words and the 3x7 design.

This design structure acts as an envelope around the sequence of six days, with a clear emphasis on the sevenfold symbolism of God’s actions and the culmination of the entire narrative on the seventh day.

Reflection Question

How would you summarize what the frame around the six days is all about (Gen. 1:1-2, 2:1-3)?

Session 14: Repeated Words in Genesis 1

Key Takeaways

- Repeated words are a common literary device that authors use to structure their text and communicate their message.
- Pay attention to which words are repeated, how many times they are repeated, and where they occur.

Repeated Words in Genesis 1

What are some of the patterns of repetition that struck you as significant or meaningful as you were reading Genesis 1? What questions did the repetition raise for you?

The days of creation use similar vocabulary, and this is intentional. As we read, we are meant to compare the days in our minds. Take a look at the similarities between days one and four below.

The Relationship Between Days One and Four

Day 1: God Orders the Heavens

³ And God said,
"Let there be light";
and there was light.

⁴ God saw that the light was good ;
and God separated the light from the darkness .

⁵ And God called the light day ,
and the darkness he called night .

And there was evening
and there was morning,
one day (יום אחד) .

Day 4: God Delegates Heavenly Rulers

¹⁴ And God said,
"Let there be lights
in the expanse of the skies
to separate the day from the night ,
and let them be for signs

and for festivals and for days and years;
 15 and let them be for **lights**
 in the dome of the skies
 to give **light** on the land";
 and it was so.
 16 And God made the two great **lights** ,
 the great **light** to **rule** the **day** ,
 and the small **light** to **rule** the **night** ;
 and also the stars.
 17 And God placed them
 in the dome of the skies
 to give light on the land,
 18 and to **rule** the **day** and the **night** ,
 and to **separate** the **light** from the **darkness** ;
and God saw that it was good .

19 And there was evening
 and there was morning,
a fourth day .

Genesis 1-2:3. Translation and Literary Design by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2020).

On day one, God provides the light of his divine glory that meets the darkness and fits it within the larger divine purpose. God names the darkness and limits its scope by containing it within the cycle of alternating periods of darkness and light.

When the parallel vocabulary of days one and four are compared, we see God return his attention to the heavenly realm as he fills it with inhabitants, namely, the "lamps."

Notice how God delegates to the lights the same role that God himself played on day one: the role of separating light and dark. This explains why these lights are called "signs" (אֲתֹת). They are physical symbols of God's own light, glory, and power that met the darkness on day one.

The Relationship Between Days Two and Five

Day 2: God Commands the Chaos Waters To Be Split

6 **And God said** ,
 "Let there be a **dome**
 in the middle of the waters,
 and let it **separate the waters**
from the waters."

7 And God made the **dome** ,

B and **separated the waters**
which were below the **dome**
from **the waters**
which were above the dome;
and it was so.
⁸ God called the **dome** **skies**.

And there was evening
and there was morning,
a second day.

Day 5: God Appoints the Waters Above and Below

²⁰ **And God said,**
A "Let **the waters** swarm with swarms of living creatures,
and let birds fly **above the land**
against the face of the dome of the **skies**."

²¹ And God created the great sea monsters
and every living creature that moves,
B with which the waters swarmed after their kind,
and every bird of wing after its kind;
B **and God saw that it was good**.

²² And God blessed them, saying,
A' "Be fruitful and multiply,
and fill **the waters in the seas**,
and let birds multiply on the land."

²³ And there was evening
and there was morning,
a fifth day.

Genesis 1-2:3. Translation and Literary Design by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2020).

On day two, God orders the middle realm that will exist between the skies above and the land below. It begins with the unordered chaos waters of Genesis 1:2, which God separates. He creates a meaningful distinction between the two that will serve his purposes.

The border between the waters above and the waters below is called a "dome" (Heb. *raqia'* / רִקִּיעַ). This creates a horizon line, as it were, between the waters above and the waters below. Only the waters above receive a name (i.e., "skies"). The waters below will receive a name on the following day.

On day five, God fills the waters above and waters below with inhabitants, addressing them in the same order as on day two. The waters below swarm with sea creatures and monsters, while birds inhabit the realm above the land against the surface of the sky-dome.

The extra element on day five is God's blessing on the living creatures, summoning them to be fruitful and to multiply. Unlike the lights and stars of day four, these inhabitants are called by God to actively experience the divine blessing of life and abundance. Their existence is not a given; it is contingent upon the divine blessing.

The Relationship Between Days Three and Six

Day 3: God Orders the Land

⁹ And God said,

"Let the waters below the skies
be gathered into one place (מקום אחד),
and let the dry ground be seen";
and it was so.

¹⁰ And God called the dry ground land,
and the gathering of the waters he called seas.

God saw that it was good. .

¹¹ And God said,

"Let the land sprout vegetation,
vegetative plants that produce seed,
fruit trees
that make fruit according to its kind
which has its seed inside it

upon the land";

and it was so.

¹² And the land brought out
vegetative plants
that produce seed according to its kind,
and trees
that make fruit
which has its seed in it,
according to its kind;

and God saw that it was good. .

¹³ And there was evening

and there was morning,

a third day. .

Day 6: God Delegates Earthly Rulers

24 **And God said,**
" **Let the land** bring out living creatures
according to their kind,
cattle
and creeping things
and beasts of the land
according to their kind";
and it was so.

25 And God made
the beasts of the land
according to their kind,
and the cattle
according to their kind,
and the creepers of the ground
according to its kind;
and God saw that it was good.

26 **And God said,**
"Let us **make human**
in our image,
according to our likeness;
and let them **rule**
over the fish of the sea
and over the birds of the sky
and over the cattle
and over all the land
and over every creeper that creeps on the land ."

27 **And God created human** in his image,
in the image of God he **created him** ;
male and female he created them .

28 And **God blessed them** ,
"Be fruitful and multiply,
and fill the land,
and **subdue** it;
and **rule**
over the fish of the sea
and over the birds of the sky
and over every living creature that creeps on the land ."

29 **And God said,**

“Behold, I have given to you
every plant producing seed
that is on the surface of all the earth,
and every tree which has fruit producing seed;
it shall be food for you;
30 and to every beast of the land
and to every bird of the sky
and to every thing that moves on the land
which has animal life in it,
every green plant for food”;
and it was so.

31 And God saw all that he had made,
and behold, it was very good.

And there was evening
and there was morning,
a sixth day .

Genesis 1-2:3. Translation and Literary Design by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2020).

Day three shifts from day two’s focus on the middle realm and the waters above and below, and it shows God creating one last environment—the land that emerges out of the water.

Day three also has a bonus act, which serves as a “+1” unit for the first triad of days. This +1 element in 1:11-13 focuses on the fruitfulness of vegetation and fruit trees that spread their seed throughout the land.

Day six displays a remarkable parallel design to day three. God concentrates on the land by creating its inhabitants (both plants and animals “come out” of the ground in 1:12 and 1:24). He focuses first on the animals of the land and then moves to humanity, who will reign as the divine image on the land.

Day six also has a final +1 element in 1:29-30, which takes up precisely the +1 element of day three—the vegetative plants and the fruit trees with seed are assigned for food for the animals and humans.

These matching relationships are clearly intentional. They create what is called a “forward symmetry” (ABC // A’B’C’).

However, this forward symmetry is not the only literary design feature of Genesis 1. Each part of the triad also has its own internal shape, which leads the reader to compare matching elements in the first and last elements of the triad. This design highlights features that match between the first and last parts of each triad, as well as the matching halves of the middle part.

Reflection Question

Days one and four of creation have many similarities in vocabulary, signaling that we are meant to compare them in our minds as we read. What meaning results when we compare them?

Session 15: Relationships Between Days

Key Takeaways

- Days one through three describe the environments that God creates, and days four through six describe the inhabitants. Creation is all about ordering and populating the skies and the land.
- Days four and six repeat the similar theme of rulers. Day four is about the rulers above, and day six is about the rulers below.
- The story culminates in the creation of the human rulers below who will partner with God.

The Cosmos of Genesis 1: Days One Through Six

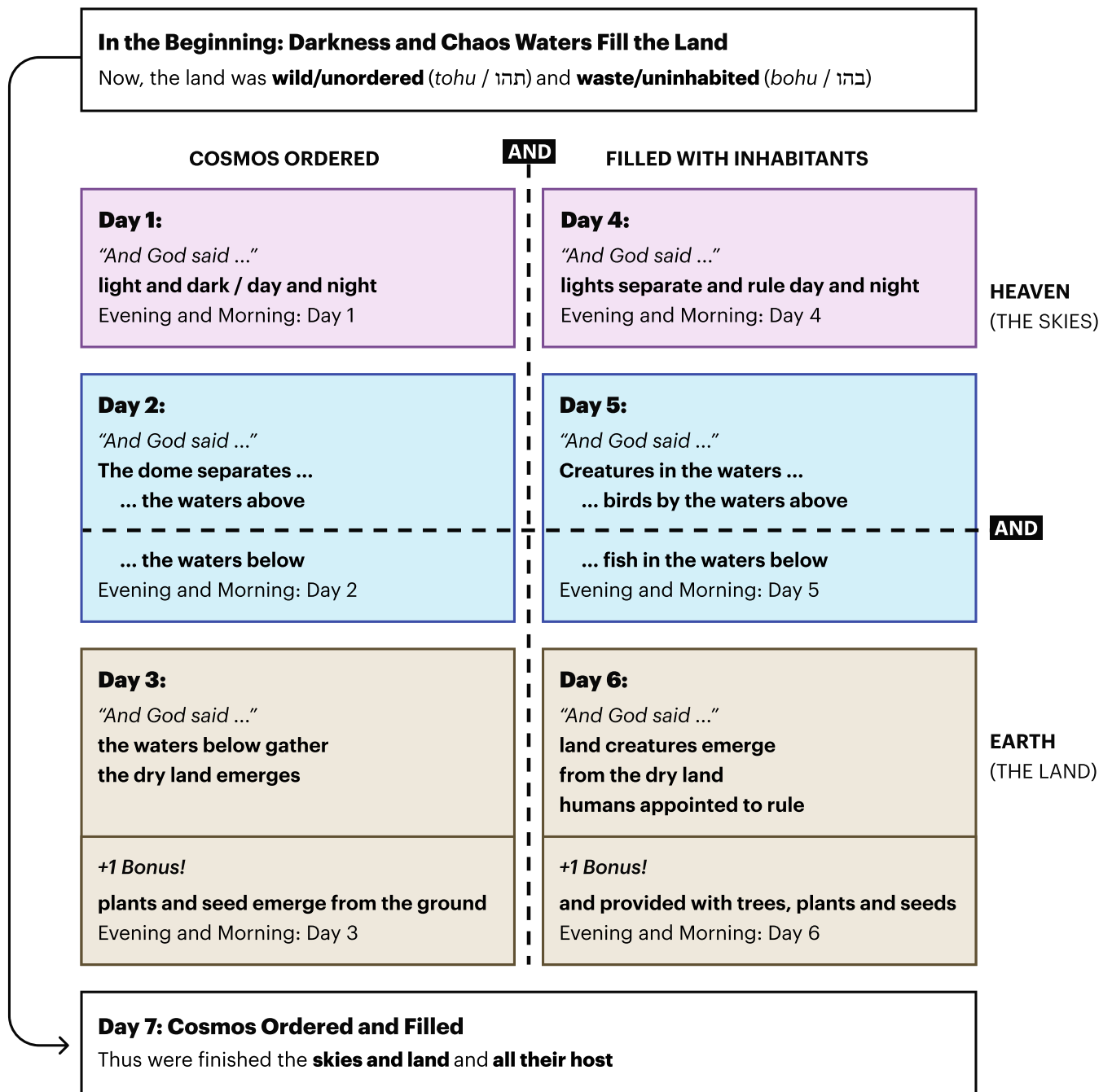
Days One Through Three

Days one through six have been neatly organized as two triads that each address the problems presented in Genesis 1:2—disorder and emptiness.

Days one through three address the problem of creation being unordered and uninhabited as God organizes the cosmos into distinct realms: the heavens above, the middle heaven/earth, and the land below.

Days Four Through Six

Days four through six supply each of these realms with their appropriate inhabitants: the heavenly realm with lights, the middle heaven/earth with birds and fish, and the dry land with creatures and humans.



Origami of Genesis 1. Adapted from David Andrew Teeter by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Adam to Noah (2020).

Design Structure of Days One Through Three

Day 1: God Orders the Heavens

³ **And God said,**
"Let there be light";

A

and there was light.

4 **God saw that the light was good** ;
and God **separated** the **light** from the **darkness** .

5 And God called the **light** **day** ,
and the **darkness** he called **night** .

And there was evening
and there was morning,
one day (יום אחד) .

Day 2: God Commands the Chaos Waters To Be Split

6 **And God said** ,
"Let there be a **dome**
in the middle of the waters,
and let it **separate the waters**
from the waters."

7 And God made the **dome** ,
and **separated the waters**
which were below the **dome**
from **the waters**
which were above the **dome** ;
and it was so.

8 God called the **dome** **skies** .

And there was evening
and there was morning,
a second day .

B

Day 3: God Orders the Land

9 **And God said** ,
" **Let the waters** below the skies
be gathered into **one place** (מקום אחד) ,
and let the dry ground be seen";
and it was so.

10 And God called **the dry ground** land,
and the gathering of the **waters** he called seas.
God saw that it was good .

11 **And God said** ,
"Let **the land** sprout vegetation,

4'

vegetative plants that produce seed,
fruit trees
that make fruit according to its kind
which has its seed inside it
upon the land";
and it was so.
12 And the land brought out
vegetative plants
that produce seed according to its kind,
and trees
that make fruit
which has its seed in it,
according to its kind;
and God saw that it was good .
13 And there was evening
and there was morning,
a third day .

Genesis 1-2:3. Translation and Literary Design by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2020).

This design structure invites the reader to compare and contrast the matching elements.

- Days one and three both portray God as addressing the two most iconic images of disorder, chaos, and death in the biblical imagination: darkness and the waters (note that they were already paired in 1:2). We are encouraged to see both as corresponding images of anti-creation.
- Day two is set apart from days one and three because it has the most elaborate “command/fulfillment” structure of the three days. While days one and three each have a command and a short fulfillment, day two has a lengthy, repetitive command followed by an equally lengthy fulfillment. But note that the two halves match, nearly identically. This is a literary embodiment of the theme of day two, which is the complete division between the heavenly and earthly by splitting the waters.

The reader walks away from days one through three with a robust awareness of the makeup of the biblical cosmos.

- Heaven and Earth are mirror realities. The provision of divine light contains the darkness and creates the most basic condition necessary for life to flourish. In a similar way, the provision of the land on Earth pushes back the waters, creating a space where life can flourish.
- God’s “conflict” with the darkness is a foundational image of the spiritual conflict that underlies the story of the Bible. Similarly, God and humanity’s conflict with the chaos-waters can function as an image of the human conflict (the metaphor scheme of humans as chaos waters).
- God’s victory over darkness on day one and the waters on day three happens by speaking a word. Day two focuses on God’s splitting the waters, again by speaking a word. But this is followed by an act of creation as God separates the chaos waters.

Every single part of this network of images will be developed throughout the remainder of the biblical narrative.

- Waters // darkness // death // enemies
- Dry land // light // life // refuge
- God splitting the waters to create life // God's victory over chaos and evil

We are invited to consider the design of days four through six in a similar way. And the comparisons and contrasts will again yield rich results about biblical imagery.

Design Structure of Days Four Through Six

Day 4: God Delegates Heavenly Rulers

- 14 **And God said,**
" **Let there be lights**
in the expanse of the skies
to **separate** the **day** from the **night**,
and let them be for signs
and for festivals and for days and years;
- 15 and let them be for **lights**
in the dome of the skies
to give **light** on the land";
and it was so.
- 16 And God made the two great **lights**,
the great **light** to **rule** the **day**,
and the small **light** to **rule** the **night**;
and also the stars.
- 17 And God placed them
in the dome of the skies
to give light on the land,
18 and to **rule** the **day** and the **night**,
and to **separate** the **light** from the **darkness**;
and God saw that it was good.
-
- 19 And there was evening
and there was morning,
a fourth day.

Day 5: God Apportions the Waters Above and Below

- 20 **And God said,**
"Let **the waters** swarm with swarms of living creatures,
and let birds fly **above the land**

against the face of the dome of the skies."

21 And God created the great sea monsters
and every living creature that moves,
B with which the waters swarmed after their kind,
and every bird of wing after its kind;
and God saw that it was good .

22 And God blessed them, saying,
A' "Be fruitful and multiply,
and fill the waters in the seas,
and let birds multiply on the land."

23 And there was evening
and there was morning,
a fifth day .

Day 6: God Delegates Earthly Rulers

24 And God said,
"Let the land bring out living creatures
according to their kind,
cattle
and creeping things
and beasts of the land
according to their kind";
and it was so.

25 And God made
the beasts of the land
according to their kind,
and the cattle
according to their kind,
and the creepers of the ground
according to its kind;
and God saw that it was good.

26 And God said,
"Let us make human
in our image,
according to our likeness;
and let them rule
over the fish of the sea

and over the birds of the sky
and over the cattle
and over all the land
and over every creeper that creeps on the land ."

27 And God created human in his image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them .

28 And God blessed them,
"Be fruitful and multiply,
and fill the land,
and subdue it;
and rule
over the fish of the sea
and over the birds of the sky
and over every living creature that creeps on the land ."

29 And God said,
"Behold, I have given to you
every plant producing seed
that is on the surface of all the earth,
and every tree which has fruit producing seed;
it shall be food for you;
30 and to every beast of the land
and to every bird of the sky
and to every thing that moves on the land
which has animal life in it,
every green plant for food";
and it was so.

31 And God saw all that he had made,
and behold, it was very good.

And there was evening
and there was morning,
a sixth day .

Genesis 1-2:3. Translation and Literary Design by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2020).

This design structure invites the reader to make new contrasts and comparisons.

- God's delegated rulers mirror each other. On day four, the sun and moon rule day and night. Note that the stars are not included in the delegated rule; rather, they make up the part that is ruled (the darkness

and night). Similarly, on day six, the man and woman function as a ruling pair over the land and animals. This last point fosters the comparison between the objects in the heavenly and earthly realm that are subjected to the rule of God's images: the stars and the animals (consider how these implicitly come together in Gen. 3).

- Notice how all three days have an extra created object that sticks out of the other lists: the stars (// the rulers), the sea monsters (// Leviathan), and the cattle (// Behemoth).

When this overlapping set of design structures are laid on top of each other, we can see what scholar David Andrew Teeter calls "literary origami." The six days of Genesis 1 are arranged along two "folds," a vertical axis that forms two matching triads, and a horizontal axis that forms each triad into a mirror shape.

Reflection Question

Summarize what you learned about the structure of days one through six in Genesis 1.



Module 4: A Tour of the Cosmos

SESSIONS 16-22

Explore the significance of each element of the cosmos, as understood by the ancient Israelites, to bring Genesis 1 into clearer focus.

Session 16: The Waters Above and Below

Key Takeaways

- In the Bible, water can be life-giving (streams, rivers, rain) or deadly (the flood waters, the sea, the deep).
- The waters above the *raqia'* are not the source of normal rain but of the flood, mirroring the dark waters below (Gen. 7:11).
- The waters below, or the *tehom* (the deep), are chaotic waters often synonymous with death or the pit (*Sheol*).

The Cosmology of Genesis 1 and the Narrative World of the Bible

The waters above the sky are not the source of rain, but they are a heavenly mirror of the dark waters below the land. The “many waters” above are the source of the flood.

Genesis 1:6-8 Instructor's Translation

⁶ Then God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of **the waters**, and let it separate the waters from **the waters**.” ⁷ God made the dome, and separated **the waters**, which were below the dome from **the waters which were above the dome**; and it was so. ⁸ God called the dome heavens/skies. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

Genesis 7:11 NRSV*

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and **the windows of the skies** were opened.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Genesis 8:1-3 NASB*

¹ But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided. ² Also the fountains of the deep and **the windows of the skies** were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained; ³ and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased.

