

Genesis Chapter One

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

It may be easy to overlook a phrase like “in the beginning,” but these three words are highly significant. For instance, what does “in the beginning” imply? Well, it is impossible to discuss the “beginning” of something without first acknowledging the concept of time.

You see, “time” is more than just a display on a phone, clock, watch, or calendar. Time is a *“continuous, measurable quantity in which events occur in a sequence proceeding from the past through the present to the future.”* ⁽¹⁾ Some have humorously suggested that “time” is the way God keeps everything from happening at once.

So what makes this significant? Well, the Scriptures reject the belief that the universe is eternal and has always existed. Instead, this passage tells us that the universe had a beginning that is documented here in Genesis 1:1.

So who or what caused that beginning? Well, that answer comes next: ***“In the beginning God...”*** Beyond this universal point of origin is an entity referred to as “God.”

This tells us that God is not a product of creation, nor is He a part of it. Instead, God is separate and distinct from this created order. Unlike those who profess that “God is everything and everything is God,” the Scriptures affirm God to be a Being who exists apart from the universe He created.

For example, the word translated “God” in Genesis 1:1 is the Hebrew word *Elohim*. This word appears more than twenty-seven hundred times in the Old Testament, and over thirty times in Genesis chapter one.

Elohim is a two-part word; the first part, “*El*” means “*strong, great or mighty*.” The “*im*” portion indicates a plural quantity. However, the Scriptures use Elohim singularly when speaking of God. Because of this, Elohim has been called a “uniplural” word; it refers to “one” but more than one. ⁽²⁾

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(1) “time.” *The American Heritage® Science Dictionary* copyright © 2011. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt publishing company. All rights reserved. Retrieved 03 June 2023 from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/time#:~:text=Scientific%20definitions%20for%20time&text=A%20continuous%2C%20measurable%20quantity%20in,of%20this%20quantity%3B%20a%20duration>.

(2) See “Elohim, ‘God’” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia Electronic Database* Copyright © 1995-1996, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

Of course, it’s natural to ask how something like this might be possible. How could God be one, yet more than one at the same time? After all, isn’t it a contradiction to say that something can be one, yet more than one at the same time? If so, then how can we make sense of this apparent inconsistency?

Well, if we were to say that God is one being and more than one being at the same time and in the same way, then that would cause a contradiction. However, it is not contradictory to say that God is one in *substance* (or essence) and one or more in *persons*.

This fundamental truth about God is developed in various places throughout the Scripture where we’re told that:

- God is One ([Deuteronomy 6:4](#)).
- The Father is God ([Ephesians 5:20](#) and [Jude 1:1](#)).
- The Son is God ([Hebrews 1:8](#) and [Titus 2:13](#)).
- And the Holy Spirit is God ([Acts 5:3-4](#) and [2 Corinthians 3:17](#)).

These passages have led us to the understanding that the God of the Scriptures is a *unity* subsisting in three Persons. ⁽¹⁾ So, two Biblical truths regarding God's nature emerge from these passages:

1.) There is one God.

2.) There are three distinct persons who are God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' message from Mark 12:28-29 offers a further opportunity to consider this doctrine of the "Trinity" or the triune nature of God as it relates to our text from Genesis 1:1...

"Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one'" (NKJV).

By saying that God is one in essence and three in Persons, we mean that God is one "What" and three "Whos." The three *Whos* (or three persons) each share the same *what* (or essence).

The "essence" of something is the constituent element of a person or thing. It represents the core of that person or thing. Synonyms for "essence" would include words like heart, substance, and quintessence. A "person" is a living, sentient being who possesses qualities such as consciousness, intelligence, self-awareness, a sense of morality, and the capacity to reason.

In short, "person" is *who* and "essence" is *what*. So when we speak of God's tri-unity, we mean God is three "whos" and one "what." God is not one God and three Gods, nor is He one Person and three Persons. He is not one essence and three essences; He is one in *essence* and three in *Persons*.

To better understand this important doctrine, it may be useful to consider some poor analogies that have been developed to illustrate God's triune nature. For instance, the Trinity is not like a chain with three links. This illustration fails because individual links are separate and separable. But God is neither separated nor is He separable.

The Trinity is also not like three gods who act together as one. This represents an error known as *tritheism*. Tritheism is the belief that there are three distinct gods with separate powers who work together. Unfortunately, that belief is more reminiscent of a group of comic-book superheroes and does not accurately reflect the God of the Bible.

God is also not like the same actor playing three different roles. God is *simultaneously* three Persons, not one person playing three distinct parts.

Finally, God is not like the three states of water: solid, liquid, and gas. Water is not normally in each of these states simultaneously, but God is always three Persons at the same time. Those last two beliefs reflect a heresy known as *modalism*, or the belief that there is one God who changes into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit at different times.

A better approach uses a triangle to illustrate the Trinity. For example, one triangle has three corners. These corners are inseparable from, and simultaneous to, each other. If we remove one corner from the triangle, it ceases to be a triangle.

