

Genesis 1:1–2:3 and Creation

Prayer

Introductory Questions

- What is a worldview?
- Do all people (including atheists) have a worldview? Why or why not?

Introduction

Genesis 1:1–2:3 outlines key components of a biblical worldview, which we explain below.

1. **What is a worldview?** It is the collection of a person’s most significant beliefs, values, and desires concerning reality as they perceive it, which expresses itself in their words and actions. Sire states, “A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being” (*The Universe Next Door*, 6).
2. **What is the content of a worldview?** A person’s worldview consists of answers to basic questions such as those listed in the first column below, with Christian answers to the right:

Worldview Questions	Answers from a Christian Perspective
What is the ultimate reality?	The Triune God of the Bible
How can we know what we know?	Revelation from God in the Bible & Nature
What are human beings?	God’s Creatures, Made in His Image
What is humanity’s biggest problem?	Sin against God and its Consequences
What is the solution to that problem?	Jesus Christ and the Gospel
What is the nature of right and wrong?	God’s Will as Outlined in the Bible
What happens to humans at death?	Eternal Life or Eternal Condemnation

All people are living out their answers to these questions, whether they know it or not.

3. **How does Genesis 1:1–2:3 contribute to the formation of a biblical worldview?** God is the ultimate reality. He created and ordered the entire universe, and his original creation (before the fall in Genesis 3) was good (set apart for God and pure). He made humans in his image and called them to be managers of his creation. While Genesis 2:17 introduces the concept of death as a consequence of sin, Genesis 1–2 emphasizes God’s incomparable power, creativity, and goodness. The Bible testifies to the fact that God reveals himself.

Next we address a key question: “What is the age of the universe?” We then outline Genesis 1:1–2:3 in two sections: (1) The Beginning of Creation (1:1–2) and (2) Days One through Seven (1:3–2:3). We conclude by summarizing the significance of the doctrine of creation.

What is the age of the universe?

Bible-believing Christians differ in their views about the age of the universe and therefore the age of the earth. What are some of the arguments for an old universe and a young universe?

Arguments for an Old Universe: Those who believe in an old universe (approx. 13.8 billion years for the universe and 4.5 billion years for the earth) point to scientific evidence. They argue that scientific discoveries in fields like astronomy (such as cosmic background radiation), geology, and physics provide compelling evidence for an ancient universe and earth. Christians who believe in an old universe argue that an old universe is *compatible* with what the Bible teaches. They view the creation account in Genesis as a theological narrative rather than a scientific treatise, and they interpret the “days” of creation figuratively. They argue that the Hebrew word for “day” (*yom*) can have meanings other than a 24-hour period, including an indefinite period of time. Therefore, they interpret the “days” of creation as figurative representations of God’s creative activity rather than literal 24-hour days.

Arguments for a Young Universe (Six Literal Days): Some Christians believe that the universe is only 10,000 to 20,000 years old, and that God created the universe in six, 24-hour periods. They argue that Genesis 1:3–2:1 describes God creating the universe and everything in it in six literal days, with each day consisting of an evening and a morning. From their perspective, the universe and the earth only *appear* old, which God created fully formed (or mature) in their appearance (not unlike he created Adam and Eve fully formed). They may argue that certain environmental conditions, such as rapid burial in sedimentary layers as a result of a worldwide flood, could have helped to preserve fossils and dinosaur remains, making them appear older than they actually are. They believe that their interpretations of the Bible are straightforward, and they may appeal to historical Christian interpretations of Genesis that align with their beliefs. Some advocates of a young universe argue that accepting an old universe compromises the integrity of the Bible as God’s inspired Word and undermines the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* (Latin for “out of nothing”), though Bible-believing, old earth creationists would deny that claim.

Summary

The debates over the age of the universe and the interpretations of Genesis 1–2 reflect differing approaches to interpretations of the Bible and conclusions within the scientific community. Christians from differing perspectives seek to uphold the authority of Scripture, and they attempt to deal with the complexities of interpreting the Bible and conducting scientific studies.

Grudem summarizes key components of the doctrine of creation: (1) God created the universe out of nothing; (2) God is distinct from creation, yet creation is dependent on God; (3) God created the universe to reveal his glory to his creatures; (4) the original universe God created was very good; (5) there is no ultimate conflict between Scripture and science; (6) theories that deny God is the Creator of the universe, such as Darwinian evolution, are incompatible with belief in the Bible; (7) God created the angelic world; (8) God created humanity in his image (*Systematic Theology*, 385). Ideally, all Christians will agree with these points.

1. The Beginning of Creation

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. (Gen. 1:1–2)

These verses summarize God’s initial act of creation, with an emphasis on the state of the earth at that time. Verse 1 states that God created the heavens and the earth—the entire universe. Verse 2 provides more detail: the earth was formless, empty, and covered in darkness. Additionally, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters, which suggests he was actively involved in the creative process, preparing to bring order and life to the unformed, lifeless world. Overall, these verses establish the initial setting for the detailed creation narrative that follows.

- What do we learn about God and creation from these verses?
- What are the implications for our lives?

2. Days One through Seven

Days One through Six describe the sequential acts of creation by God.