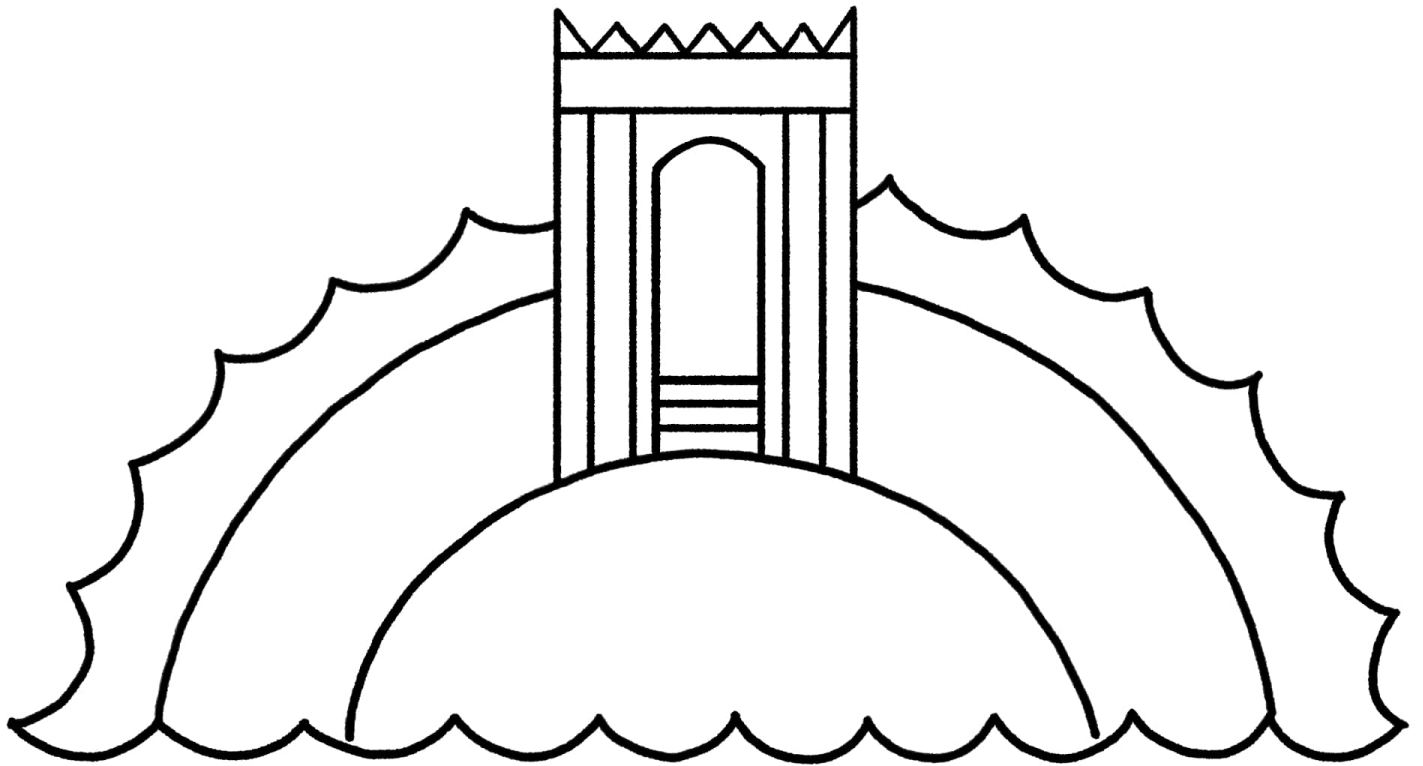
*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalms 104 and 148 are poetic explorations of the cosmology of Genesis 1, summoning every tier of creation and all their inhabitants to praise the Creator.

Psalms 104:1-3 NASB*

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD my God, you are very great;
you are clothed with splendor and majesty,
² covering yourself with light as with a cloak,
stretching out heaven like a tent curtain.
³ He lays the beams of his upper chambers in the waters;
he makes the clouds his chariot;
he walks upon the wings of the wind ...

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher



The Temple as a Portal. Illustration created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

Psalms 148:1-6 NASB*

¹ Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!
² Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his hosts!
³ Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all stars of light!
⁴ Praise him, highest heavens,
and the waters that are above the heavens!

⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for he commanded and they were created.

⁶ He has also established them forever and ever;
he has made a decree which will not pass away.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Many texts describe the “great waters above” that Yahweh sits above on his heavenly throne (Jer. 10:12-13; Ps. 29:3, 10; Ps. 104:1-3).

These cosmic heavenly waters are different from the rain released by the clouds, which float below the sky-dome.

Job 26:8 NASB

He wraps up the waters in his clouds, and the cloud does not burst under them.

Psalms 147:7-8 NASB

⁷ Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praises to our God on the lyre, ⁸ who covers the heavens with clouds, who provides rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow on the mountains.

The water falling from the clouds was viewed as different from the cosmic waters that God holds back with the sky-dome above.

Jeremiah 10:10-13 NASB

¹⁰ But Yahweh is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. At his anger the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation. ¹¹ So you shall say to them, “The gods that did not make the skies and the land will perish from the land and from under the skies.” ¹² It is he who made the land by his power, who established the world by his wisdom; and by his understanding he has stretched out the skies. ¹³ When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the skies, and he causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth; he makes lightning for the rain, and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

Psalms 29:3, 9-10 NASB

³ The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD is over the great waters. ⁹ ... And in his temple everything says, “Glory!” ¹⁰ The LORD sits as King at the flood; yes, the LORD sits as King forever.

Reflection Question

In the Bible, water is presented in many forms—sometimes as life-giving streams, rivers, or rain that waters the earth. But what ideas do “the waters above” and “the deep” convey?

Session 17: The Dragon in the Waters

Key Takeaways

- The *tannin*, or mythical sea dragon, is created on day five with the other sea creatures. It symbolizes disorder, chaos, and death throughout the Bible, but the creation story shows that the *tannin* is simply one of Yahweh's creatures.
- The forces of chaos in the Bible, represented by the waters and the sea dragon, affect human life, but ultimately, they are created things that will be overcome by God himself.

Revisit of the Design Structure of Days Four Through Six

Day 4: God Delegates Heavenly Rulers

14 And God said,
"Let there be lights
in the expanse of the skies
to separate the day from the night,
and let them be for signs
and for festivals and for days and years;
15 and let them be for lights
in the dome of the skies
to give light on the land";
and it was so.
16 And God made the two great lights,
the great light to rule the day,
and the small light to rule the night;
and also the stars.
17 And God placed them
in the dome of the skies
to give light on the land,
18 and to rule the day and the night,
and to separate the light from the darkness;
and God saw that it was good.

19 And there was evening
and there was morning,

a fourth day.

Day 5: God Apportions the Waters Above and Below

20 **And God said,**

A

"Let **the waters** swarm with swarms of living creatures,
and let birds fly **above the land**
against the face of the dome of the **skies**."

21 And God created the great sea monsters
and every living creature that moves,

B with which the waters swarmed after their kind,
and every bird of wing after its kind;

B

and God saw that it was good .

22 And God blessed them, saying,

A'

"Be fruitful and multiply,
and fill **the waters in the seas**,
and let birds multiply on the land."

23 And there was evening
and there was morning,

a fifth day .

Day 6: God Delegates Earthly Rulers

24 **And God said,**

"**Let the land** bring out living creatures
according to their kind,
cattle
and creeping things
and beasts of the land
according to their kind";
and it was so.

25 And God made

the beasts of the land
according to their kind,
and the cattle
according to their kind,
and the creepers of the ground
according to its kind;

and God saw that it was good.

26 **And God said,**

"Let us **make human**

in our image,
according to our likeness;
and let them **rule**
over the fish of the sea
and over the birds of the sky
and over the cattle
and over all the land
and over every creeper that creeps on the land ."

27 And God created human in his image,
in the image of God he created him ;
male and female he created them .

28 And God blessed them ,
"Be fruitful and multiply,
and fill the land,
and subdue it;
and rule
over the fish of the sea
and over the birds of the sky
and over every living creature that creeps on the land ."

29 And God said,
"Behold, I have given to you
every plant producing seed
that is on the surface of all the earth,
and every tree which has fruit producing seed ;
it shall be food for you;
30 and to every beast of the land
and to every bird of the sky
and to every thing that moves on the land
which has animal life in it,
every green plant for food";
and it was so.

31 And God saw all that he had made,
and behold, it was very good.

And there was evening
and there was morning,
a sixth day .

The Dragon in the Waters

Genesis 1:21 alludes to a tradition of great sea monsters that lived in the ocean. Wait, seriously—sea monsters? Let's take a look.

Genesis 1:21 NASB

God created the **great sea monsters** and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

The Hebrew word used here for “sea monster” is *tannin* (תנין). This word is used to refer to the mythical sea dragons elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

Other texts in the Hebrew Bible describe creation as a cosmic victory of Yahweh in which he shatters the heads of chaos dragons.

Psalms 74:12-17 NIV

12 But God is my King from long ago;
he brings salvation on the earth.
13 It was you who **split open the sea** by your power;
you **broke the heads of the sea monster in the waters.**
14 It was you who **crushed the heads of Leviathan**
and gave it as food to the creatures of the desert.
15 It was you who opened up springs and streams;
you dried up the ever-flowing rivers.
16 The day is yours, and yours also the night;
you established the sun and moon.
17 It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth;
you made both summer and winter.

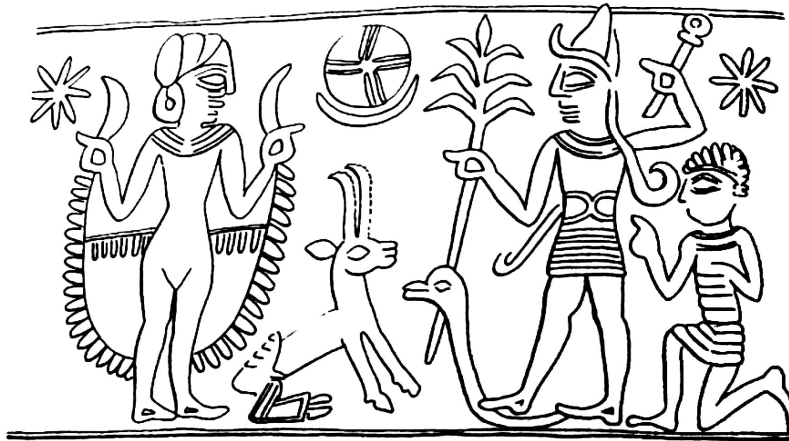
Job 26:10-14 NIV

10 He marks out the horizon on the face of the waters
for a boundary between light and darkness.
11 The pillars of the heavens quake,
aghast at his rebuke.
12 By his power he **churned up the sea**;
by his wisdom he **cut Rahab to pieces.**
13 By his breath the skies became fair;
his hand pierced the gliding serpent.
14 And these are but the outer fringe of his works;
how faint the whisper we hear of him!
Who then can understand the thunder of his power?

Psalms 89:8-13 NIV

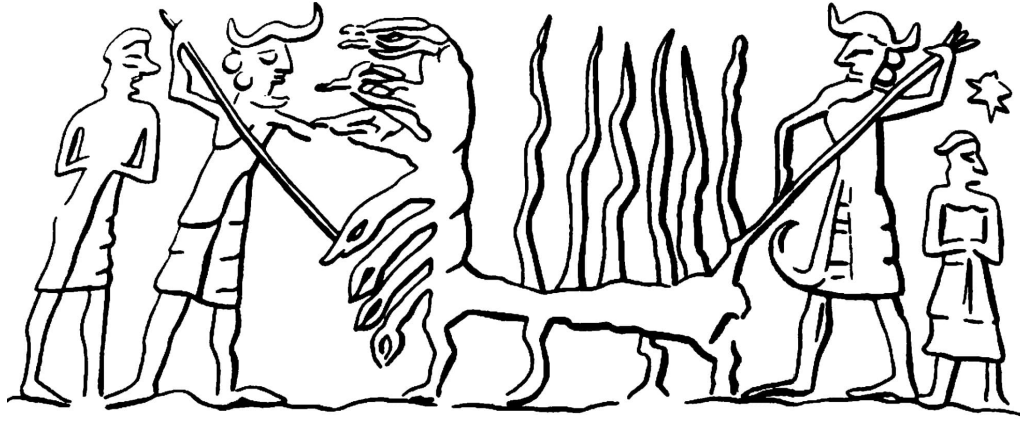
⁸ Who is like you, LORD God Almighty?
You, LORD, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.
⁹ You rule over the surging sea;
when its waves mount up, you still them.
¹⁰ You crushed Rahab like one of the slain;
with your strong arm you scattered your enemies.
¹¹ The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth;
you founded the world and all that is in it.
¹² You created the north and the south;
Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at your name.
¹³ Your arm is endowed with power;
your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.

Dragon Smashing in Babylonian and Canaanite Cosmology



Keel, Othmar (2015). *Creation: Biblical Theologies in the Context of the Ancient Near East*. Eisenbrauns.

A Syrian cylinder seal from 18th-17th century B.C.E. depicts Baal crushing a snake. A Syrian goddess (left) calls upon Baal the storm god (right). Baal stomps on a snake while piercing its head with a spear. A kneeling worshiper looks on (far right).



Keel, Othmar (2015). *Creation: Biblical Theologies in the Context of the Ancient Near East*. Eisenbrauns.

A cylinder seal from Tell-Asmar (2300 B.C.E.) depicts two horned deities as they thrust spears into a seven-headed dragon. The two gods are flanked by worshippers.

These images correlate with a Canaanite epic known as the Baal and Anat epic, dating to the 14th century B.C.E. The story was among the Ugaritic tablets found north of Israel in the 1920s. There was a temple to Baal with many texts profiling his exploits and rise to power. In a crucial scene, Baal defeats the forces of chaos to become a cosmic king and build his royal palace. Notably, the powers of chaos that Baal overcomes are *Yam* ("sea" in Hebrew) and *Nahar* ("river" in Hebrew), who are portrayed together as a great, multiheaded dragon-snake!

Similarly, there are other creation texts in the Hebrew Bible where the sea itself is the chaos monster, taking the place of the dragon image.

Psalm 104:6-9 NASB

⁶ You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters were standing above the mountains.

⁷ At your rebuke they fled,
at the sound of your thunder they hurried away.

⁸ The mountains rose; the valleys sank down
to the place which you established for them.

⁹ You set a boundary that they may not pass over,
so that they will not return to cover the earth.

Job 38:8-11 NASB

⁸ Or who enclosed the sea with doors
when, bursting forth, it went out from the womb;

⁹ when I made a cloud its garment
and thick darkness its swaddling band,

¹⁰ and I placed boundaries on it
and set a bolt and doors,

¹¹ and I said, “Thus far you shall come, but no farther;
and here shall your proud waves stop”?

Even though Yahweh is depicted as victorious over the sea-dragon at creation, the Hebrew Bible is very clear that he did not eliminate the dragon. Those same chaos monsters are behind every event of disorder and death in human history that threatens God’s good order.

- In [Psalm 74](#), Yahweh’s defeat of the dragon at creation makes the destruction of the temple even more painful, so the poet calls for the defeat of the dragon once again.
- In [Isaiah 51:9-11](#), the poet calls for God to redo the exodus event, which was a defeat of the chaos dragon that had enslaved Israel. The dragon is loose again in the events of Jerusalem’s destruction and exile, and the dragon needs to be dealt with.
- In [Job 41](#), the chaos dragon Leviathan is still alive, and only Yahweh can subdue it.

“In each of these texts [Ps. 74; Isa. 51; Job 41], the confinement of chaos rather than its elimination is the essence of creation, and the survival of ordered reality hangs only upon God’s vigilance in ensuring that those cosmic dikes do not fail, that the bars of the Sea’s jail cell do not give way ... [These images] testify both to the precariousness of life, its absolute dependence upon God, and the sureness and firmness of life under the protection of the faithful master. The world is not inherently safe, but inherently unsafe. Only the magisterial intervention of God and his eternal vigilance prevent the cataclysm.”

Levenson, Jon (1994). [Creation and the Persistence of Evil](#). Princeton University Press. 17.

Chaos Water and Sea Beasts in a Modern Worldview

"Genesis 1:2 depicts the pre-creation state as an unholy trinity: wilderness, darkness, and cosmic chaos waters. However, within the Bible itself, these chaos waters can be depicted metaphorically as the chaos dragon, and in this way, the symbolic meaning of the waters remains a viable idea today.

In the Bible, water and sea beasts function as evocative symbols of overwhelming and powerful chaos-inducing forces. They remind us that God’s creation is good but not tame. There are forces beyond human control that should be treated with respect, because when they exceed their bounds they are destructive. At a metaphorical level dragons and wild oceans remain helpful symbols of chaos that can invade communal and individual human worlds, threatening order and life itself. Within the Bible the symbol is used to describe political oppression and the collapse of order in the lives of communities and people. At a metaphysical level ... Genesis 1 depicts a creation that, left to itself, would collapse back into chaos. The world does not sustain or order itself. It is God who ordered and continues to order reality ... But the tendency towards disorder is inherent within the world ... The sea represents non-being, literally ‘no-thing.’

Taking this approach, we might consider evil, portrayed as chaos waters or sea beasts, as a tendency in creation to move away from being and form toward nothingness. Here we find Augustine’s helpful idea that evil is not a thing as such, but a lack of substance and form, a privation. Evil is what remains when goodness has fallen away from something’s nature. On this approach, the sea and the dragon are symbols of meaninglessness, creation that has fallen from its intended purpose. Conceived in this way, evil has no purpose or being, it is literally nothing, and has no meaning at all. That, of course, is what is so terrible about it.”

Parry, Robin A. (2014). [The Biblical Cosmos: A Pilgrim's Guide to the Weird and Wonderful World of the Bible](#). Cascade Books. 202-203.

Design Patterns: God as the Master Water Tamer

God has total mastery over the dark, chaos waters of Genesis 1:2, but those forces of chaos still exist and threaten the world.

Genesis 1: God as the Water Tamer

Genesis 1:1-2	Genesis 1:3-5	Genesis 1:6-8	Genesis 1:9-10
God creates by means of his Spirit hovering over the dark, cosmic waters of "wild and waste" that make human communities impossible.	Day 1 "'Let there be light' and there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and he separated between the light and between the darkness."	Day 2 "Let there be a dome, and it will separate between the waters below the dome and the waters above the dome."	Day 3 "Let the waters under the skies gather together (קוה) into one place and let the dry land (יבשה) become visible."
God the Water Tamer. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).			

Genesis 6-8: The Flood as De-Creation and Re-Creation

The flood is presented as a de-creation. In Genesis 7:11, “the springs of the cosmic deep waters (תְּהוֹם) split (נִבְקַע) and the windows of the heavens are opened” (i.e., reversing days two and three of creation).

Genesis 7:22-23 NASB*

²² ... Of all that was on the dry ground, and all in whose nostrils was the breath of life (נִשְׁמַת־רוּחַ חַיִּים), died.
²³ And every being was wiped away that was on the face of the ground, from human (אָדָם), to beast, to creeper, to bird of the skies ... but Noah remained (שָׂאֵר) and those with him in the ark.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

In this passage, there is an undoing of all the inhabitants from days five and six of creation.

Genesis 8:1, 3 NASB*

¹ But God remembered Noah ... and God caused a *ruakh* to pass (עָבַר) over the land, ³ and the waters decreased ... and the waters turned back (הַמַּיִם וַיָּשֻׁבוּ) from upon the land.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Genesis 8:13-14 NASB*

¹³ And it came about on the 601st year, on the first of the month, the waters dried up (חָרַב) from upon the land ... ¹⁴ And by the second month on the 14th day, Noah looked and behold, the land was dried up (יָבֵשׁ).

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Joshua 3: Crossing Through the Waters Into the Promised Land

Take notice of any creation imagery in the following passages, specifically the waters and the dry land.

Joshua 3:1 Instructor's Translation

And Joshua awoke in the morning and set out from Shittim and they came to the Jordan, and they stayed the night there before they crossed over.

Joshua 3:2-4

The people are instructed to wait for the priests to carry the ark across first, which will tell them the way to cross the river.

Joshua 3:5 Instructor's Translation

Joshua said to the people, “Make yourselves holy, for tomorrow Yahweh will do wonders in your midst.”

Joshua 3:7 Instructor's Translation

Yahweh said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to make you great in the eyes of all Israel, so they will know that just as I was with Moses, I will be with you.”

Joshua 3:16-17 Instructor's Translation

¹⁶ [The priests' feet touched the river] and the waters of the Jordan were cut off where they flowed up above, and they stood in a single heap ... ¹⁷ And the people crossed across from Jericho, and the priests stood carrying the ark of the covenant of Yahweh on dry ground (ערבה), standing in the midst of the Jordan, while all Israel was crossing on dry ground until all the nation had finished.