Each corner of our triangle is separate and distinct, but the triangle is one in essence. Therefore, we can say that a triangle has three "things" (three corners) and one "what" (a triangle). In a similar way, God is three Persons (or three "Whos") and one "What" (God). God is one in substance (or essence) and three in persons.

This is not a perfect illustration, for a triangle is finite while God is infinite. However, it is probably the closest and most accurate analogy we can develop to illustrate the triune nature of God. Thus, we can say that God is a unity of essence with a plurality of persons. Each Person is different, yet they share a common nature.

So the first four words of Genesis 1:1 tell us two important things:

1. ***In the beginning*** chronicles the start of time.
2. ***God*** tells us about a Being known as God who is one, yet more than one.

God's creative endeavors come next: ***"In the beginning, God created...."*** While human creativity is wide and diverse, human creations are always derived from preexisting materials. For example, an inventor, artist, or designer may produce something fresh and distinctive, but that thing (whatever it is), must be fashioned from existing resources.

However, the word used to depict God's act of creation in Genesis 1:1 is one that signifies the creation of something from nothing. ⁽¹⁾ This means God brought things into existence that did not exist until He brought them into being.

For instance, there were no raw materials, no building blocks, no primordial soup, and no pre-existent matter of any kind prior to Genesis 1:1. Everything God made was completely new and had no prior existence of any kind.

(1) The word used in the original language of Genesis is the Hebrew word *bara* meaning, *to create, (to) make*. "...Only God can "create" in the sense implied by *bara*. The verb expresses creation out of nothing..." (from *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

Genesis 1:1 also dismisses the theory that the universe was formed through a process of random chance. The problem is that the "random chance" theory of origin lacks the evidentiary power necessary to explain how the universe came into being.

In general, there are two different theories that are often employed to explain the origin of the universe. The first involves the work of an intelligent designer; that is, a being who planned and created the universe along with everything in it. This approach does not explicitly identify the God of the Scriptures as the creative agent behind this work, but it does find general agreement with the Biblical narrative given to us here in Genesis 1:1.

The second theory holds that the universe originated through random chance. This theory contends that the universe entered into existence without the intervention of "God" or an intelligent designer.

Each model seeks to answer the question, "How did the universe begin?" A person who accepts the first premise can find the answer to that question here in Genesis chapter one. However, those who embrace the random chance theory of origin face several difficult challenges.

For example, proponents of the random chance and intelligent design theories of origin generally accept "Big Bang" cosmology. At the risk of oversimplifying this complex subject, this theory states that the universe began as a dense, hot, point of matter and expanded to become the cosmos we know today. This theory has found broad acceptance because it explains the observable evidence quite well.

The problem is that Big Bang cosmology fails to adequately explain how the universe began. When faced with this theory, we may simply back up one step and ask, *"What caused the Big Bang?"* If the universe began with a colossal explosion of hot, concentrated matter, then where did that matter originate? Who or what lit the fuse that led the "big bang" to occur?

If we accept the premise that nothing existed prior to the Big Bang, the question of how it occurred remains unresolved. You see, the belief that something (like the Big Bang) can arise from nothing ultimately fails because "nothing" doesn't exist. Nothing is "no-thing," and it is impossible for "no-

thing” to produce “some-thing.”

Because of this, it is logically untenable to say that nothing existed prior to the Big Bang- *something* must have been there to cause it to happen. If there was a time when nothing existed, then it is impossible for something to exist now. So even if we say the universe started with the Big Bang, that doesn’t answer our question. The Big Bang may represent the vehicle that explains the origin of the universe, but who or what created that vehicle?

This leads us back to the concept of random chance, or the notion that the universe came into existence through an arbitrary process. The idea is that the universe could have come into existence by chance if given enough time.

But let’s consider this premise for a moment. In this context, the word “chance” conveys the statistical probability that something will occur. Unfortunately, this explanation fails when we apply it to the belief that the universe came into existence by chance. The problem is that chance by itself is powerless.

The following illustration helps explain why. Let’s say that two individuals are engaged in a card game. Person number one shuffles the playing cards and randomly deals several of them to person number two. With this in mind, here’s a question: did random chance possess the ability to manipulate or control the cards person number two received? Did random chance exert the power necessary to make person number two receive one particular card instead of another?

Well, of course, the answer is no. Chance simply describes the statistical likelihood that one type of card will be dealt instead of another. This illustration helps explain why “random chance” cannot be responsible for the existence of the universe. Chance doesn’t *make* things happen- it only describes the probability that something *will* happen.

Here’s another way to demonstrate this idea. Let’s imagine that someone is about to flip a coin into the air. When someone flips a coin in the air, the chance that it will land on “heads” is 50%. ⁽¹⁾ However, “chance” doesn’t make a coin land on heads. Instead, that outcome will depend on many different variables.

For instance, the size, shape, and weight of the coin will affect the result. The number of revolutions that a coin makes before it lands will also influence the outcome. Environmental conditions represent another contributing factor, as well as the surface upon which the coin lands. The coin will also be impacted by a decision to catch it or let it fall to the ground.