<p>Day One: 3 Then 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 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day. (Gen. 1:3–5)</p>	<p>On Day One, God created the light and separated it from the darkness (Gen. 1:3–5). Again, some Christians view the word “day” as a 24-hour period, while others interpret it differently, such as an indefinite age. God determined that what he created was “good” (on each of the six days except Day Two). On Day Six, he called his work “very good” after he created humans. He called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”</p>
<p>Day Two: 6 Then God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water.” 7 So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. 8 God called the expanse “sky.” Evening came and then morning: the second day. (Gen. 1:6–8)</p>	<p>On Day Two, God created the sky by separating the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse (Gen. 1:6–8). He called the expanse “sky.”</p>

<p>Day Three: 9 Then God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry land “earth,” and the gathering of the water he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, “Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds.” And it was so. 12 The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 Evening came and then morning: the third day. (Gen. 1:9–13)</p>	<p>On Day Three, God gathered the water under the sky to form dry land, named the “earth” and “seas,” and created seed-bearing vegetation (Gen. 1:9–13).</p>
<p>Day Four: 14 Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for seasons and for days and years. 15 They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth.” And it was so. 16 God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night—as well as the stars. 17 God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, 18 to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 Evening came and then morning: the fourth day. (Gen. 1:14–19)</p>	<p>On Day Four, God created lights in the sky, including all the stars. For the earth in particular, he created “two great lights” (the sun and the moon) to provide light for the earth, to “rule” the day and night, and to separate light from darkness (Gen. 1:14–19).</p>
<p>Day Five: 20 Then God said, “Let the water swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” 21 So God created the large sea-creatures and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them: “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.” 23 Evening came and then morning: the fifth day. (Gen. 1:20–23)</p>	<p>On Day Five, God created sea creatures and birds. He blessed them and commanded them to multiply—to fill the sea and the earth (Gen. 1:20–23).</p>
<p>Day Six: 24 Then God said, “Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. 25 So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the</p>	<p>On Day Six, God created land animals, and he created humans (male and female) in his image. He blessed them and commanded them to multiply and to rule over the fish, birds, livestock, and everything that crawls on the earth.</p>

<p>creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. (Gen. 1:24–25)</p> <p>26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.” 27 So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female. 28 God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.” (Gen. 1:26–28)</p> <p>29 God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you, 30 for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it—I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.</p> <p>31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day. (Gen. 1:29–31)</p>	<p>God declared that all he made was “very good” (Gen. 1:24–31).</p> <p>To be made in God’s image means humans are made in his likeness. “In this context to be made in the image of God means to rule over the life in the three domains that God created. This rulership is a stewardship. It is illustrated in ch. 2, where the man takes care of the garden (2:15) and names the animals (2:20). In this context God placed humanity on earth to continue his rulership after he finished the work of creation. With the coming of Jesus Christ as the perfect image of God (Col 1:15), Christians are re-created (2 Cor 5:17) and become conformed to Christ as an expression of his image (Rom 8:29), with righteousness, holiness, and knowledge (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10)” (NIVBTSB, 27).</p>
<p>Summary of Days One through Six: 2:1 So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. (Gen. 2:1)</p>	<p>The completion of God’s work on Day Six is followed by a summary statement, indicating that everything in the heavens and earth was completed (Gen. 2:1).</p>
<p>Day Seven: 2:2 On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation. (Gen. 2:2–3)</p>	<p>On Day Seven, God rested from his work of creation, blessing the seventh day and declaring it holy (set apart for him and his purposes) (Gen. 2:2–3).</p>

- What do we learn about God and his creation from this passage?
- In your own words, what does it mean that we are made in God’s image? What are the implications for our lives?

Sound Doctrine: Creation

Below we explain the significance of the doctrine of creation for our lives.

1. **The doctrine of creation outlines both what we believe and what alternative worldviews we must reject (rule out).** Referring to truths from Genesis 1 in particular, D.A. Carson states:

God is different from the universe that he creates, and therefore pantheism is ruled out; that **the original creation was entirely good**, and therefore dualism is ruled out; that **human beings, male and female together, are alone declared to be made in the image of God**, and therefore forms of reductionism that claim we are part of the animal kingdom and no more must be ruled out; that **God is a talking God**, and therefore all notions of an impersonal God must be ruled out; that **this God has sovereignly made all things, including all people**, and therefore conceptions of merely tribal deities must be ruled out. (Carson, *For the Love of God, Volume One*, 26, emboldened text mine)
2. **God displays his glory (his supreme importance, excellence, and worth that radiates from his being) in and through creation:** “1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge” (Ps. 19:1–2).
3. **Because God created the universe, we are morally accountable to him.** Referring to Jesus as God’s agent in creation, the apostle John said: “10 He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (John 1:10–11). Rejecting Jesus is evil in large part because he is the Creator (John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:10).
4. **The truth of God’s existence and his role as the sovereign, personal, talking Creator is foundational information when helping non-Christians to know God through Jesus Christ.** The apostle Paul addressed biblically-illiterate people: “15 People! Why are you doing these things? We are people also, just like you, and we are proclaiming good news to you, that you turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them. 16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to go their own way, 17 although he did not leave himself without a witness, since he did what is good by giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons and filling you with food and your hearts with joy” (Acts 14:15–17; cf. Acts 17:24–29).
5. **Because God is the Creator, he is worthy of our eternal love and worship:** “Our Lord and God, you are worthy to receive glory and honor and power, because you have created all things, and by your will they exist and were created” (Rev. 4:11) (*ibid.*, 26).

- What comments and questions do you have about this lesson?
- What is one thing you can do in response to this lesson?

Prayer