The Waters in Isaiah 11 and 51

In Isaiah 11:1-16, we read about a new king from the line of David who is endowed by the Spirit.

Isaiah 11:10 Instructor's Translation

And it will come about on the day, the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples, and the nations will seek him out, and his resting place will be glory.

Isaiah 11:11-12, 16 Instructor's Translation

¹¹ And it will come about on the day, the Lord will again use his arm a second time, to purchase the remainder (שאר) of his people which remains (שאר) in Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Babylon, and the islands of the sea. ¹² And he will lift up a banner to the nations, and gather the scattered ones of Israel, and he will regather the dispersed ones of Judah ... ¹⁶ And there will be a highway for the remainder (שאר) of his people who remain (שאר) from Assyria, just as there was for Israel on the day he came up from the land of Egypt.

Notice the language of “remainder.” Other examples of remainders in the biblical story include Noah, Israel rescued from Egypt by Moses, and exiles rescued by the new David.

Isaiah 51:9-11 NIV*

⁹ Awake, awake, arm of the LORD, clothe yourself with strength! Awake, as in days gone by, as in generations of old. Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces, who pierced the sea monster through? ¹⁰ Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over? ¹¹ Those the LORD has ransomed will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Let's skip ahead to Jesus' baptism and walking on the sea (not the waters) in the Gospel of Mark.

Mark 1:9-11 NASB

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan River. ¹⁰ Immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him; ¹¹ and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are my beloved Son, in you I am well-pleased.”

Mark 4:35-41 NASB

³⁵ On that day, when evening came, he said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." ³⁶ Leaving the crowd, they took him along with them in the boat, just as he was; and other boats were with him. ³⁷ And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. ³⁸ Jesus himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ And he got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. ⁴⁰ And he said to them, "Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?" ⁴¹ They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Jesus rebuking the sea echoes back to Yahweh rebuking the waters in [Nahum 1:4](#) and [Psalm 106:9](#). Jesus walking on the sea echoes back to Yahweh treading on the sea in [Job 9:8](#).

The Sea and Monsters in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 and 21

Daniel 7:2-7 NASB

² Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. ³ And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. ⁴ The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle ... ⁵ And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!' ⁶ After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. ⁷ After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns."

Revelation 13:1-2 NASB

¹ And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. ² And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

Revelation 21:1 NASB

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

Reflection Question

A *tannin*, like the one created on day five, is a mythical sea dragon throughout the Bible. What does the *tannin* symbolize? What is significant about it being highlighted on day five?

Session 18: The Dry Land

Key Takeaways

- The biblical authors portrayed the dry land as a disc surrounded by and resting on the waters. It is set up on pillars that God upholds by his power.
- The dry land often symbolizes salvation, most notably, in Genesis 1 and the Exodus narrative.

The Dry Land

Genesis 1:9-10 NASB

⁹ Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry ground appear”; and it was so. ¹⁰ And God called the dry ground land, and the gathering of the waters he called seas, and God saw that it was good.

This passage gives us a mental picture of the waters receding from a mound of dry land and gathering into waters around it. The following biblical phrases assume we are familiar with this picture.

The Ends/Edges of the Land

Psalms 19:1, 4 Instructor's Translation

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the dome declares the work of his hands. ... ⁴ Their line has gone out through all the land and their utterance to **the edge of the world**.

Daniel 4:10-11 NASB*

¹⁰ Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the land and its height was great. ¹¹ The tree grew large and became strong, and its height reached to the sky, and it was visible to the end of all the land.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

See also [Isaiah 26:15](#); [Isaiah 41:9](#); [Jeremiah 16:19](#); [Psalm 19:4](#); [Psalm 48:10](#); [Psalm 65:5](#); [Psalm 67:7](#); [Job 28:24](#); [Job 37:3](#); [Job 38:13](#); [Daniel 4:11](#); [Acts 13:47](#)

The Four Corners of the Land and the Four Winds of the Heavens

Isaiah 11:12 NASB

And he will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

See also [Ezekiel 7:2](#); [Zechariah 2:10](#); [Zechariah 6:5](#); [Revelation 7:1](#)

In this world picture, the land disc is suspended over the dark abysmal waters below.

Psalm 24:1-2 NASB

¹ The land is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. ² For he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

Psalm 136:5-6 NASB

⁵ [Give thanks] to him who made the heavens with skill, for his lovingkindness is everlasting;
⁶ to him who spread out the land above the waters, for his lovingkindness is everlasting.

Exodus 20:4 NASB

You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the land beneath or in the water under the earth.

The Waters Surrounding the Land Disc

Proverbs 8:27-30 NASB

²⁷ When he established the heavens, I [Wisdom] was there, when he inscribed a horizon on the face of the deep, ²⁸ when he made firm the skies above, when the springs of the deep became fixed, ²⁹ when he set for the sea its boundary so that the water would not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the land; ³⁰ then I was beside him, as a master workman; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him ...

Job 26:10-13 NASB

¹⁰ He has inscribed a circle/horizon on the surface of the waters at the boundary of light and darkness. ¹¹ The pillars of heaven tremble and are amazed at his rebuke. ¹² He quieted the sea with his power, and by his understanding he shattered Rahab. ¹³ By his breath the heavens are cleared; his hand has pierced the fleeing serpent.

Isaiah 40:21-22 NASB

²¹ Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood the foundations of the earth? ²² It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

These passages do not describe a sphere floating in space, like we might think of. Rather they are talking about the horizon line (Job 26) or the round disc of the land surrounded by waters (Prov. 8; Isa. 40).

In many psalms, the dry land of Genesis 1 is identified with God's provision of salvation from the waters of chaos.

Psalm 18:2-3 NASB

² The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. ³ I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

Psalm 89:8-11 NASB

⁸ O LORD God of hosts, who is like you, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds you. ⁹ You rule the swelling of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them. ¹⁰ You yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm. ¹¹ The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours; the world and all it contains, you have founded them.

Psalm 104:1-9 retells the story of creation, flood, and re-creation from Genesis 1 and 6-8 by using the imagery of waters rising or receding from the land.

Psalm 104:1-9 NASB

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty, ² covering yourself with light as with a cloak, stretching out heaven like a tent curtain. ³ He lays the beams of his upper chambers in the waters; he makes the clouds his chariot; he walks upon the wings of the wind; ⁴ he makes the winds his messengers, flaming fire his ministers. ⁵ He established the earth upon its foundations, so that it will not totter forever and ever. ⁶ You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters were standing above the mountains. ⁷ At your rebuke they fled, at the sound of your thunder they hurried away. ⁸ The mountains rose; the valleys sank down to the place which you established for them. ⁹ You set a boundary that they may not pass over, so that they will not return to cover the earth.

This language makes sense only within a flat Earth model. While we still use some of these phrases, we do so in a non-literal sense. This is not so for the biblical authors. See the following examples.

- [Matthew 4:8](#): Jesus is taken to a tall mountain and shown all the nations of the land.
- [Revelation 1:7](#): "Every eye will see him ..."

Reflection on the Dry Land

What thoughts or questions do you have about the biblical understanding of the dry land?

Exodus 14: The Exodus as an Act of New Creation

Exodus 14:6-7 Instructor's Translation

⁶ Pharaoh took his chariot and took his people with him, ⁷ and he took 600 choice chariots and all the chariotry of Egypt ...

Exodus 14:13-14 Instructor's Translation

¹³ And Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid! Stand here and see the salvation of Yahweh which he will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians you see today, you will not see them anymore, ever. ¹⁴ Yahweh

will fight for you, but you, keep quiet.”

Exodus 14:16 Instructor's Translation

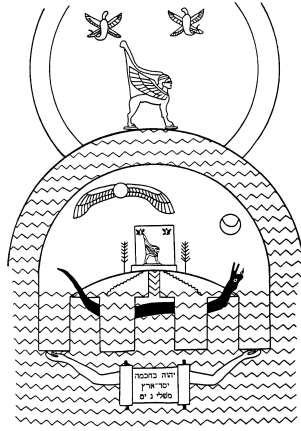
Moses, lift your staff and extend your hand over the sea and split (בקע) them, and let the sons of Israel go in the midst of the sea on dry land (יבשה).

Exodus 14:20-30 Instructor's Translation

²⁰ [God sets the pillar of cloud and fire between the camps of Egypt and Israel “all the night” (כל-הלילה).] ²¹ And Moses stretched his hand over the sea and Yahweh led away the sea by a strong east wind (רוח קדים עזה) all the night, and he turned the sea into dry ground (חרבה), and the waters were split (נבקע). ²² And the sons of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry land (יבשה), and the waters were a wall for them, on their right and on their left. ²³ And Egypt chased and came after them, every horse of Pharaoh, his chariots and horsemen into the midst of the sea. ²⁴ And it came about at the morning watch (אשמרת הבקר) that Yahweh, in the pillar of fire and cloud, looked down at the camp of Egypt and confused the camp of Egypt. ... ²⁸ And the waters turned back (וישבו המים) and covered the chariots and horsemen ... in the sea, and there was not one of them remaining (שאר). ²⁹ But the sons of Israel walked on dry land (יבשה) ... ³⁰ And Yahweh saved Israel on that day.

“It should be evident that within the worldview of the ancient Near East, including the Hebrew Bible, their physical-technical and poetic-mythical statements and conceptions are not susceptible to consistent separation. To people in the ancient Near East, the empirical world, as manifestation and symbol, points beyond its superficial reality. A blurring occurs between the actual and the symbolic, and conversely between the symbolic and the actual. This openness of the everyday, earthly world to the spheres of divine life and bottomless, devastating lostness is probably the chief difference between ancient Near Eastern conception of the world and our own, which views the world as a virtually closed mechanical system. The principal error of conventional representations of the ANE view of the world lies in their profanity and lifelessness. In the biblical and ANE conception, the world is open and transparent to things above and beneath the earth. It is not a lifeless stage. The universe is thoroughly alive and, therefore, the more capable of sympathy with humans and of response to the rule of its creator, on whom both humanity and the universe directly depend. Certainly we have here more than a poetical personification of the cosmos, when it is invited to shout for joy!”

Keel, Othmar (1997). [*The Symbolism Of The Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book Of Psalms*](#). Eisenbrauns. 56.



Keel, Othmar (1997). "Figure 14" (p. 161). *Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*. Eisenbrauns.

Reconstruction of the Israelite image of the world on the basis of biblical passages and iconographic elements from Palestine/Israel and its surroundings.

Reflection Question

How do the biblical authors talk about the dry land? In other words, what did it rest upon, what marked its edges, what shape was it in, and what held it up? And did it carry a positive, negative, or neutral connotation?

Session 19: Reflections on Where All Creation Is Headed

Key Takeaways

- The ultimate goal of creation helps define what is good, that is, human image-bearers on the dry land, farming and having families.
- Genesis 1 presents us with an ideal. When the narrative proper begins, the characters never attain the ideal. As the story continues, it points toward an ideal that has yet to be realized.
- There was potential in the garden of Eden, but not perfection as English speakers would typically define it.



This session has no other notes

Reflection Question

What questions came to mind as you listened to this session?

Session 20: Rivers of Life

Key Takeaways

- Rivers and springs are life-giving in the Bible. A river flows out of Eden to water the whole Earth, and rivers flow down from holy mountains in Ezekiel, Psalm 46, and Revelation.
- Rivers, springs, and wells become divine gifts of life in the desert at just the right moment for Hagar, the Israelites, and the Samaritan woman when Jesus gives her living water. The book of Revelation also talks about a river of life flowing down.

The Biblical Earth and Its Foundations in a Modern Worldview

"We have seen that in biblical cosmology, the earth is flat ... and held in place by pillars. We might well ask, 'But what are the pillars standing on?' And the biblical authors never even try to answer that question. Had they done so, they would certainly not have appealed to an eternal regress of pillars upon pillars. Here we may recall the obscure comment from the book of Job: '[God] ... hangs the land upon nothing ([Job 26:7](#)). The pillars, we might say, are suspended over nothing! So why don't they drop? Because, says Job, God suspends them there ... For the biblical authors, the pillars speak simply of the stability of the earth ... and the earth is utterly dependent on God, not just for its beginning, but at each and every moment of its existence. The universe does not ground itself; it does not explain its own being ... To speak of the earth's pillar is not a primitive physical claim, but a profound metaphysical one."

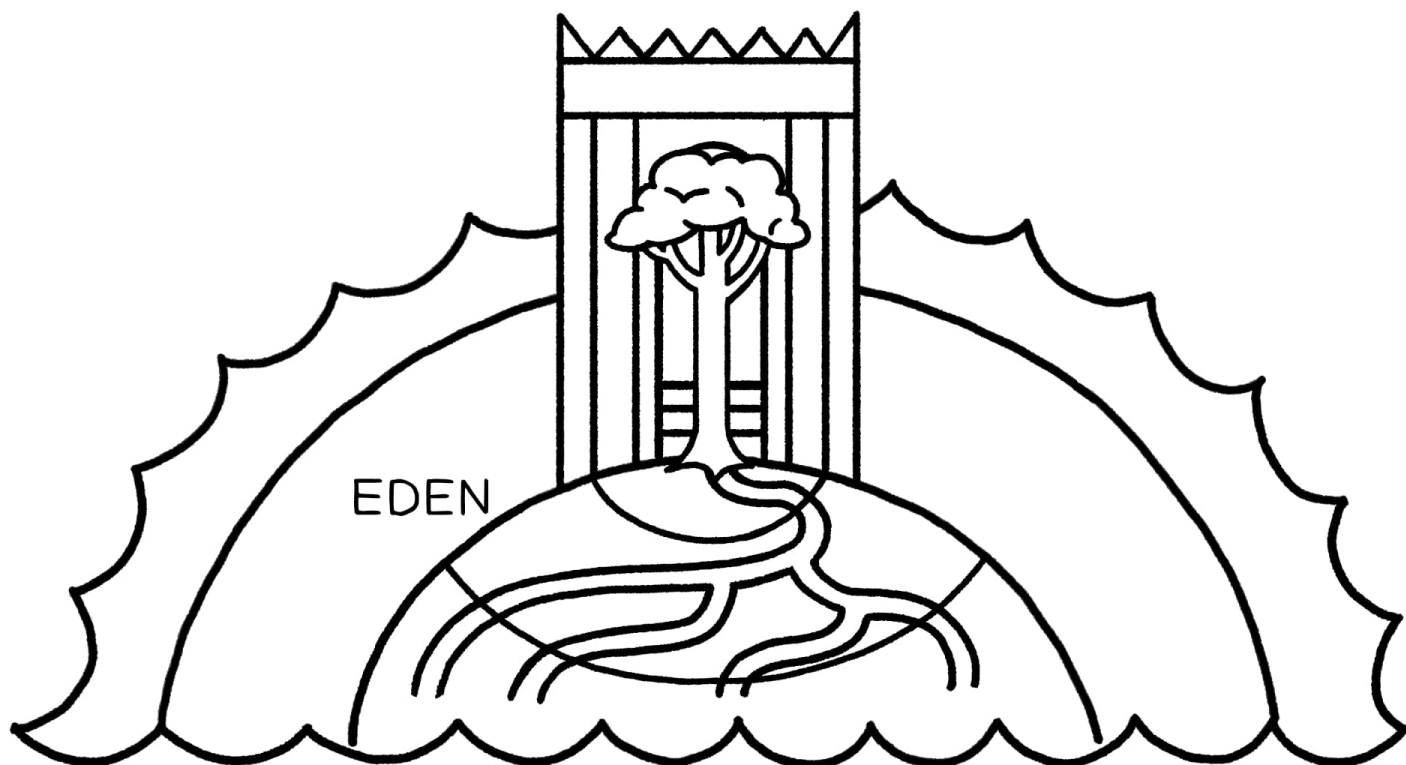
Parry, Robin A. (2014). [*The Biblical Cosmos: A Pilgrim's Guide to the Weird and Wonderful World of the Bible*](#). Cascade Books. 199-200.

Mountains and Rivers in Genesis 1-2

Genesis 1 and 2 depict the emergence of the dry land and Eden as a cosmic mountain where Heaven and Earth overlap. In Genesis 1, God tames the sea, and in Genesis 2, God channels the dark waters below into life-giving waters on the dry land.

- 1:2a: "And the land was wild (Heb. *tohu* / תהו) and waste"
- 1:2b: "And darkness was on the face of the deep abyss (Heb. *tehom* / תהום)"
- 1:2c: "And the wind/spirit of God was hovering on the face of the waters (Heb. *hamayim* / המים)"

These three lines are parallel, matching key terms in order to contrast them. In the place of darkness, we find the opposite, the Spirit of God, through whom the spoken word of God will bring about light.



Tree of Life in the Center of Eden. Illustration created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

The double “on the face of the” (על־פני) highlights the two parallel terms for waters. These refer to the same reality (i.e., ocean waters) but with two different interpretations.

- 2b: When darkness is present, the waters are threatening and destructive.
- 2c: When God’s Spirit is present, the waters are controlled and can be life-giving.

“Water is commonly conceived [in the Bible and ANE literature] as a symbol of the oppositional forces of life, an ambiguous symbol of life and death ... Water is symbolic of death when it is uncontrolled (too much or too little), and of life when it is controlled, because it provides growth and fertility. This summarizes the movement from Genesis 1:2 to 2:10-14, from the chaotic waters of the dark abyss to the fructifying rivers of Eden. In the Hebrew Bible, this decisive control of the waters is the prerogative of God who is sovereign over death and life ... In this sense, ‘deep abyss’ signifies the negative or threatening aspect of the waters, while ‘the waters’ represent the positive aspect of water under control.”

Morales, Michael (2012). [Tabernacle Prefigured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus](#). Peeters Publishers. 54-55.

Genesis 2:10-14: The River of Eden

“And a river went out from Eden to water the garden, and from there it was separated and it became four heads.”

1. “The name of the first was Pishon (פִּישׁוֹן = ‘leaper/springer’); it went around the whole land of Havilah where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. There is the bdellium and onyx stone.”

2. "The name of the second river is Gihon (גִּיחוֹן = 'gusher'); it goes around all the land of Cush."
3. "The name of the third river is Hideqel; it goes east of Assyria."
4. "And the fourth river is the Euphrates."

Rivers were commonly viewed as having their source in the deep abyss below the land.

Deuteronomy 33:13-16 Instructor's Translation

- ¹³ About Joseph he said: "May the LORD bless his land with the precious dew from heaven above and with the deep abyss (Heb. *tehom*) that lie below;
- ¹⁴ with the best the sun brings forth and the finest the moon can yield;
- ¹⁵ with the choicest gifts of the ancient mountains and the fruitfulness of the everlasting hills;
- ¹⁶ with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favor of him who dwelt in the burning bush. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers.

Rivers and Mountains in the Biblical Story

The following are examples of more rivers and mountain imagery in the Bible.

- The Zion temple, the place where Heaven and Earth are one (see cosmic symbolism in [Ps. 46](#), [48](#))
- The future restored temple ([Isa. 2](#); [Ezek. 47](#); [Joel 4](#); [Zech. 14](#))

Jesus as the Temple/Source of the River of Life

- [John chapters 1, 2, 4, 7, 12](#), and [18](#) explore Jesus as the tabernacle, the temple body, and the water of life. We see him exalted and lifted up for his crucified body to provide the water of life to humanity.
- In [Revelation 21-22](#), the new creation is a unified Heaven and Earth as a garden/city/temple on a mountain with a river.

Reflection Question

In a previous session, we learned that the seas represent chaos and are a force that God confronts and defeats. But what connotation do rivers have?

Session 21: Jesus and Living Water

Key Takeaways

- Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus is portrayed as the true source of life—as the tabernacle dwelling among us (John 1:14), as the temple (John 2:21), and as the garden with rivers flowing out of him (John 7:37).
- The garden of Eden points to the reality of Jesus being high and lifted up, signifying that Jesus is the source of true and eternal life.



This session has no other notes

Reflection Question

In the Gospel of John, when water comes out of Jesus' body after his death, what is the significance? What passages might this be connected to?

Session 22: Ancient Cosmology in Psalm 36

Key Takeaways

- Psalm 36 displays the same ancient cosmology we've been looking at in Genesis 1—the heavens above, the deep below, and the dry land in between.
- In the psalm, the dry land can be used as an image for the space of the wicked even though, as the psalm says, God's love and justice extend from the heavens all the way to the deep. The psalm exposes this tension between two realities.

Psalm 36: Another Example of Ancient Cosmology

Psalm 36 ESV

¹ Transgression speaks to the wicked
deep in his heart;
there is no fear of God
before his eyes.

² For he flatters himself in his own eyes
that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.

³ The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit;
he has ceased to act wisely and do good.

⁴ He plots trouble while on his bed;
he sets himself in a way that is not good;
he does not reject evil.

⁵ Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.

⁶ Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
your judgments are like the great deep;
man and beast you save, O LORD.

⁷ How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

⁸ They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

⁹ For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light do we see light.

¹⁰ Oh, continue your steadfast love to those who know you,
and your righteousness to the upright of heart!

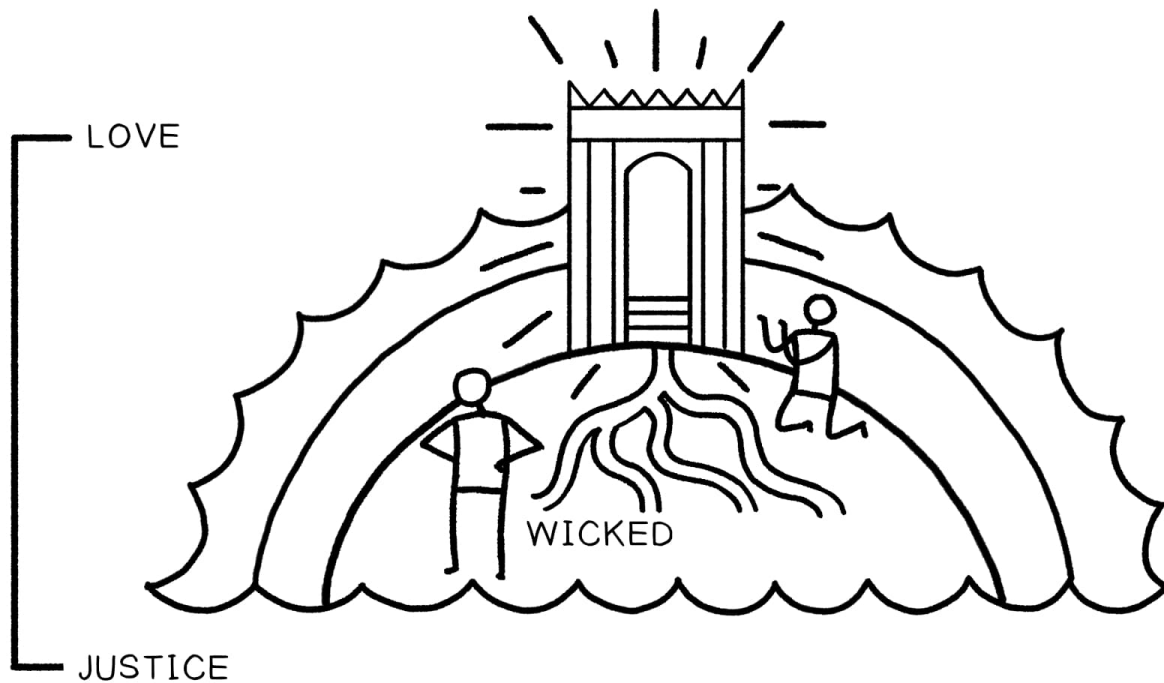
¹¹ Let not the foot of arrogance come upon me,

nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.

¹² There the evildoers lie fallen;
they are thrust down, unable to rise.

Reflection on Psalm 36

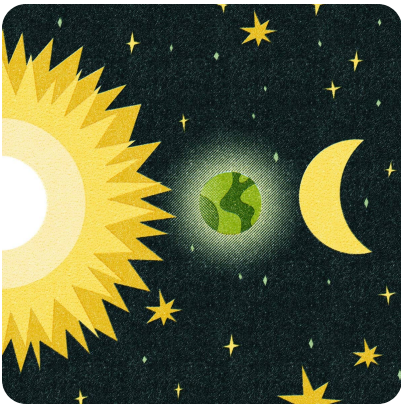
What do you notice about ancient cosmology and the shape of the cosmos in Psalm 36?



The Land of the Wicked. Illustration created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

Reflection Question

What's something that stands out to you from Psalm 36 that relates to this ancient cosmology we've been discussing? The elements of the biblical cosmos (the dry land, the heavens, the deep) correspond to different characteristics. What do they symbolize?



Module 5: The Unity of Heaven and Earth

SESSIONS 23-26

See how the two realities of Heaven and Earth merge throughout the biblical story and explore fascinating topics like heavenly beings.

Session 23: The Heavens

Key Takeaways

- In the Bible, the heavens represent God's dwelling place, the source of life, and the ultimate reality.
- Although God's presence permeates the whole universe (Ps. 36, 139), the heavens uniquely signify his dwelling place and the ultimate reality.
- The point of the biblical story is not that humanity will one day ascend up to Heaven but that the heavenly realm will come and transform Earth.

The Land Down, Out, and Under: The Wilderness, Abyss, *Sheol*, and the Grave

Jonah 2:1-7 NASB*

¹ Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from **the stomach of the fish**, ² and he said,
"I called out of my distress to the LORD,
and he answered me.

I cried for help from the **depth of Sheol**;
you heard my voice.

³ For you had cast me into **the deep**,
into the heart of **the seas**, and the current engulfed me.
All your breakers and waves passed over me.

⁴ So I said, 'I have been expelled from your sight.
Nevertheless I will look again **toward your holy temple**.'

⁵ Water encompassed me to **the point of death**.

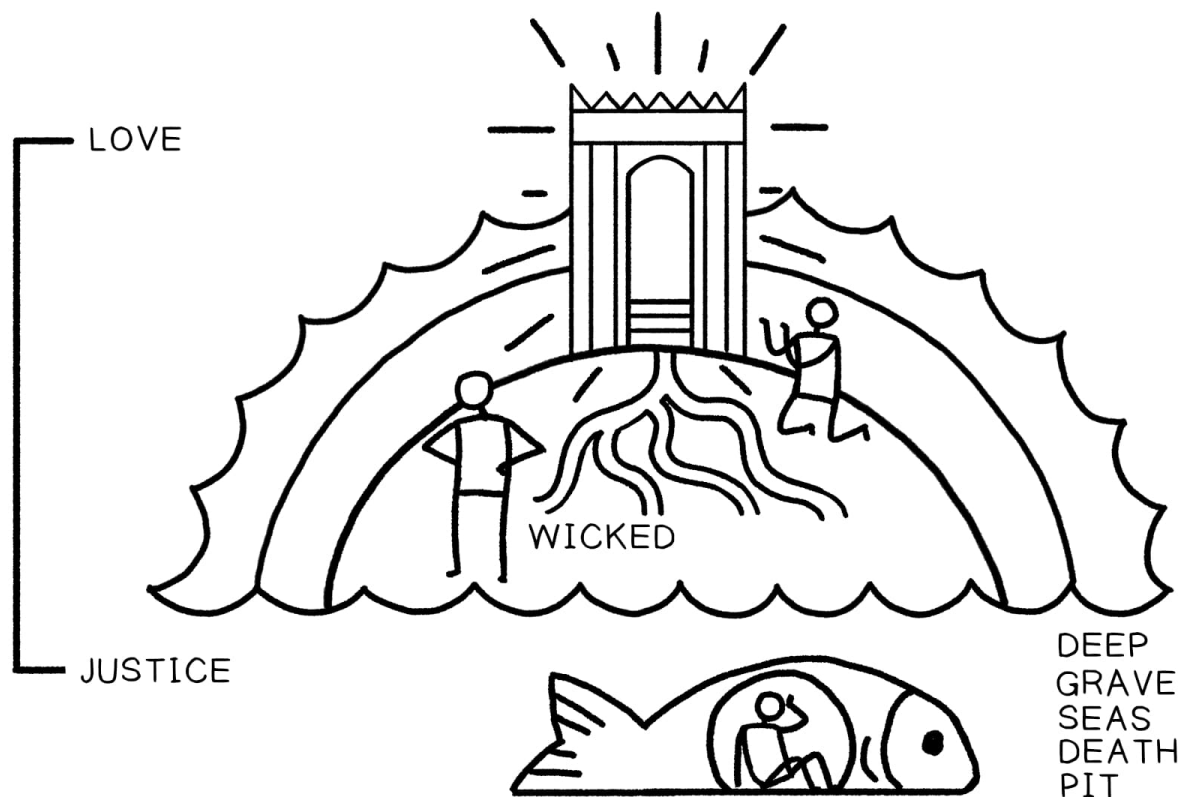
The great deep engulfed me,
weeds were wrapped around my head.

⁶ I descended to **the roots of the mountains**.
The **earth with its bars** was around me forever,
but you have brought up my life from **the pit**, O LORD my God.

⁷ While I was fainting away,
I remembered the LORD,
**and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple.**"

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Jonah's prayer connects his plight in the belly of the fish to biblical cosmology, evoking themes of the deep, the grave, the seas, death, and the pit.



Jonah's Fish as a Type of Wilderness Grave. Illustration created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

Wilderness in Genesis 1:2: An Image of “Nothingness”

Genesis 1:2 NASB*

Now, the land was **wild and waste** (Hebrew: *tohu va-vohu*)

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Other Uses of *Tohu* or *Bohu*: Empty, Uninhabited, Wasteland

Deuteronomy 32:9-10 NASB*

⁹ For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the allotment of his inheritance. ¹⁰ He found him in a desert land, and in the howling **tohu** of a wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he guarded him as the pupil of his eye.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Isaiah 24:10-12 NASB*

¹⁰ The city of **tohu** is broken down; every house is shut up so that none may enter. ¹¹ There is an outcry in the streets concerning the wine; all joy turns to gloom. The gaiety of the earth is banished. ¹² Desolation is left in the city and the gate is battered to ruins.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Isaiah 45:18 NIV*

For this is what the LORD says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be **tohu**, but formed it to be inhabited—he says: “I am the LORD, and there is no other.”

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Genesis 3:22-24 and Genesis 4:17: Exile “to the East” Into the Land of Thorns and Thistles

Genesis 3:17-19 NASB

¹⁷ Then to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; ¹⁹ by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 3:23-24 NASB*

²³ ... therefore the LORD God **sent him out from the garden of Eden**, to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So **he banished the man out**; and **at the east** of the garden of Eden he stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Genesis 4:14-16 NASB*

¹⁴ “Behold, you have **banished** me this day from the face of the ground; and **from your face** I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth” ... ¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, **east of Eden**.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

City De-Creation Tropes

Isaiah 34:10-15 NASB

¹⁰ It will not be quenched night or day;
its smoke will go up forever.
From generation to generation it will be desolate;
none will pass through it forever and ever.

¹¹ But pelican and hedgehog will possess it,
and owl and raven will dwell in it;
and he will stretch over it the line of desolation
and the plumb line of emptiness.

¹² Its nobles—there is no one there
whom they may proclaim king—
and all its princes will be nothing.

¹³ Thorns will come up in its fortified towers,

nettles and thistles in its fortified cities;
it will also be a haunt of jackals
and an abode of ostriches.

¹⁴ The desert creatures will meet with the wolves,
the hairy goat also will cry to its kind;
yes, the night monster will settle there
and will find herself a resting place.

¹⁵ The tree snake will make its nest and lay eggs there,
and it will hatch and gather them under its protection.
Yes, the hawks will be gathered there,
every one with its kind.

Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16: The Scapegoat Goes Into the Desert

Leviticus 16:7-10 NIV*

⁷ Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ⁸ He is to cast lots for the two goats—**one lot for the LORD and the other for Aza'zel**. ⁹ Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the LORD and sacrifice it for a sin offering. ¹⁰ But the goat chosen by lot for **Aza'zel** shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it **into the wilderness for Aza'zel**.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Leviticus 16:20-22 NIV*

²⁰ When Aaron has finished making atonement for the most holy place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. ²¹ He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites— all their sins—and put them on the goat's head. **He shall send the goat away into the wilderness** in the care of someone appointed for the task. ²² The goat will carry on itself all their sins **to a remote place (lit. "a land that is cut off"); and the man shall release it into the wilderness**.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

New Creation as Wilderness Transformed Into Gardens

Isaiah 41:17-20 NIV

¹⁷ The poor and needy search for water, but there is none;
their tongues are parched with thirst.
But I the LORD will answer them;
I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

¹⁸ I will make rivers flow on barren heights,
and springs within the valleys.
I will turn the desert into pools of water,
and the parched ground into springs.

¹⁹ I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia,

the myrtle and the olive.
I will set junipers in the wasteland,
the fir and the cypress together,
²⁰ so that people may see and know,
may consider and understand,
that the hand of the LORD has done this,
that the Holy One of Israel has created it.

Other Occurrences of the Wilderness Pattern

- Summary of Psalms passage (Ps. 107:33-37)
- Jesus tested and victorious in the wilderness (Matt. 4)
- Demons and the wilderness (Luke 8:29)
- The harlot on the dragon in the wilderness (Rev. 17:3)

Sheol, the Watery Abyss, and the Pit

Recall that under the land was the abysmal waters, darkness, and death.

Psalm 24:1-2 NIV*

¹ **The land** is the LORD'S, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
² for he founded it **on the seas**
and established it **on the waters**.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalm 69:1-2, 15 NASB*

¹ Save me, O God,
for **the waters** have threatened my life.
² I have sunk in **deep mire**, and there is no foothold;
I have come into **deep waters**, and a flood overflows me.
¹⁵ May **the flood of water** not overflow me
nor **the deep** swallow me up,
nor **the pit** shut its mouth on me.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalm 88:3-7 NASB*

³ For my soul has had enough troubles,
and my life has drawn near to **Sheol**.
⁴ I am reckoned among those who go down to the **pit**;
I have become like a man without strength,
⁵ forsaken among the **dead**,
like the slain who lie in the **grave**,

whom you remember no more,
and they are cut off from your hand.

⁶ You have put me in the lowest **pit**,
in dark places, in the **depths**.

⁷ ... and you have afflicted me with all your **waves**.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalm 18:4-5 NASB*

⁴ The **cords of death** encompassed me,
and the **torrents of ungodliness** terrified me.

⁵ The cords of **Sheol** surrounded me;
the snares of **death** confronted me.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalm 115:16-17 NASB*

¹⁶ The heavens are the heavens of the LORD,
But the **earth** he has given to the sons of men.

¹⁷ The **dead** do not praise the LORD,
Nor do any who go down into silence.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

In the Bible, *Sheol* is the realm of the dead.

- "Below" (Deut. 32:22; Ps. 86:13; Job 11:8; Prov. 9:18)
- "The pit" (Jon. 2:6; Ps. 40:2; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 32:23)
- "The depths of the land" (Ps. 71:20)
- Associated with dirt and worms (Job 17:16; Isa. 14:11)
- The cosmological opposite of the skies (Job 11:8; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2)

Psalm 139:7-9 NASB*

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to **heaven**, you are there;
if I make my bed in **Sheol**, behold, you are there.

⁹ If I take to the edges/wings of the dawn,
if I dwell in the end of **the sea** ...

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Metaphors Associated with Sheol

- Darkness, the pre-creation state of Genesis 1 (Job 17:21; Ps. 88:2-6, 10-12; Lam. 3:6)
- Locked with gates and bars (Jon. 2:6; Isa. 38:10)
- Half-sleep and weakness (Isa. 14:10; Ps. 94:17, 115:17; Ezek. 32:21; Eccl. 9:5-6)

- The home of defeated kings of old (Isa. 14:9-15)
- Home of the wicked (Ps. 9:17, 31:17, 49:14, 141:7; Job 24:19; Prov. 5:5, 7:27, 9:18)
- From it the righteous await redemption (Ps. 14, 30:3, 40:2, 71:20, 86:13, 88:6)

Psalm 9:17-18 NIV*

¹⁷ The wicked **go down to Sheol**,
all the nations that forget God.

¹⁸ But God will never forget the needy;
the hope of the afflicted will never perish.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalm 31:14-17 NIV*

¹⁴ But I trust in you, LORD;
I say, "You are my God."

¹⁵ My times are in your hands;
deliver me from the hands of my enemies,
from those who pursue me.

¹⁶ Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love.

¹⁷ Let me not be put to shame, LORD,
for I have cried out to you;
but **let the wicked be put to shame
and be silent in Sheol.**

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalm 49:12-15 NIV*

¹² People, despite their wealth, do not endure;
they are like the beasts that perish.

¹³ This is the fate of those who trust in themselves,
and of their followers, who approve their sayings.

¹⁴ They are like sheep and are destined to die;
death will be their shepherd,
but the upright will rule over them in the morning.
Their forms will decay in the grave,
far from their princely mansions.

¹⁵ But God will redeem me from **Sheol**;
he will surely take me to himself.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalm 71:19-21 NIV

¹⁹ Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens,
you who have done great things.

Who is like you, God?

²⁰ Though you have made me see troubles,
many and bitter,
you will restore my life again;
from the depths of the earth
you will again bring me up.

²¹ You will increase my honor
and comfort me once more.

Other examples of restoration from exile as resurrection include [Hosea 6:1-3](#) and [Ezekiel 37:1-14](#).

The Heavens/Skies Above

God is depicted as dwelling above the heavens. This spatial image makes clear that the divine realm is transcendent and above all, a fitting place for God's divine throne.

Psalm 11:4 NIV

The LORD is in **his holy temple**;
the LORD is on his **heavenly throne**.
He observes everyone on earth;
his eyes examine them.

Isaiah 66:1-2 NIV

¹ This is what the LORD says:
**"Heaven is my throne,
and the land is my footstool.**
Where is the house you will build for me?
Where will my resting place be?
² Has not my hand made all these things,
and so they came into being?"
declares the LORD.

Reflection Question

How is the word "heaven(s)" used today, and how does this compare with the biblical use of "heavens"?

Session 24: Heaven and Earth United in the Temple

Key Takeaways

- God consistently brings the heavenly reality into the earthly reality. We see this with Eden, Babylon, Moses on Mount Sinai, Jacob's dream, the tabernacle, and the temple.
- Ultimately, this occurs in Jesus, the true human made in God's image, who "dwelt (literally "tabernacled") among us" (John 1:14) like God's glory in the tabernacle.

The Many Meanings of "Heaven" in the Bible

Given the reality of the waters above the heavens (see "The Waters Above and Below" notes in session 16), the Hebrew word "heavens" (*shamayim* / שמים) can be used in three distinct ways within biblical cosmic geography.

"Heavens" as the Sky-Dome That Divides the Cosmic Waters Above and Below

Genesis 1:6-8 NRSV*

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ So God made the dome, and separated the waters which were below the dome from the waters which were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ **God called the dome "heavens."** And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

"Heavens" as the Landward Side of the Sky-Dome That Is Visible to Us and Accessible to the Birds

Genesis 1:20 ESV*

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarming living creatures, and birds that fly over the land against the surface of the dome of the heavens."

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalms 8:8a NASB

... the birds of the heavens ...

See also [Psalm 79:2](#)

"Heavens" as God's Divine Throne Above the Sky-Dome

Psalm 2:4 NIV

The one enthroned in the heavens ...

Psalm 11:4 NIV

The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD is on his heavenly throne.
He observes everyone on earth;
his eyes examine them.

Heaven, the Temple, and Mount Zion

The heavenly temple is God's transcendent dwelling, and people glimpse it when they encounter God in places where Heaven and Earth overlap.

Genesis 28:10-17 NASB

¹⁰ Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. ¹² He had a dream, and behold, **a stairway/ramp was set on the land with its top reaching to the skies; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.** ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac ..." ¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely **the LORD is in this place**, and I did not know it." ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than **the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.**"

Exodus 24:9-13 NASB

⁹ Then Moses went up [to Mount Sinai] with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel; and under his feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. ¹¹ Yet he did not stretch out his hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank. ¹² Now the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction." ¹³ So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.

Exodus 24:15-25:9 NASB

¹⁵ Then **Moses went up to the mountain**, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ **The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day he called to Moses from the midst of the cloud.** ¹⁷ And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. ¹⁸ **Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain;** and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights. ¹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying ... ⁸ "Let them construct a sanctuary for me, that I may dwell among them. ⁹ **According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle** and the pattern of all its furniture, **just so you shall construct it.**"

The heavenly temple is God’s transcendent dwelling, and people get glimpses of it when they encounter God in places where Heaven and Earth overlap. The worldview in these stories shows us the heavenly and earthly realms are not completely separate because they overlap at key places and times. We might say these are moments of “Heaven on Earth.” Notice that both of these stories are about the foundation of sacred spaces: Jacob makes a temple in Bethel, and Moses models the tabernacle after the heavenly temple.

In this worldview, Israel’s tabernacle and temple are a micro-cosmos of all creation, the place where Heaven and Earth are one. This explains why these sacred spaces and the stories of their creation are loaded with cosmic imagery and symbolism.

Creation in Genesis 1	The Tabernacle in Exodus 25-31, 35-40	The Temple in 1 Kings 6-8
Created by the Spirit of God (רוח אלהים) [Gen. 1:2]	Created by Bezalel of Judah, who is “filled with the Spirit of God, wisdom and understanding” (רוח אלהים) [Exod. 31:3; 35:30-31]	Created by Hiram of Tyre, who is “filled with wisdom and understanding” [1 Kgs. 7:13-14]
Creation is the product of seven divine speech acts in Genesis 1. Seven days open with divine command: “And God said ...” Day 1 - Gen. 1:5 Day 2 - Gen. 1:8 Day 3 - Gen. 1:13 Day 4 - Gen. 1:19 Day 5 - Gen. 1:23 Day 6 - Gen. 1:31 Day 7 - Gen. 2:1-3 Sabbath	Tabernacle instructions come in seven divine speeches. Seven speeches open with divine command: “And YHWH spoke to Moses ...” Speech 1 - Exod. 25:1 Speech 2 - Exod. 30:11 Speech 3 - Exod. 30:17 Speech 4 - Exod. 30:22 Speech 5 - Exod. 30:34 Speech 6 - Exod. 31:1 Speech 7 - Exod. 31:12 Sabbath Command	The temple is dedicated with seven petitions by Solomon, leading to a seven-day feast. Petition 1 - 1 Kgs. 8:31-32 Petition 2 - 1 Kgs. 8:33-34 Petition 3 - 1 Kgs. 8:35-37a Petition 4 - 1 Kgs. 8:37b-40 Petition 5 - 1 Kgs. 8:41-43 Petition 6 - 1 Kgs. 8:44-45 Petition 7 - 1 Kgs. 8:46-53 Seven-day feasts
“and the skies and the land were completed (כלה)” [Gen. 2:1]	“and Moses completed (כלה) the work (מלאכה)” [Exod. 40:33]	“and Solomon built the temple and he finished (כלה) it” [1 Kgs. 6:14]
“and God rested (שבת) on the seventh day ...”	“and the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of YHWH filled the tent.” [Exod. 40:34]	“and the cloud filled the house of Yahweh” [1 Kgs. 8:10-11]
<i>Comparing Creation, the Tabernacle, and the Temple. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).</i>		

The three-tiered universe in Genesis 1 (skies-land-sea) directly corresponds to the three-tiered geography of Eden in Genesis 2-3. This three-tiered design is symbolically recalled in the design of ancient temples, and it

specifically aligns with symbolic features of Israel's temple.

Tabernacle / Temple	Cosmic Geography in Genesis 1:1-2:3	Cosmic Geography in Genesis 2:4-3:24
Holy of holies	Heaven	The middle of the garden
Holy place - Menorah = tree - Cherubim = animals - Priests = humans	The land - Fruit trees - Animals 'adam	The garden in Eden
Courtyard Bronze sea (1 Kgs. 8:23)	The waters	The land outside the garden
<i>The Tabernacle or Temple Related to Cosmic Geography.</i> Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).		

“The function of these correspondences is to underscore the depiction of the sanctuary as a world, that is, an ordered, supportive, and obedient environment, and the depiction of the world as a sanctuary, that is, a place in which the reign of God is visible and unchallenged, and his holiness is palpable, unthreatened, and pervasive. ... The Temple was conceived as a microcosm, a miniature world. But it is equally the case that in Israel, the world, or I should say, the ideal world ... was conceived as a macro-temple, the palace of God which is permeated with his presence and in which all is aligned with his will.”

Levenson, Jon (1994). [Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence](#). Princeton University Press. 86.

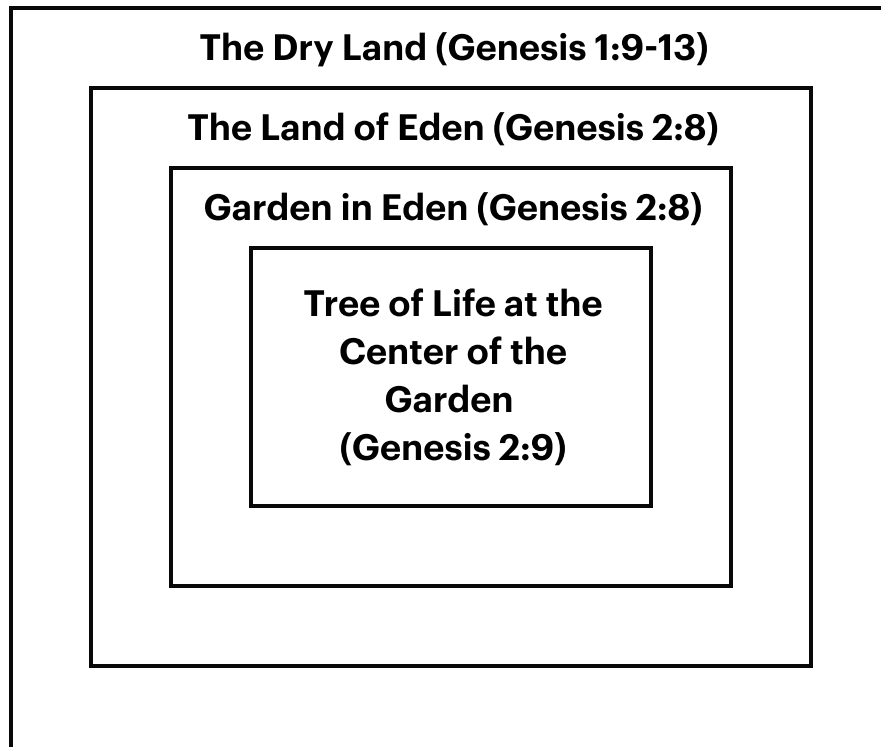
“The Hebrew Bible is replete with descriptions of creation as a tabernacle which God has pitched ([Ps. 104](#); [Job 9:8](#); [Isa. 40:22](#)), or a house that God has established (with pillars, windows, and doors: [Job 26:11](#); [Gen. 7:11](#); [Ps. 78:24](#)). Consequently, the temple of Zion, as a sanctuary that God has established, becomes a microcosmic metaphor for creation itself. This finds explicit expression in Psalm 78:69.”

Gage, W.A. (2001). [The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology](#). Wipf and Stock Publishers. 54.

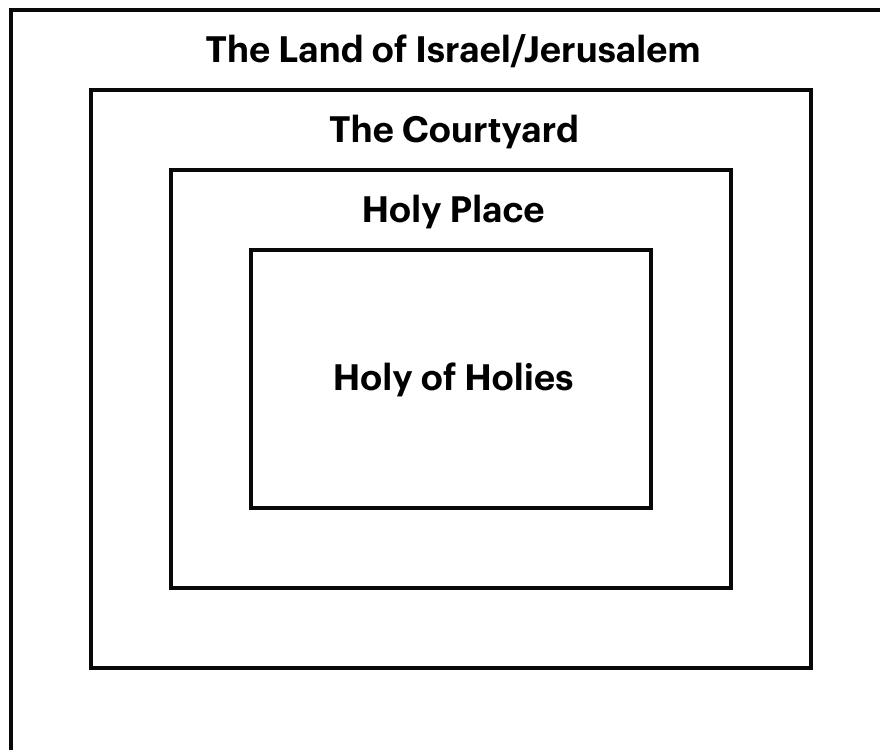
Psalm 78:68-69 NASB

68 But chose the tribe of Judah,
 Mount Zion which he loved.
 69 And **he built his sanctuary** like the heights,
 Like **the land which he has founded** forever.

The geography of Eden within the dry land of Genesis 2-3 depicts a three-part topography. This conception of the garden of Eden on the dry land provides a symbolic template for Israel's tabernacle temple, especially as described in Ezekiel's ideal/restored temple (Ezek. 40-48).



Three-Part Eden Geography Diagram. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Adam to Noah (2020).



Three-Part Tabernacle Layout. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Adam to Noah (2020).

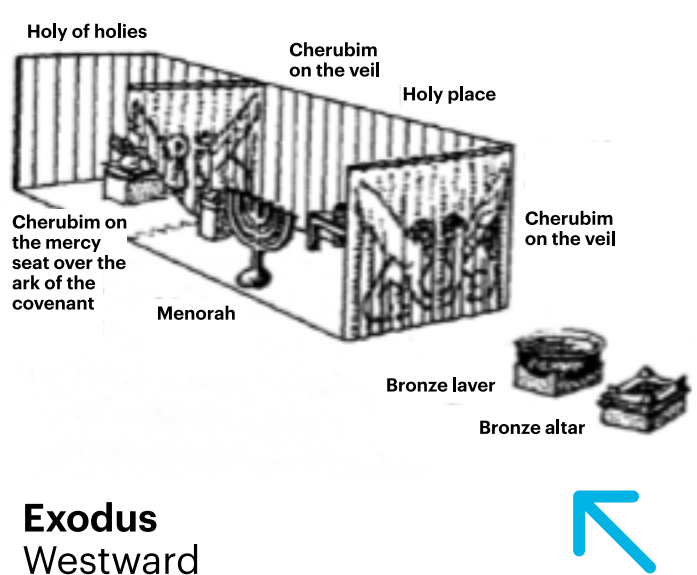
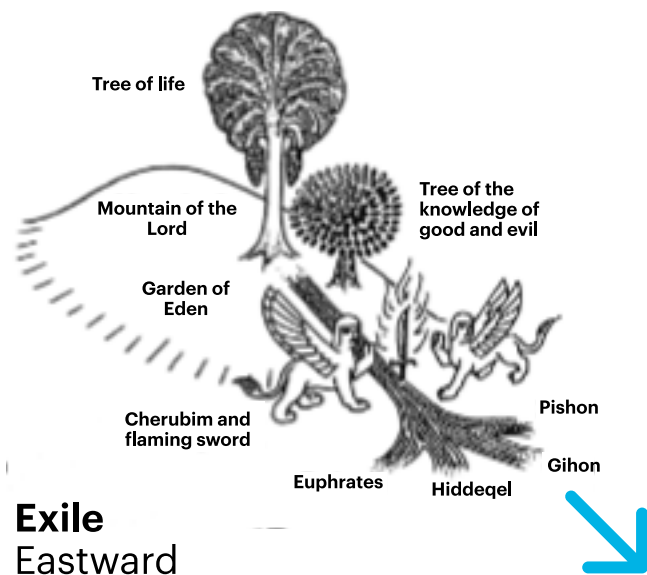


Image adapted from Morales, Michael L. (2015). *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*. IVP Academic.

Adapted from Morales, Michael L. (2015). *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*. IVP Academic. By BibleProject for Classroom: Adam to Noah (2020).

"In order to understand how the temple functioned we must first look at how those who worshipped there understood space and time. Modern ideas of space and time are very different, and if we are not aware of this, everything about the temple seems strange and almost ridiculous. ... We have to try and stand where ancient worshippers stood, think as they thought, and look where they looked, and perhaps we will glimpse what they saw. ... Our experience of the material world is made possible by our perception of the three dimensions of space ... and by the dimension of time. The [biblical] world envisages another manner of being, a dimension in which there is neither spatial limitation nor time in our sense, but one which shares with our world the forces of love, hate, obedience, and rebellion. This other world is often called 'Eternity,' which does not mean an unbelievably long span of time, but rather an existence without time. ... It lies outside our experience of time, and actually underlies in its entirety every perception we have of time. It could perhaps be called a belief in certain basic principles on which the world was based, principles which could be compared to our 'laws' of science. ... In the same way, eternal space and time were present in their entirety in the temple, so that a sacred space of some three hundred square meters could represent the entire world. ... The Hebrew word for this mode of representation is *mashal* (משל), translated as "parable." [In this worldview] a story or vision of the heavenly world could correspond or represent a situation on earth. ...

The temple in Jerusalem was ... not just a highly decorated building, but rather a place where the eternal and earthly were one. The decorations represented the heavenly world, but it was more than just a representation. The temple actually was the heavenly world. ... [This is why] it is not always possible to know whether the setting of a biblical story [like [Isaiah 6](#)] is the earthly temple or the heavenly court of the Holy One. Whereas we always want to separate heaven and earth, the ancient biblical authors did not. The rituals of the temple were performed on earth, but were part of an eternal heavenly reality."

Baker, Margaret (2008). [*The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem*](#). Sheffield Phoenix Press Ltd. 58-61.

The Complex Portrait of Heaven as "Above" and "Within" and "Without"

While the dominant imagery of the heavens is above the sky, there are other texts about God's presence that use a totally different spatial scheme.

God's Presence Is Within the Sacred Space (Tabernacle or Temple)

Exodus 29:42-45 NIV

⁴² ... at the entrance to the **tent of meeting**, before the LORD. **There I will meet you** and speak to you; ⁴³ there also I will meet with the Israelites, and **the place will be consecrated by my glory**. ⁴⁴ So I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. ⁴⁵ Then **I will dwell among the Israelites** and be their God.

Numbers 7:89 NASB

Now when **Moses went into the tent of meeting** to speak with him, he heard **the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat** that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim, so he

spoke to him.

Creation Is God's Cosmic Temple

Psalms 139:7-12 NIV

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Jeremiah 23:23-24 NIV

²³ "Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD,
"and not a God far away?"
²⁴ Who can hide in secret places
so that I cannot see them?" declares the LORD.
"Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.

Acts 17:24-28 NIV

²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, **he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.** ²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though **he is not far from any one of us.** ²⁸ **"For in him we live and move and have our being."** As some of your own poets have said, "We are his offspring."

God's Presence Transcends the Heavens Into the Hyper-Heavens

1 Kings 8:10-13, 27 NIV

¹⁰ When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, **the cloud filled the temple of the LORD.** ¹¹ And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for **the glory of the LORD filled his temple.** ¹² Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud; ¹³ I have indeed built a **magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever.**" ... ²⁷ **"But will God really dwell on the land? The heavens, even the heavens of the heavens cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"**

Notice the paradox presented by God's localized presence in the temple. It is a building "on the land" that hosts a special manifestation of the divine presence. But at the same time, Solomon acknowledges that the entire world is not sufficient to host the immensity of God's presence, and neither are the heavens or the heavens of the heavens!

This phrase, "the heavens of the heavens" cracks open the symbolic nature of heaven language because even the heavens that we know are only the outer layer, so to speak, of the ultimate heavenly realm that lies beyond our detection and experience.

Some biblical authors refer to these ultimate heavens of the divine realm when they experience God's presence in visions, dreams, and apocalypses.

2 Corinthians 12:1-4 NASB*

¹ Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ² **I know a man in the Messiah who fourteen years ago**—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—**such a man was caught up to the third heaven.** ³ And I know how such a man—**whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know**, God knows—⁴ **was caught up into Paradise** and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

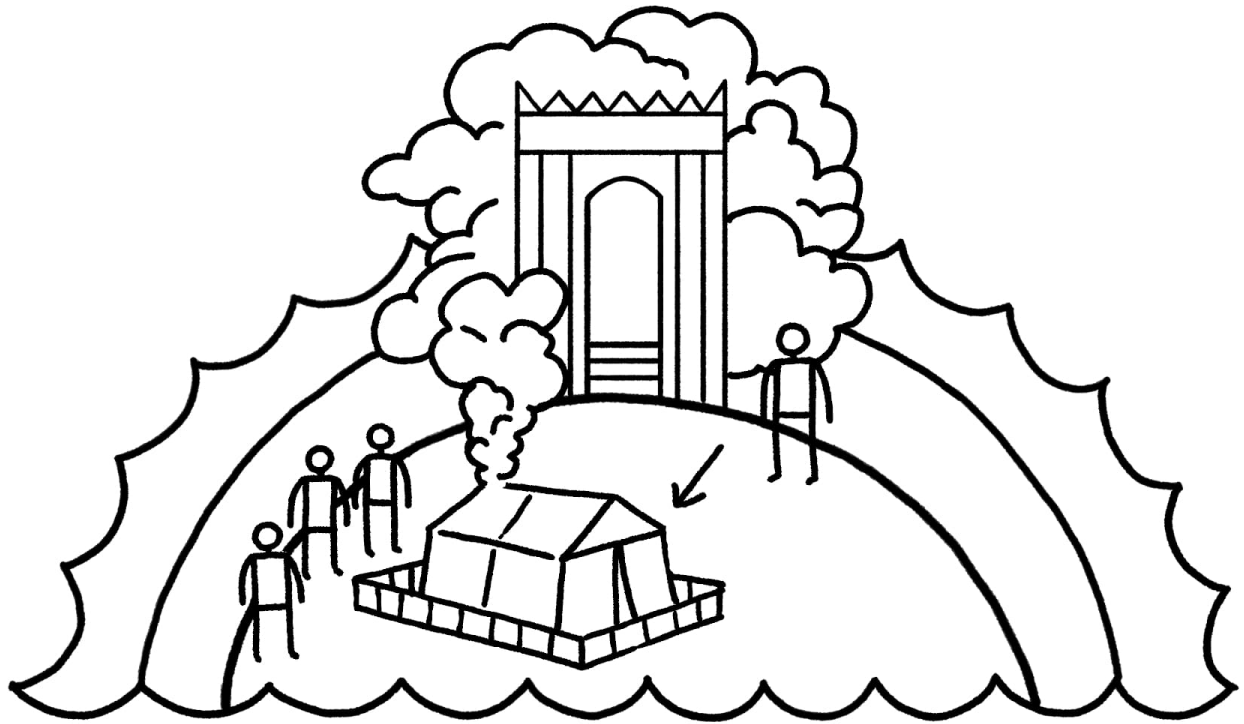
Isaiah 6:1-4 NASB

¹ In the year of King Uzziah's death **I saw Yahweh sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of his robe filling the temple.** ² Seraphim stood above him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, **The whole earth is full of his glory.**"

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

Revelation 4:1-2, 6 NASB

¹ After these things I looked, and behold, **a door standing open in Heaven**, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, **a throne was standing in Heaven**, and One sitting on the throne. ... ⁶ and **before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal**; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.



The Tabernacle/Temple as God's Space. Illustration created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

Reflection Question

Where in the biblical story do you see Heaven and Earth merging?

Session 25: Reflections on Heaven Coming to Earth

Key Takeaways

- The cosmic mountain, Eden, the temple, and the tabernacle were all symbols pointing toward an ultimate reality. Jesus, in human form, claims to be this ultimate reality.
- Heaven is the ultimate cause and source of all life, but it is invisible and inaccessible unless we have our imaginations transformed.

Reflections on Heaven and Earth

“Christians have a long tradition of adjusting and translating from biblical to contemporary cosmologies, often without realizing it. In the history of Christianity, the ancient Israelite cosmology gave way to the Ptolemaic cosmology, which dominated Christian thought for centuries. [Ptolemaic cosmology was earth-centric but envisioned the earth as a globe.] Most Christians did not even notice that a shift had taken place. And once Copernican cosmology finally supplanted the Ptolemaic, Christians had little trouble adapting to that either ... Remember, in the biblical texts, the symbolic meaning of the image of Heaven above had always been the most important thing about such language. Height or depth spoke of relative importance and rank ... and for the biblical authors, the idea of Heaven being 'above' the rest of creation meant that Heaven was the most important dimension of the created world, because from that high and exalted place God ruled over all things. Interpreting the language of the high Heaven non-geographically does not threaten the heart of this biblical teaching at all—the truth Scripture pointed to was always that Heaven is invisible and inaccessible to humans, and yet is at the heart of creation because divine life and rule flow from it. Whether or not Heaven is also literally above the sky is incidental to the truth that Scripture points towards.”

Parry, Robin A. (2014). [*The Biblical Cosmos: A Pilgrim's Guide to the Weird and Wonderful World of the Bible*](#). Wipf and Stock Publishers. 180-181.



This session has no other notes

Reflection Question

This session concludes our tour through the biblical cosmos—the skies, land, light, *raqia'*, waters above, seas, rivers, dry land, and the heavens. Which idea so far has been the most transformative for you?

Session 26: The Rulers Above

Key Takeaways

- The sun, moon, and stars of Genesis 1 are heavenly beings.
- Heavenly beings are called “signs” (Gen. 1:14) because they are symbols of the true source of light.
- Heavenly beings form God’s divine council, his staff team who are under his divine command.
- The word “angel” in the New Testament broadly means “heavenly being,” and these beings often look like people.

The Host of Heaven

In Genesis 1, the “host of heaven” are set in the “sky-dome” (Gen. 1:14-18). They are the inhabitants of the divine throne room above the heavens. This helps us understand why the biblical authors consistently use the language of stars to describe spiritual beings. They inhabit the heavenly realm and have authority under God. The host of heaven are the staff team of God’s heavenly throne.

Psalm 103:19-21 NIV*

¹⁹ The LORD has established his **throne in heaven**,
and his kingdom rules over all.

²⁰ Praise the LORD, you his **angels**,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
who obey his word.

²¹ Praise the LORD, all his **hosts of heaven**,
you his servants who do his will.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

1 Kings 22:19 NASB*

Micaiah said, “Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the **hosts of heaven** standing by him on his right and on his left.”

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalm 148:1b-3 NIV*

¹ Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.

² Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his **heavenly hosts**.

³ Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you **shining stars**.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Luke 2:9, 13 NASB

⁹ And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ... ¹³ And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the host of the heavens praising God ...

Observations on the Phrase “Host of Heaven”

The lists of heavenly creatures in [Psalms 103](#) and [148](#) are in the literary form of Hebrew parallelism, paired lines that describe the same things from different points of view. The heavenly hosts are the sun, moon, and stars.

Notice how in [Luke 2](#), the angel is associated with the light of God’s glory, and these two are associated with the host of heavens, who are depicted as God’s heavenly choir (as they are in [Job 38:7](#) and [Isa. 6:1-3](#)).

The Sons of God

Job 38:4-5, 7 NASB*

⁴ Where were you when I laid the foundations of the land?
Tell me if you have understanding.
⁵ Who set its measurements? Since you know.
Or who stretched a measuring line over it? ...
⁷ When the **stars of the morning** sang together
and all **the sons of God** shouted aloud.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Psalms 89:5-8 NASB*

⁵ The heavens will praise your wonders, O LORD;
your faithfulness also in **the assembly of the holy ones**.
⁶ For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD?
Who among **the sons of God** is like the LORD,
⁷ a God greatly feared in **the council of the holy ones**,
and awesome above all those who are around him?
⁸ O LORD God of hosts, who is like you, O mighty LORD?
Your faithfulness also surrounds you.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

These are parallel lines in Hebrew, which means that the stars and the sons of God are not separate entities but the same creature described from two perspectives.

- Day four of creation delegates the “host of heaven” as authorities (Gen. 1:14-19)

- Stars as signs of spiritual beings (Job 38:4-7)
- Stars are “in the sky-dome” and images of the divine council
- Passages about God among the council/hosts (Ps. 82:1, 89:5-7; Isa. 24:21-23; Ps. 148:1-6)

Throughout the Story of Israel, the People Continually Worship the Stars as Deities

Deuteronomy 4:19 ESV*

And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven and when you see **the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven**, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Amos 5:25-27 ESV*

²⁵ “Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

²⁶ You shall take up Sikkuth your king, and Kiyyun **your star-god—your images that you made for yourselves**, ²⁷ and I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Zephaniah 1:4-5 NASB*

⁴ I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests, ⁵ **those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens**, those who bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom ...

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Book Recommendation

[*Angels: What the Bible Really Says About God's Heavenly Host*](#) by Michael S. Heiser.

Reflection Question

In this session on heavenly beings, what ideas are most significant for you?



Module 6: Humans and Their Role in the Cosmos

SESSIONS 27-29

Explore the identity and role of humanity in the biblical picture of the cosmos.

Session 27: The Rulers Below

Key Takeaways

- Humans are meant to image or mirror God (Gen. 1:26-27).
- Humans image God by their unity and diversity as one humanity made of male and female (Gen. 1:26-27).
- God is dianthropic—he desires and designs to work through (Grk. *dia*) human beings (Grk. *anthropos*). Humans image God by ruling, or cultivating, creation as partners with God.
- God imparts a huge amount of dignity to humanity by appointing them to rule as his partners.

Humanity in Genesis 1 (Anthropology)

Within the framework of the six days of Genesis 1, the appointment of humanity as God's image is clearly the climactic act of God's work because it's saved for last. The key moment in Genesis 1:26-28 is designed as a literary symmetry.

Day 6: God Delegates Earthly Rulers

26 **And God said,**
"Let us **make human**
in our image,
according to our likeness;
and let them **rule**
over the fish of the sea
and over the birds of the sky
and over the cattle
and over all the land
and over every creeper that creeps on the land ."

27 **And God created human** in his image,
in the image of God he **created him**;
male and female he **created them** .

28 **And God blessed them,**
"Be fruitful and multiply,
and fill the land,
and **subdue** it;
and **rule**

over the fish of the sea
and over the birds of the sky
and over every living creature that creeps on the land."

Genesis 1-2:3. Translation and Literary Design by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2020).

Observations

The literary symmetries invite the reader to compare the corresponding sections. The "image of God" statements are immediately followed by sections that unpack the meaning and significance of the divine image.

1. "And Let Them Rule Over ..."

In Hebrew grammar and syntax, when you have a verb of command or invitation (called a "jussive") followed by a clause that also has a jussive ("and let them rule ..."), it is meant to be understood as a purpose statement: "Let us make human in our image ... in order that they may rule ..."

For this point, see Thomas Lambdin's book *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew (1971 edition)*, section 107c.

2. "Male and Female" = "In His Image"

Notice in Genesis 1:27 how the three-line poem has three key elements in each line.

Parallelism of Genesis 1:27

Line 1	God created	human	in his image
Line 2	He created	him	in the image of God
Line 3	He created	them	male and female

Parallelism of Genesis 1:27. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

This poetic parallelism makes clear that the divine image is constituted in some crucial way by the duality of gender. Somehow God is imaged in a special way through the unity of humanity as one species that consists of two distinct others. Humanity is one and more than one at the same time, and this offers an important image of God's divine identity.

3. The Preposition "In"

The preposition "in" (Heb. *be-/ב*) attached to "his image" means "in the place of" or "instead of" (called *beth pretii*, see *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 102p). Therefore, this verse can be read as "God created human in the place of his image/as his image."

Reflection Question

What does it say about God that he creates humans in his image to rule with him?

Session 28: Humans as the Image, or Idol, of God

Key Takeaways

- The Hebrew word for “image” is *tselem*, which literally means “idol.” In the ancient world, idols were said to embody a deity or a king.
- Idols can serve a priestly function by mediating for the deity they embody, or they can serve a royal function by representing the king. Human images do both as a kingdom of priests for the true King Yahweh (Exod. 19:4-6).
- God commands humans not to make idols because humans are the idol of God.

The Image of God = God’s Idol Statue in His Cosmic Temple

The words “image” (Heb. *tselem* / צֶלֶם) and “likeness” (Heb. *demut* / דְּמוּת) are most commonly used to refer to physical statues of stone or wood, and these words are usually translated “idol” or “statue.” Let’s look at some examples.

Numbers 33:51-52 NASB*

⁵¹ Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, “When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ⁵² then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten **images** and demolish all their high places.”

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

2 Kings 11:18 NASB

All the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces thoroughly ...

“Genesis 1:26 can only be understood against the background of an ancient Yahweh statue ... humanity is regarded as the statue of God ... The terms 'image' and 'likeness' are used as synonyms denoting a 'statue.' Humans were thus created to be the living statues of the deity ... There was no need of a divine image because humans represented Yahweh as a statue would have done.”

Niehr, Herbert (1997). *In Search of YHWH’s Cult Statue in the First Temple*. Peeters Publishers. 93-94.

"To appreciate the full force of this image-of-God-in-humanity theology, we must have in mind the role of idols in ancient Near Eastern religion ... where an idol is set up to be the real presence of the god. Because the god is really believed to inhabit the image, the image is the god, and its proper care and veneration guarantees the god's benefits and protection for the worshipping community ... With this understanding of divine images assumed, [Genesis 1] has a sharply focused theological anthropology: Humanity is to be the eyes, ears, mouth, being, and action of the creator God within his creation ... This point gives the biblical prohibition of idolatry its strongest possible rationale: for humans to make an idol is foolish because it fails to appreciate that according to the original order of creation, it is humanity that functions in relation to God as do the idols in relation to their gods."

Fletcher-Louis, Crispin (2004). "God's Image, His Cosmic Temple, and the High Priest: Towards an Historical and Theological Account of the Incarnation." *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*. Paternoster. 83-84.

"[T]his unifying image in humankind has a sacramental as well as an essentially corporal function: Adam beings are animate icons ... the peculiar purpose for their creation is "theophani": to represent or mediate the sovereign presence of the deity within the central nave of the cosmic temple, just as cult-images were supposed to do in conventional sanctuaries. [This means that] humanity is an inherently ambivalent species, whose ... existence blurs, by design, the otherwise sharp distinction between creator and creation."

McBride, Sean Dean (2000). "Divine Protocol: Genesis 1:1-2:3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch." *God Who Creates*. Eerdmans. 16-17.

The Image of God = Humanity as God's Royal Image

As noted above, the purpose of humanity's appointment as the divine image is royal rule over creation. In Genesis 1, it is clear that God alone has the unique mastery and power over the chaotic nothingness, and he alone can speak reality into an ordered existence. But now, humanity is appointed as God's delegated ruler and an embodied physical image of the divine rule.

"Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion, erect an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire where they do not personally appear, so humans are placed on the earth in God's image as God's sovereign emblem."

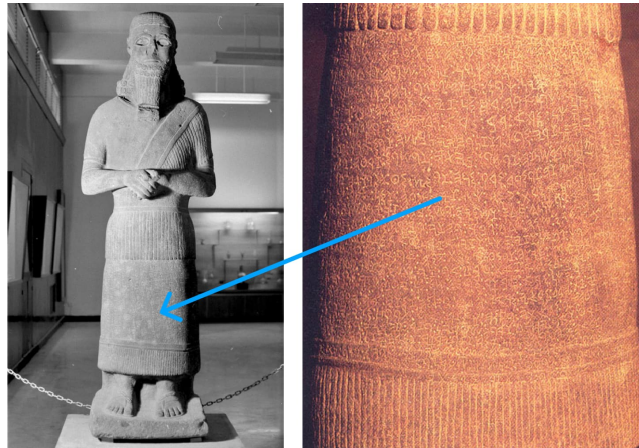
von Rad, Gerhard (1973). [*Genesis: A Commentary \(Old Testament Library\)*](#). John Knox Press. 60.

"[In Genesis 1] the imago Dei refers to human rule, that is, an exercise of power on God's behalf in creation ... This delegation of, or sharing in, God's rule suggests the image is "representative," designating the responsible office and task entrusted to humanity in administering the earthly realm on God's behalf ... [However] the meaning of "rule" goes well beyond our contemporary hermeneutical preconceptions. The royal metaphor ... integrally includes wisdom and artful construction. The God who rules creation by his authoritative word is also the supreme artisan who constructs a complex and habitable cosmic structure ... The humans are called to imitate or continue God's own creative activity by populating and organizing the remaining unformed and unfilled earth. God has, in other words, started the process of forming and filling, which humans, as God's earthly delegates, are to continue."

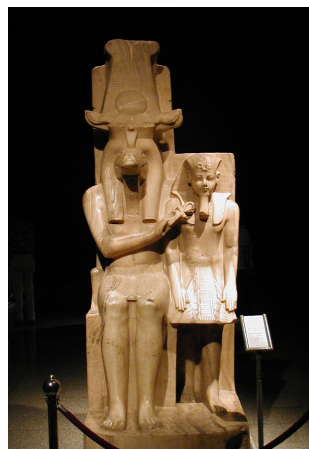
Middleton, J. Richard (2005). [The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1](#). Baker Academic. 88-89.

Ancient Near Eastern Background of Royal Representative Images

The statue of the Syrian king Hadad-iti (9th century B.C.E.) is dedicated to Adad (= Baal), the patron storm god of Syria, and described in precisely the language of Genesis 1:26. The statue of the king embodies and represents Adad's authority.



Left: Pitard, Wayne (2018). [Vici](#). Right: [The BAS Library](#) (1991)



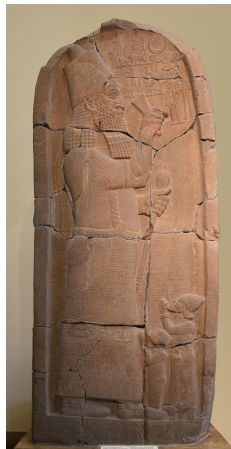
Ducher, Gerard (2006). [Wikimedia Commons](#)

- In Egyptian royal ideology, the Pharaoh was called “the image of Re” (Re = the sun deity, chief of the Egyptian pantheon).
- Pharaoh Ahmose I (1550-1525 B.C.E.) was called “the prince of Re, the child of Qeb, his heir, the image of Re whom he created, the representative, for whom he has set himself on earth.”
- Queen Hatshepsut (1479-1457 B.C.E.) is described as “superb image of Amon, the image of Amon on earth, the image of Amon-Re to eternity, his living monument on earth.”
- Amenhotep II (1427-1400 B.C.E.) was titled “image of Re,” or “image of Horus,” or “holy image of the lord of gods.”
- Amenhotep III (1390-1352 B.C.E.) was called by Amon “my living image, creation of my members, whom Mut bore for me.”

For more examples and discussion, see David J.A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin*, vol. 19.

“Central to this ideology was the divinity of the pharaoh, by which he was set apart from all other human beings ... [T]he central function of the king was his cultic, intermediary function of uniting the earthly and divine realms. The pharaoh was thought, in a fairly strong sense, to be a physical, local, incarnation of the deity, analogous to that of a cult statue or image of a god, which is also such an incarnation ... The king ... was a place where the god manifested himself and was a primary means by which the deity worked on earth.”

Middleton, J. Richard (2005). [The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1](#). Baker Academic. 109-110.



Mortel, Richard (2020). [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Mesopotamian (Assyrian and Babylonian) Examples

A letter from Adad-shumu-usur, the court astrologer in the reign of Assyrian king Esarhaddon (670s B.C.E.) says, “The king, the lord of the world, is the very image of Shamash.”

Another letter from Adad-shumu-usur to Esarhaddon, where he describes both the king and his late father, says, “The father of the king, my lord, was the very image of Bel, and the king, my lord, is likewise the very image of Bel.”

This is discussed in Simo Parpola's *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, letters #196 and #228.



The Trustees of the British Museum (2023). (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) [British Museum](#).

“[In ancient royal ideology,] the king is the image of the god. This widely attested functional similarity between the king and god in Mesopotamia, whereby the king represents the god by virtue of his royal office and is portrayed as acting like the god in specific ways, provides the necessary background for understanding the descriptions of the king as the image of a god ... [This] provides the most plausible set of parallels for interpreting the imago Dei in Genesis 1 ... Humanity is dignified with a status and role ... that is analogous to the status and role of kings in the ancient Near East. Genesis chapter 1 ... thus constitutes a genuine democratization of ancient Near Eastern royal ideology. As imago Dei, humanity is called to be the representative and intermediary of God’s power and blessing on earth.”

Middleton, J. Richard (2005). [The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1](#). Baker Academic. 121.

The Ritual Transformation of the Divine Image

In Mesopotamian culture, statues of the gods underwent rituals called *mîs-pî* (“mouth washing”) and *pîṭ-pî* (“mouth opening”) accompanied by ritual incantations and blessings, in which the deities’ presence became one with the statue.

“These statues, having gone through the purification, charging, and activating rituals, were then effectively considered to be the god ... After the ceremony, the statue which had become a god was no longer referred to as an “image.” Instead, it was referred to by the name of the god or goddess represented. It was clothed, fed, and cleaned on a daily basis, as if it were alive. ... [Through] this ritual transformation, the image did not “stand for” but actually was a manifestation of the subject represented.

The image in ancient Mesopotamia should not be conceptualized as a mere statue or monument, because modern conceptions of portraiture are too often attached to those ideas. The ancient ‘image’ (Hebrew *tselem* / Akkadian *tsalmu*) is not a “replica” ... after the transformation ritual the image becomes an extension or manifestation of the referent.”

Herring, Stephen. (2008). “A ‘Transubstantiated’ Humanity: The Relationship Between Divine Image and the Presence of God in Genesis 1:26-28.” *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 58. Brill. 483, 485, 488-489.

This sheds important light on the two passages about humanity’s divine task in Genesis 1 and 2.

Genesis 1:27-28 NIV*

²⁷ And God created human in his image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ And **God blessed them**, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the land, and subdue it;
and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over living creature that creeps on the
land."

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Genesis 2:7, 15 NASB*

⁷ Then the LORD God **formed** the human of dust from the ground, **and breathed into his nostrils the
breath of life**; and man became a living being. ... ¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the human and put him into
the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

In Genesis 1, God creates and appoints a human image and then pronounces a ritual blessing over the image
as they are commissioned. This is modeled after the transformation rituals of Mesopotamian statues.

In Genesis 2, notice the focus on the transformation of a clay statue ("formed" is a standard Hebrew word for
clay manufacture) into a "living being" by means of divine breath. This is followed by a commission of the
animated statue to work in the priestly precincts of the garden.

This portrait of humans as divine and royal images of Yahweh is precisely the claim of Psalm 8, which is the
product of a sustained meditation on Genesis 1 and 2.

A ¹ O Yahweh, our LORD, how **majestic** is your name in all the land,

B You who have displayed your **splendor** above **the skies** !

C ² From the mouth of infants and nursing babies
You have established strength
because of your adversaries,
to make the enemy and revengeful cease.

B ³ When I consider **your skies, the works of your fingers,**
the moon and the stars, which You have established,

C ⁴ what is human that you remember him,
and the son of human that you care for him?

B

⁵ Yet You have made him a little lower than elohim,
yet with **glory** and **majesty** you have **crowned** him!
⁶ You made him a **ruler** over **the works of your hands** ;
you have put all things under his feet

C

⁷ All sheep and oxen, and beasts of the field,
⁸ The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

A

⁹ O Yahweh, our LORD, how **majestic** is your name in all the land.

Psalm 8. Translation and Literary Design by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

Reflection Question

What is an idol meant to be in the ancient world, and how is humanity to function like an idol, or image, of God?

Session 29: The Image of God in the Storyline of the Bible

Key Takeaways

- Daniel 7 is a meditation on Genesis 1-3, where humans give up their role as embodied divine rulers to an animal. They'd rather trust in themselves than in God. And by doing so, they become like beasts.
- Genesis 3:15 gives us hope in the form of a coming seed, who we learn will be the Messiah or anointed one. In the New Testament, "Christ" means "anointed one." So Jesus is depicted as the true human and image of God, the seed of Genesis 3:15.

The Image of God in the Storyline of the Hebrew Bible

In Genesis 1:26-28, we are told that humanity, male and female together, constitute the royal image of God. God appoints humanity to rule the world on his behalf and receive his blessing as they multiply in a land of abundance.

Genesis 1 is a template for the entire biblical story. This first chapter shows us God's ideal design for his world: royal human partners, the kings and queens of creation, ruling together in an abundant world during the eternal seventh-day rest.

Genesis 2-5 tells us about the first human characters who are given the opportunity to rule together as God's image. Unfortunately, these humans foolishly forfeit their divine roles. They are deceived by a snake and choose to define good and bad on their own terms instead of acting "in the fear of Yahweh."

In Genesis 3:14-15, God says he is going to humiliate the snake ("you will eat dust all the days of your life," Gen. 3:14) and that a "seed of the woman" is going to "strike" the snake's head one day while the snake strikes the heel of the woman's seed (Gen. 3:15).

Genesis 5:1-3 shows us that this promised line of the seed will be carried on through Seth, Adam and Eve's third son.

Genesis 5:1-3 Instructor's Translation

¹ This is the scroll of the generations of 'adam: In the day when God created Adam, in the likeness of God he made him, ² male and female he created them, and he blessed them and he named them 'adam in the day when they were created. ³ And Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, and he became the father of a son **in his own likeness, according to his image**, and named him Seth.

Notice that 'adam's relationship to God is described as "image and likeness," which recalls all of the meaning and significance of Genesis 1:26-28. Now, here in Genesis 5:1-3, Seth is described as his father's image and

likeness on analogy to Adam’s relationship to God.

The analogy illuminates in both directions.

- 1. If Seth is the “son of Adam” and can be called the image of Adam, then ‘adam too can be thought of as the “son of God,” which becomes a synonym for “image of God.”

Bonus: Notice that Luke’s genealogy of Jesus is constructed on this very conviction, tracing Jesus as “son of God” all the way back to Adam as “son of God” (see [Luke 3:23-38](#)).

- 2. Since ‘adam (consisting of male and female) was the image of God called to represent God in the world, Seth and his descendants are also identified with the promise of Genesis 3:14-15. This promise describes a future seed who will subdue the snake, rule the world on God’s behalf, and undo what happened in Genesis 3:1-7.

Bonus: The connection between a future seed of the woman and the victory over the snake is exactly how the apostles came to see Jesus as the victor over death (see [1 John 3:7-8](#)).

These ideas in Genesis 1-5 are the template for later narratives in the Hebrew Bible that show human rulers as new Adams who are given the chance to be images of God, rule the world on God’s behalf, and overcome the forces of animal-like chaos in the world.

The High Priest Is the Image of God: Exodus 25-40

“In Israel’s temple and tabernacle, the role of the cult statue is played by the high priest who is the visible and concrete image of the creator within the temple as microcosm.”

Fletcher-Louis, Crispin (2004). “God’s Image, His Cosmic Temple, and the High Priest: Towards an Historical and Theological Account of the Incarnation.” *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*. Paternoster. 89.

God in Genesis 1	The High Priest in Exodus	Implication
Creation takes place in seven days marked by seven divine acts of speech (Gen. 1:1-2:3).	The tabernacle blueprints are revealed in seven acts of divine speech (Exod. 25-31).	The tabernacle is a micro-cosmos of the world created in Genesis 1.
God’s divine light separates between darkness and light, evening and morning (Gen. 1:3-5).	Aaron is to light the menorah every evening and morning, to create light in the tabernacle (Exod. 27:20-21; 30:7-8).	The priest plays the role of the creator on the cultic stage, recreating God’s work of the first day.
Genesis 1 and the High Priest in Exodus. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2020).		

God in Genesis 1	The High Priest in Exodus	Implication
God introduced “light” (אור) into creation, which is “completed” on the seventh day.	The high priest is ordained in a seven-day ceremony where he wears the golden ephod with the stones of “lights” (אורים) and “completions” (תמים) (Exod. 28:6-30).	The high priest in his radiant clothing is the embodiment of God's light and power to bring complete order to creation.
Genesis 1 and the High Priest in Exodus. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2020).		

Joshua as a New Moses: Joshua 1-12

Joshua is portrayed as a new Moses leading Israel into the Eden-like promised land. He is called to confront the forces of evil in the land and follow God’s wisdom as defined by the Torah.

Joshua 1:1-8 NASB

¹ Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ servant, saying, ² “Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. ³ Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. ⁵ **No one will be able to stand before you** all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the Torah which Moses my servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success/wisdom wherever you go. ⁸ This scroll of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have **success/wisdom.**”

In Joshua 2-8, we see the Jordan, Jericho, and Ai episodes. Joshua leads the Israelites to victory over Jericho by imitating God’s creation strategy from Genesis 1 (six days of work and one day of rest).

Joshua 6:1-20 NASB

¹ Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. ² The LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. ³ You shall **march around the city**, all the men of war **circling the city once. You shall do so for six days.** ⁴ Also seven priests shall carry **seven trumpets** of rams’ horns before the ark; then **on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times**, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. ⁵ It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man

straight ahead.” ...¹² Now Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.¹³ The **seven priests carrying the seven trumpets** of rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew the trumpets; and the armed men went before them and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while they continued to blow the trumpets.¹⁴ Thus **the second day** they marched around the city once and returned to the camp; **they did so for six days.**¹⁵ Then **on the seventh day** they rose early at the dawning of the day and **marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times.**¹⁶ **At the seventh time,** when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.” ...²⁰ So **the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat,** so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city.

Two failure narratives follow right after Joshua’s victory over Jericho. Achan takes forbidden plunder (Josh. 7), and Joshua is deceived by the Gibeonites before overcoming the alliances of kings (Josh. 9-10).

Joshua 9:1-4 NASB

¹ Now it came about when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country and in the lowland and on all the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, heard of it,² that they gathered themselves together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel.³ When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai,⁴ they also **acted craftily** and set out as envoys, and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins worn-out and torn and mended ...

Joshua 9:14-15 NASB

¹⁴ So the men of Israel took some of their provisions, **and did not ask for the counsel of the LORD.**¹⁵ And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them.

Joshua 9:22-25 NASB

²² Then Joshua called for them and spoke to them, saying, “**Why have you deceived us,** saying, ‘We are very far from you,’ when you are living within our land?”²³ **Now therefore, you are cursed,** and you shall never cease being slaves, both hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.”²⁴ So they answered Joshua and said, “Because it was certainly told your servants that the LORD your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; therefore **we feared greatly** for our lives because of you, and have done this thing.”²⁵ Now behold, **we are in your hands; do as it seems good and right in your eyes to do to us.”**

Joshua 10:23-25 NASB

²³ They did so, and brought these five kings out to him from the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.²⁴ When they brought these kings out to Joshua, Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, “**Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.**” So they came near and put their feet on

their necks.²⁵ Joshua then said to them, “**Do not fear or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies with whom you fight.**”

Joshua Is the Template for the “Blessed One” in Psalm 1

The “blessed one” of Psalm 1 is portrayed, like the ideal Joshua in Joshua 1:7-8, as someone who mediates on the Torah day and night, which results in success and prosperity.

Psalm 1:1-6 NASB

¹ How blessed is the man

who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stand in the path of sinners,
nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

² But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and in his law he **meditates** day and night.

³ He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in its season
and its leaf does not wither;
and in whatever he does, he prospers.

⁴ The wicked are not so,
but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

⁶ For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of **the wicked will perish.**

Joshua Parallels God’s Anointed in Psalm 2

Psalm 2 NASB*

¹ Why are the nations in an uproar
and the peoples **meditate** a vain thing?

² The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers take counsel together
against the LORD and against **his anointed**, saying,

³ “Let us tear their fetters apart
and cast away their cords from us!”

⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs,
the Lord scoffs at them.

⁵ Then he will speak to them in his anger
and terrify them in his fury, saying,

⁶ “But as for me, **I have installed my King**
upon Zion, my holy mountain.”

⁷ “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:

he said to me, 'You are **my Son**,
today I have begotten you.

⁸ 'Ask of me, and I will surely give **the nations as your inheritance**,
and the very ends of **the land as your possession**.

⁹ 'You shall break them with a rod of iron,
you shall shatter them like earthenware.'"

¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;
take warning, O judges of the earth.

¹¹ Worship the LORD with reverence
and rejoice with trembling.

¹² Do homage to the Son, that he not become angry, **and you perish in the way**,
for his wrath may soon be kindled.

How blessed are all who take refuge in him!

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

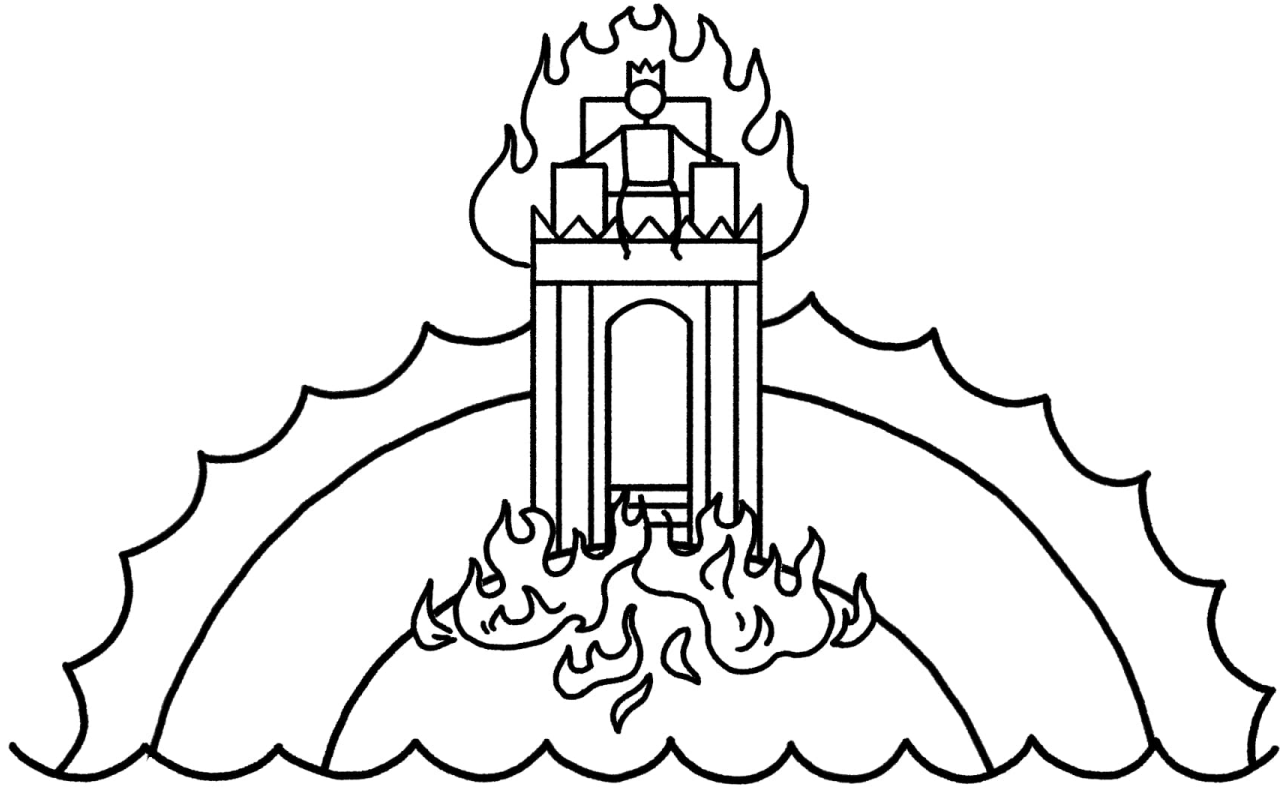
This poem depicts the rebellious nations plotting against Yahweh and his anointed just like the rebellious Canaanite kings were continuously plotting in Joshua 5-12. Joshua's "promised land" here becomes the "inheritance for the nations." The destiny of the nations turns on whether or not they will humble themselves before the anointed son of God. If not, they will "perish in the way" (just like the "way of the wicked" in Ps. 1). But if they "kiss the son" and take refuge in him, they will find God's blessing.

Daniel 7 Depicts "One Like a Son of Man" Who Is Exalted From Earth To Sit Beside God on His Heavenly Throne

In Daniel 1:1-3, we learn that Daniel is of the "royal seed" (lit. "seed of the kingdom"), that is, from the line of David. He is taken into Babylon in the first wave of exiles from Jerusalem. In Daniel 2-7, we have a fully worked out theology of the "image of God" represented by God's royal priesthood who has been exiled to the land of idolatrous royal images.



BibleProject (2016). Overview: Daniel.



The Son of Man in Daniel 9. Illustration created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

Jesus as the Image of God and Son of God

In Luke 3-4, Jesus is depicted as a new Adam, the royal and priestly Son of God.

In Colossians 1-3, Jesus is explicitly called “the image of God.” He is God’s second self, the royal and divine human who is now risen and ruling the cosmos. Notice that the new humanity of Jesus is now available to his people, so they are being renewed in the image of God as well.

Colossians 1:15-20 NIV*

¹⁵ The Son ...

who is the image of the invisible God,
the **firstborn** of all creation.

¹⁶ **For in him all things were created,**
in the heavens and on the earth,

things visible and invisible,
whether thrones or powers
or rulers or authorities—

all things have been created through him and to him.

¹⁷ **And he** is before all things, and **in him** all things hold together.

¹⁸ **And he** is head of the body, the church;

who is the beginning
the **firstborn** from the dead;

so that he himself might come to have first place in everything.

¹⁹ For **in him**, [God] was pleased that all the fullness would dwell

²⁰ and **through him to reconcile all things to himself**,

things on earth or things in heaven,

having made peace through the blood of his cross.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Colossians 3:1-4 NIV*

¹ Therefore, if you have been raised with the Messiah, set your hearts on the things above, where the Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Messiah in God. ⁴ And when the Messiah, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

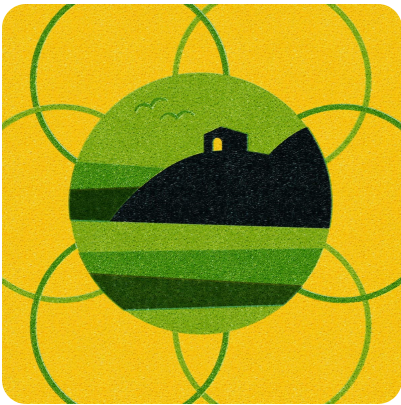
*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Colossians 3:9-11 NASB

⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off **the old humanity** with its practices ¹⁰ and you have put on **the new humanity**, which is being renewed in knowledge **in the image of its Creator**. ¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but the Messiah is all, and he is in all.

Reflection Question

Why is Daniel 7 such a significant chapter for understanding the image of God?



Module 7: Time and Eschatology in Genesis 1

SESSIONS 30-31

Dive into time and eschatology in Genesis 1 and finish the class strong!

Session 30: God Rests on the Seventh Day

Key Takeaways

- “Seven” (*sheva*) and “complete/full” (*sava*) are spelled with the same Hebrew consonants. Seven communicates a sense of fullness or completeness.
- There are two words used to describe God’s Sabbath rest on the seventh day of creation: *shabbat* (Gen. 2:2-3) and *nuakh* (Exod. 20:11). *Shabbat* means rest in the sense of stopping all work. *Nuakh* means rest in the sense of settling and taking up residence.
- When God completes his work and rests on the seventh day of creation, the authors are saying that God’s glorious presence fills the Earth. But he also takes up residence in creation with humanity—Heaven and Earth are truly united in this moment.

Time in Genesis 1 (Eschatology)

The most self-evident design feature of Genesis 1 is its seven-day sequence. The number seven is an organizing principle for the entire chapter from beginning to end.

The opening line of Genesis 1 has seven words, and the central word, untranslated in English, is two Hebrew letters, the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
הָאָרֶץ the land	אֶת and	הַשָּׁמַיִם the skies	אֵל אֵלֹהִים God	בָּרָא he created	בְּרֵאשִׁית In-the- beginning	
א = aleph / ת = tav						
Time in Genesis 1 (Eschatology). Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).						

Genesis 1:1 shows us that the structural design of sentences is meaningful and can convey deeper layers of significance. Here, the number seven is introduced as significant alongside the structural importance of the central word.

This same design structure is at work on the macro-level in Genesis 1: The first, middle, and final days all focus on the theme of time in a coordinated way.

See how the symmetrical emphasis on time in Genesis 1 and the literary design of day four (1:14-19) connect in the table below [adapted from Morales, Michael (2015). *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?* 44.]. The narrative provides a foundation for all of Israel’s ritual calendar.

A: Time	B: Inhabitants	C: Time + Inhabitants	B': Inhabitants	A': Time
Day 1 Light and dark Day and night Daily Shema prayer Daily sacrifices in morning and evening Exodus 29:38-46	Day 2 Waters, sky dome Day 3 Dry land, plants	Day 4 Sun and moon Day and night Annual festivals Annual feast days and sacrifices Leviticus 23	Day 5 Fish, birds Day 6 Dry land, plants	Day 7 Sabbath day Jubilee cycle Sabbath ritual Jubilee year Leviticus 25-26
Design Emphasis on Time in Genesis 1. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).				

A	1:14a And God said, "Let the lights be in the skies for dividing between the day and between the night ,		
	1:14b and let them be for signs and for festival times and for days and years.		
	B	1:15 And let them be for lights in the dome of the skies, to give light upon the land."	
		C	1:16a And God made the two great lamps, the great light for ruling over the day
		C'	1:16b and the little lamp for ruling over the night and also the stars.
	B	1:17 And he set them in the dome of the skies, to give light upon the land,	
A	1:18a and rule over the day and over the night 1:18b and to divide between the light and between the darkness.		
Design of Day Four. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).			

This design highlights the structural significance of divinely-ordered time in Genesis 1. God provides the essential order (day one) and then delegates the maintenance of that order to others (day four), which is mirrored by the sacred calendar of Israel. All of this looks forward to and leads up to the Sabbath (day seven).

Other Patterns of Seven in Genesis 1

In his book *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, biblical scholar Umberto Cassuto draws attention to patterns of seven in the first movement of Genesis.

- There are **seven words** in Genesis 1:1 and **fourteen words** in Genesis 1:2.
- There are **seven paragraphs** in Genesis 1:1-2:3 marked by “evening and morning.”
- The concluding **seventh paragraph** in Genesis 2:1-3 begins three lines which have **seven words** each (2:2-3a).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
and-he-finished	God	one-the-day	the-seventh	his-work	which	he-made
and-he-ceased	on the day	the-seventh	from-all	his-work	which	he-made
and-he-blessed	God	the	day	the-seventh	and-he-sanctified	it
<i>Patterns of Seven in Genesis 1. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).</i>						

Each of the key words in Genesis 1:1 are repeated by multiples of **seven** in the opening movement of Genesis.

- “God” = 35x (7x5) in Genesis 1:1-2:3
- “Land” = 21x (7x3) in Genesis 1:1-2:3
- “Skies” and “dome” = 21x (7x3) in Genesis 1:2-2:3

Key words that are repeated **seven times**:

- “Light” (5x) and “day” (2x) = seven times on day one
- “Light” on day four
- “Living creature” (חיה) on days five and six
- “God saw that it was good”

God speaks 10 times in Genesis 1:1-2:3.

- Seven of those times are divine creative commands to the creation itself: “Let there be”
- Three of those times are divine initiatives toward humanity: “Let us make ‘adam,” “be fruitful and multiply,” “behold I have given to you”

“To suppose that all these appearances of the number seven are mere coincidence is not possible. This numerical symmetry is, as it were, the golden thread that binds together all the parts of the section.”

Cassuto, Umberto (1961). [*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I, From Adam to Noah \(Genesis 1-6\)*](#). Magnes Press. 93-94.

Why the Number Seven?

Seven was a symbolic number in Israelite culture and literature. It communicated a sense of fullness or completeness (שבע “seven” is spelled with the same consonants as the word שבע, meaning “complete/full”). This makes sense of the pervasive appearance of seven patterns in the Bible.

The Hebrew word “seven” is a homonym with the Hebrew words for “complete/full.”

- “Seven” = Hebrew *sheva’* / שבע
- “Complete, full” = Hebrew *sava’* / שבע
- “Oath, promise” = Hebrew *savua’* / שבע

The origin of seven symbolizing completeness possibly originates in the lunar calendar of moon cycles. The biblical Hebrew word for “month” is the same as “new moon” (חדש), a period of time made up of 29.5 days/month, consisting of four 7.3-day cycles, making a complete cycle of time. For more on this see Maurice H. Farbridge’s book *The Biblical and Semitic Symbolism Of Numbers* (Farbridge, 2010).

However, the Israelite Sabbath cycle is independent of the moon cycle, and Sabbaths do not coincide with the new moon. Rather, the seven-day cycle in Genesis 1 is portrayed as the ideal complete time sequence of creation. It stands outside of any natural cycle of time (sun, moon, stars).

Why Does God Rest on the Seventh Day?

God’s rest involves a matrix of ideas connected with temples. God is taking up his rest within a sacred space by filling it with his divine presence.

Two Key “Rest” Words Associated with Sabbath, *Shabat* and *Nuakh*

When God rests on the seventh day, the text uses the word *shabbat*, which means “to stop.”

Genesis 2:1-2 NASB*

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. ² On the seventh day God completed his work which he had done, and he **rested** (Heb. *shabbat*) on the seventh day from all his work which he had done

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Shabat = “to cease from.” God ceases from his work because “it is finished” (Gen. 2:1). Compare Joshua 5:12, “the manna ceased (*shabbat*) on that day.”

By the time we get to Exodus, this same rest is associated with another word, *nuakh*, which means “to take up residence.”

Exodus 20:11 NASB*

For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and **rested** (Heb. *nuakh*) on the seventh day, therefore the LORD blessed the **Sabbath** (Heb. *shabbat*) day and made it holy.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Both of these, *shabbat* and *nuakh*, become closely associated words in the Hebrew Bible used to evoke an image of God’s presence filling his temple and bringing peace.

God’s rest involves a matrix of ideas connected with temples. God is taking up his rest within a sacred space by filling it with his divine presence.

Exodus 10:14 NASB*

The locusts came up over the land of Egypt and rested in all the land.

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Deuteronomy 12:10 ESV*

When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and he gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security ...

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

2 Samuel 7:1 Instructor's Translation

Now when King David dwelt in his house, for Yahweh had provided rest from his enemies ...

In conclusion, when God or people *nuakh*, it always involves settling into a place that is safe, secure, and stable.

Creation is depicted as the cosmic prototype in Genesis 1. All later temples are symbolic miniatures of this prototype. In each later biblical temple, God’s presence fills the sacred space on the seventh day.

Creation and Sabbath	Tabernacle Designs and Sabbath	Tabernacle Completion and Sabbath	Jerusalem Temple Completion
Creation’s Completion (Gen. 1:31-2:3)	Tabernacle Instructions (Exod. 25-31)	Completion of the Tabernacle (Exod. 39-40)	1 Kings 6-8
Cosmic Prototype of Creation and The Tabernacle and Temple as Symbolic Miniatures. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).			

Creation and Sabbath	Tabernacle Designs and Sabbath	Tabernacle Completion and Sabbath	Jerusalem Temple Completion
Seven days open with divine command: "And God said ..." Day 1 — Gen. 1:5 Day 2 — Gen. 1:8 Day 3 — Gen. 1:13 Day 4 — Gen. 1:19 Day 5 — Gen. 1:23 Day 6 — Gen. 1:31 Day 7 — Gen. 2:1-3 Sabbath	Seven speeches open with divine command: "And Yahweh spoke to Moses ..." Speech 1 — Exod. 25:1 Speech 2 — Exod. 30:11 Speech 3 — Exod. 30:17 Speech 4 — Exod. 30:22 Speech 5 — Exod. 30:34 Speech 6 — Exod. 31:1 Speech 7 — Exod. 31:12 Sabbath	Seven acts of obedience to the divine command complete tabernacle: "And Moses did ... just as Yahweh commanded Moses." Act 1 — Exod. 40:19 Act 2 — Exod. 40:21 Act 3 — Exod. 40:23 Act 4 — Exod. 40:25 Act 5 — Exod. 40:27 Act 6 — Exod. 40:29 Act 7 — Exod. 40:32-35 Divine rest	Seven petitions of Solomon upon the completion of the temple: "Blessed be Yahweh who spoke to my father David." Petition 1 — 1 Kgs. 8:31-32 Petition 2 — 1 Kgs. 8:33-34 Petition 3 — 1 Kgs. 8:35-37a Petition 4 — 1 Kgs. 8:37b-40 Petition 5 — 1 Kgs. 8:41-43 Petition 6 — 1 Kgs. 8:44-45 Petition 7 — 1 Kgs. 8:46-53 Seven-day feasts
Seventh day culminates in Sabbath (Gen. 2:1-3)	Seventh speech emphasizes the "sign of Sabbath" (Exod. 31:12-17) Priesthood installed after a seven-day ordination (Exod. 28-29)	Seventh act of obedience "completes" the tabernacle	Solomon observes two seven-day feasts to dedicate the temple (1 Kgs. 8:65)
"And God saw all that he had done, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and morning, the sixth day." (Gen. 1:31) "And God blessed		"And Moses saw all the work they had done, and behold, just as Yahweh commanded, so they did, and Moses blessed them." (Exod. 39:43)	"Then the king faced about and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing." (1 Kgs. 8:14)
<i>Cosmic Prototype of Creation and The Tabernacle and Temple as Symbolic Miniatures. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).</i>			

Creation and Sabbath	Tabernacle Designs and Sabbath	Tabernacle Completion and Sabbath	Jerusalem Temple Completion
the seventh day.” (Gen 2:3)			
“and the skies and the land were completed (כלה)” (Gen. 2:1)	“and it came about when he completed (כלה) speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai” (Exod. 31:18)	“and Moses completed (כלה) the work (מלאכה)” (Exod. 40:33)	“and Solomon built the temple and he finished (כלה) it” (1 Kgs. 6:14)
“and God rested (שבת) on the seventh day ...”		“and the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tent” (Exod. 40:34)	“and the cloud filled the house of Yahweh” (1 Kgs. 8:10-11)
“... from all his work (מלאכה) ... and God blessed (ברך) the seventh day and made it holy (קדש)” (Gen. 2:2-3)	“you shall keep the Sabbath for it is holy (קדש) for you ... Six days let the work (מלאכה) be done, and on the seventh day it is a Sabbath of Sabbath.” (Exod. 31:14-15)	Aaron and his sons are brought before the tent for seven days in the ordination ceremony (Lev. 8-9, see 8:35)	“In the eleventh year, in the ... eighth month, the temple was finished throughout all its parts and according to all its plans. So he was seven years in building it. (1 Kgs. 6:38) “And the work (מלאכה) of the pillars was finished.” (1 Kgs. 7:22) “Thus all the work (מלאכה) that King Solomon performed in the house of the Lord was finished.” (1 Kgs. 7:51)
Temptation and fall narrative: Genesis 3	Temptation and fall narrative: Exodus 32	Temptation and fall narrative: Leviticus 10	Temptation and fall narrative: 1 Kings 9:1-9 and 11:1-3

Cosmic Prototype of Creation and The Tabernacle and Temple as Symbolic Miniatures. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).

In a Similar Way, the Temple in Israel Was Spoken of as the Place of God's Rest

Psalm 132:7-8, 13-14 NASB*

⁷ Let us go into his dwelling place/tent (Heb. *mishkan* / משכן);
let us worship at his footstool.

⁸ Arise, O LORD, to your resting place (Heb. *menukhah* / מנוחה),
you and the ark of your strength.

¹³ For the LORD has chosen Zion;
he has desired it for his habitation.

¹⁴ “This is my resting place (Heb. *menukhah* / מנוחה) forever;
here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.”

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

Exodus 15:17-18 NASB*

¹⁷ “You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance,
the place, O LORD, which you have made for your dwelling (Heb. *le-shibteka* / *shabbat* / לשבתך),
the sanctuary, O LORD, which your hands have established.

¹⁸ The LORD shall reign forever and ever.”

*Key Words Adapted by Teacher

“The role of the temple in ancient Israel was not only a place where people gathered for worship. It is first and foremost a place for the deity—sacred space. It is God’s home, but more importantly, his headquarters—the control room. When the deity rests in his temple, it means that he is taking command, that he is mounting his throne to assume his rightful place and his proper role. ... So, what did God do on the eighth day? In this view, on the eighth day, and every day since then, he is in the control room from where he runs the cosmos that he set up. This is the ongoing work of creation. If one thinks of Genesis 1 as an account of material origins, God’s creating is an action in the past that is now over and done with. God made the physical universe and now the cosmos exists. But viewing Genesis 1 as an ancient account of the cosmos’ functional origins offers a more faithful account to the scriptural depiction of God’s creational ‘rest’ as ongoing.”

Walton, John H. (2015). [*The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate*](#). IVP Academic. 75, 77.

“Humanity’s elevation, made in the image of God, is designed for the exaltation of the Sabbath day. The Sabbath thus becomes the day for humanity to enjoy its privileged status of being created as God’s image. The Sabbath is the symbolic time for humanity’s climactic union with and representation of its Creator. ... Just as the divine work began with a workman’s week as an archetype of the human week, now humanity can live in the image of God. The Sabbath and the image of God are linked together and interdependent themes.”

Morales, Michael (2015). [*Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*](#). IVP Academic. 48.

Why Does God Bless the Seventh Day?

God’s blessing upon the creatures and humans on days five and six is directly tied to being fruitful and multiplying and filling the land.

By analogy, the blessing on the Sabbath would also involve a kind of fruitfulness, multiplying, and filling that is appropriate to a period of time. The idea is that the Sabbath would become many as it is observed and experienced by others.

“Set apart from all other days, the blessing of the seventh day establishes the seventh part of created time as a day when God grants his presence in the created world. It is then his presence that provides the blessing and the sanctification. The seventh day is blessed and established as the part of time that assures fruitfulness, future-orientation, continuity, and permanence for every aspect of life within the dimension of time. The seventh day is blessed by God’s presence for the sake of the created world, for all nature, and for all living beings.”

Frey, Mathilde (2011). [*The Sabbath in the Pentateuch: an Exegetical and Theological Study*](#). Andrews University Digital Commons. 38.

The Seventh Day That Has No End

The seven days portray God working to bring order and life out of darkness and chaos. This divine work culminates in the delegation of human images who rule the fruitful land on God’s behalf (day six). Creation is “completed” (Gen. 2:1) only after God delivers creation from the darkness and chaos waters and appoints a human image to rule. After he completes creation, God can rest/cease from his work.

“Unlike the previous days, the seventh day is simply announced. There is no mention of evening or morning, no mention of a beginning or ending. The suggestion is that the primordial seventh day exists in perpetuity, a sacred day that cannot be abrogated by the limitations common to the rest of the created order.”

Balentine, Samuel (1999). [*The Torah’s Vision of Worship*](#). Fortress Press. 93.

"The seventh-day account does not end with the expected formula, 'there was evening and morning,' that concluded days one through six. Breaking the pattern in this way emphasizes the uniqueness of the seventh day and opens the door to an eschatological interpretation. Literarily, the sun has not yet set on God's Sabbath."

Lowry, Richard (2000). [*Sabbath and Jubilee*](#). Chalice Press. 90.

"The Sabbath is that point in time where God and man meet. On the seventh day of creation, God joined himself and his eternal presence to his temporal creation, to the world of man. On the Sabbath day, man not only recalls but participates in an act of cosmic creation ... he experiences the original structuring of time within the microcosm of his own life. ... The observance of the Sabbath links humanity to a divinely ordained future, as well as a divinely created past. Sabbath observance has cosmic implications ... a foretaste of an eschatological future ... a prefiguration of the final phase of the divine/human reconciliation. In pointing back to the beginning, the Sabbath also points to what is yet to be, to the final destiny to which all creation is moving."

Och, Bernard (1995). "Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation." *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought*. Volume 44 (No. 2). 240.

"With regard to the lack of the final formula, 'there was evening and there was morning,' commentators have argued that the seventh day is not meant to be understood as a literal day. This argumentation then has led to an eschatological interpretation of the seventh day. However, as part of the first creation account, the seventh day is the last of the seven sections, and the formula 'there was evening and there was morning' in the account of the weekdays may be taken not only as a closing formula but also as a literary feature to anticipate what comes next within the series of sections in the creation account, that is the next day of the creation week. Functioning as a transition from one day to another the closing formula is a feature that moves the text forward throughout the six weekdays with the intention to arrive at the seventh day. Once it arrives at the last section, the text highlights the identification of the seventh day by stating it three times and then has no more need for the formula because there is no eighth section following for an eighth day. Creation has come to an end, for the seventh day has arrived."

Frey, Mathilde (2011). [*The Sabbath in the Pentateuch: an Exegetical and Theological Study*](#). Andrews University Digital Commons. 38.

Israel's Sacred Calendar in Leviticus 23

In Leviticus, the Sabbath ideal is multiplied by seven. [*Leviticus 23*](#) lists seven meeting/convocation days for Israel's holy worship. Every one (except firstfruits) is a multiple of seven (in days or the month) or a duration of seven and represents a moment of new creation.

Holy Day		Date	Duration	Activity	Ritual Story
1	Sabbath	7th day	1 day	No work	Creation and rest
First Half of the Year					
2	Passover and Unleavened Bread	1/14 1/15-21	1 day + 7 days	No work on 1st and 7th day	Exodus liberation into the promised land
3	Firstfruits	Day after 7th day	1 day	—	Celebrating the gift of food
4	Weeks/Pentecost	7 x 7 + 1 days after Sabbath	1 day	No work	Celebrating the gift of food
Second Half of the Year					
5	Trumpets	7th month / 1st day	1 day	No work	Marking the 7th month
6	Day of Atonement	7th month / 10th day	1 day	No work	Removing sin and death from the camp
7	Tabernacles	7th month 7/15-7/21	7 days	No work on 1st and 7th day	Provision in the midst of the wilderness
<i>Israel's Sacred Calendar in Leviticus Chapter 23. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Heaven and Earth (2019).</i>					

The principle of the Sabbath (a burst of Eden rest into ordinary time) is here multiplied by seven. All these holy days participate and develop some aspect of meaning of the original Sabbath.

- Passover and Unleavened Bread celebrate redemption from death (new creation) and commitment to simplicity and trust in God's power to provide food in the wilderness.
- Firstfruits and Weeks celebrate the gift of produce from the land.
- Trumpets announces the sabbatical (seventh) month.
- Day of Atonement celebrates God's renewal of the holiness of his Eden presence among his compromised people.
- Tabernacles celebrates provision for God's people on their way to the promised land/Eden. They are to live in God's "tent" for a Sabbath cycle. Leviticus 23:40 says, "And you will take the fruit of the beautiful tree, the branches of a palm, and branches of a tree of leaf and of poplar trees by a river, and you shall rejoice before Yahweh for seven days." This is a mini-Eden tent made of the fruit of a beautiful tree for a Sabbath cycle (Gen. 1-2)!

Reflection Question

What is the significance of God resting on the seventh day of creation?

Session 31: The Sabbath With No End

Key Takeaways

- The seventh day is the only day of creation that has no end. This tells us that God's ideal is for his glorious presence to dwell among humanity forever.
- Jesus sees himself as inaugurating God's ultimate Sabbath rest and the super Jubilee year (Isa. 61:1-2).

The Jubilee Year of Release and Restoration: Leviticus 25

Leviticus 25:1-12 NASB

¹ The LORD then spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying, ² "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you come into the land which I shall give you, **then the land shall have a sabbath** to the LORD. ³ **Six years** you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, ⁴ but during **the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest**, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard. ⁵ Your harvest's aftergrowth you shall not reap, and your grapes of untrimmed vines you shall not gather; the land shall have a sabbatical year. ⁶ All of you shall have the sabbath products of the land for food; yourself, and your male and female slaves, and your hired man and your foreign resident, those who live as aliens with you. ⁷ Even your cattle and the animals that are in your land shall have all its crops to eat. ⁸ You are also to **count off seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years**, so that you have the time of the **seven sabbaths of years, namely, forty-nine years**. ⁹ You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; **on the day of atonement** you shall sound a horn all through your land. ¹⁰ You shall thus **consecrate the fiftieth year** and proclaim a **release** through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a **jubilee** for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family. ¹¹ You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in from its untrimmed vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field.'"

Key Takeaways from Leviticus 25

- Every seventh year is a Sabbath ("release" from Exod. 21; Deut. 15) in which the land rests and reverts to Eden conditions.
- Every 49th to 50th year is a Super Sabbath (release/Jubilee) where (1) the land rests on its proper Sabbath, (2) the land "goes out" from slavery to return to its original owners, and (3) slaves "go out" from slavery to return to freedom.
- The counting scheme works so that the 50th year is the first year of the next cycle.
- God will re-create Eden conditions if Israel obeys the Jubilee.

43	44	45	46	47	48	49 – Sabbath
50/1 – Jubilee	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Sabbath
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 – Sabbath
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 – Sabbath
22	23	24	25	26	27	28 – Sabbath
29	30	31	32	33	34	35 – Sabbath
36	37	38	39	40	41	42 – Sabbath
43	44	45	46	47	48	49 – Sabbath
50/1 – Jubilee	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Sabbath

Bergsma, John (2007). *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation*. Brill. 89.

Jubilee Anticipates a Future Restoration

“There is something inherently 'eschatological' about the jubilee, long before it was seen as a symbol of the eschaton by later writers. Since it recurred usually only once in a lifetime, the impoverished Israelite—or at least the one projected by the text—would spend most of his life in anticipation of this event of restoration. Also, from the perspective of the entire Pentateuch, the conquest and settlement of Canaan was a kind of “realized eschatology”—the fulfillment of the promise of the land of Canaan originally made to Abraham. Leviticus 25—in its present position in the Pentateuch—looks forward to the time when the 'eschatological' condition of Israel dwelling within her own land will be realized, and enacts measures to ensure that periodically this utopian, 'eschatological' state of Israel will be renewed and restored.”

Bergsma, John (2007). *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation*. Brill. 81.

The Jubilee in Luke’s Gospel

Luke 4:14-21 NASB

¹⁴ And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through all the surrounding districts. ¹⁵ And he began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. ¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and as was his custom, he entered the synagogue **on the Sabbath**, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim **release** to the captives,
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to **set free** those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

²⁰ And he closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Isaiah 61:1-2 Instructor's Translation

¹ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to **bind up the brokenhearted**,
to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight for the blind
² to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD

And the day of vengeance of our God ...

"Freedom" means "release" in Greek (*aphesis*) and "Jubilee liberation" (Isa. 61:1; Lev. 25:10) in Hebrew (*deror*). Freedom is the common word for forgiveness in Luke (1:77, 3:3), but the word's meaning is broader—release from burden or bondage. In Isaiah 61, the word is rooted in the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25) and is about release from the social consequences of a society's collective sin—freedom from debt, slavery, poverty, and oppression.

"The poor" (Grk. *ptokhos* = Heb. *aniy*) refers to more than a person's economic status. It refers to a person's wider social location based on family heritage, land ownership, vocation, gender, ethnicity, education, and religious purity. In Jewish literature, it refers to anyone of low status or anyone who lives outside socially accepted boundary lines.

"Jesus' mission is directed to the poor ... in the holistic sense of those who are for any number of reasons relegated to positions outside the boundaries of God's people. Jesus refuses to recognize those socially determined boundaries, asserting instead that these 'outsiders' now can belong to God's family."

Green, Joel (1997). [*The Gospel of Luke*](#). Eerdmans. 211.

"Jesus' claim to 'fulfill' Isaiah 61 must be seen as a claim to inaugurate the climactic Jubilee of God's people, the time when their freedom from captivity and oppression would be permanent. The main feature of Jesus' fulfillment of the Jubilee in Luke 4 is the proclamation of *αφεσις*, which in Luke/Acts refers ... to forgiven sin and ... to release from physical/economic oppression."

Bruno, Christopher R. (2010). [*"Jesus Is Our Jubilee ... But How? The OT Background and Lukan Fulfillment of the Ethics of Jubilee."*](#) *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society (JETS)*. 98-99.

The Nazareth announcement in Luke 4 sets the agenda for Jesus' healing and teaching ministry in Luke 5-9 where he reaches out to:

- A leper ([Luke 5:12-16](#))
- A paralyzed man ([Luke 5:17-27](#)) [Note the use of *aphesis* to mean "forgiveness" of sin and "release" from sickness with multiple nuances in this story]
- A man with a deformed hand ([Luke 6:6-11](#)) [Jesus "saves life" on the Sabbath]
- The Roman centurion's servant ([Luke 7:1-10](#))
- The grieving widow and mother in Nain ([Luke 7:11-16](#)) ["God has come to visit his people"]
- The blind, leprous, lame, deaf, and poor ([Luke 7:22](#))
- A repentant prostitute ([Luke 7:36-49](#)) [Note the repetition of *aphesis* "forgiveness" and "release" in the parable]
- The demon-tormented ([Luke 11:14-23](#))
- The hunchbacked woman ([Luke 13:10-17](#)) [Note the explicit mention of slavery/release/freedom vocabulary in Jesus' view of her illness]

Reflection Question

When Jesus stands up and reads in the synagogue, he reads from Isaiah 61:1-2, saying that he is inaugurating the year of Jubilee. What significance does this have? What is Jesus saying he is inaugurating?