The point is that “chance” will not *make* a coin land on heads or tails- that will be determined by several factors. Chance only *describes* the statistical probability that a coin will land in a certain manner. In the same way, the idea that “random chance” brought the universe into existence cannot be possible because chance has no ability to “do” anything.

(1) For the purpose of this illustration, we will discount the nominal possibility that a coin will land on its edge after it is flipped.

So, despite its brevity, the first verse of the Bible offers a great deal of insight regarding the concept of time, the nature of God, and how He brought the universe into existence. Now it’s time to begin our look at what God created...

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

In this context, the word “heavens” refers to the expanse where the sun, moon, and stars reside. Today,

we might refer to this region as “outer space.” ⁽¹⁾

When we speak of the heavens in this manner, it’s natural to think of planets, galaxies, and/or other celestial bodies that are visible in the night sky. However, we should notice that Genesis 1:1 doesn’t mention any such objects yet- it simply refers to “the heavens.” So it seems that God had established the universe at this point in history, but there was nothing within it yet.

Now an expression like “...*the heavens*” is easy to say, but virtually impossible to fully comprehend. For instance, the speed of light is 186,000 miles (299,000 km) per second, or 700 million miles per hour. At that speed, it would take about seven hours to reach the edge of our solar system, and over 100,000 years to travel across our own Milky Way galaxy.

But let’s say that we wanted to stop and visit each of the estimated 100 billion stars within the Milky Way. If we were to visit one new star per hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it would take over 12 million years to visit each one. Yet the Milky Way is just one of *billions* of other galaxies in the known universe. This serves to illustrate the enormity of what God brought into existence here in Genesis 1:1.

It is also possible that Genesis 1:1 records the formation of the material elements that God would later use to construct the rest of the universe in the days ahead, but we’ll discuss that further in a moment...

“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:2 NIV).

Other translations of Genesis 1:2 tell us that the earth was “...*without form and void...*” or “...*a shapeless, chaotic mass...*” (*TLB*) at this stage in its development. This would appear to support the idea that God generated the essential elements that later became the universe as we know it in Genesis 1:1

We could interpret this to mean that the elements of creation were suspended in a formless, fluid state during this phase. Nevertheless, it appears the earth was separate and distinct from everything else at this early stage.

(1) The term “heavens” may also refer to the area within the earth’s atmosphere or the place where God dwells depending on the context

Words like “darkness” and “the deep” suggest that that there were no stars, no planets, no human beings, no energy, and no illumination during this formulative phase. Verse two then lays the foundation for the next step in this creative journey: “*the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*”

This verse represents the first mention of the Holy Spirit within the Biblical Scriptures and offers a glimpse into God's “one yet more than one” nature as implied by the word Elohim mentioned earlier. Some translations employ the word “*moving*” (*NET*), to describe the rapid, back-and-forth action mentioned here. Whatever this refers to, it appears to be related to God’s next creative act...

“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Genesis 1:3).

While the creation of visible light forms the central idea of this passage, we should remember that there is more to “light” than what is visible to the naked eye.

For instance, visible light represents one portion of the electromagnetic spectrum. Therefore, a proclamation like “*Let there be light...*” might also encompass things like gamma rays, x-rays, ultraviolet light, infrared radiation, microwaves, and/or radio waves. In the words of one commentator, “*The statement ‘Let there be light’ may mean ‘Let there be energy of all wavelengths and in all forms.’*” ⁽¹⁾

So, following the creation of time, space, and matter in verse one, God called light or “energy” into existence here in verse three.

(1) See Lambert Dolphin, *What is Light?* Retrieved 22 May 2023 from <http://ldolphin.org/light.html>

***And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.
(Genesis 1:4).***

At this point, it might be useful to acknowledge the numerous individuals who struggle to accept the Biblical account of creation. However, this narrative should pose little difficulty for anyone who accepts the idea that God exists.

After all, a God who is truly God should possess the creative ability we see portrayed in the opening verses of Genesis chapter one. Of course, a “god” who lacked the creative resources necessary to fashion time, space, matter, and energy wouldn’t be a god at all. Such a “god” would be more like a cinematic superhero- a being with superhuman abilities, but nothing more. If we accept the reality of God’s existence, then we should have little difficulty with the creation account that is given to us here in the opening verses of Genesis chapter one.

So Genesis 1:4 tells us that God’s creation was “good.” In other words, this creative work succeeded in the purpose He intended. However, Genesis 1:5 presents us with an interesting and challenging account...

“God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day” (Genesis 1:5).

While concepts like “day” and “night” seem relatively straightforward, we face a potential difficulty when we apply the definition of a “day” to our passage from Genesis 1:5. For instance, we commonly define a day as *“the period of light between dawn and nightfall; the interval from sunrise to sunset.”* ⁽¹⁾

So with this definition of a “day” in mind, the critical element missing from Genesis 1:5 is the earth’s sun. Since the Genesis account of creation tells us that God created the sun on day number four, how could “daytime” exist without it?

It seems implausible to have a *sunrise* and a *sunset* without the sun. And even if light existed without the sun, how could things like “evening and morning” exist? These are all good questions, but fortunately, we have some appropriate answers.

While a “day” typically refers to the interval between sunrise and sunset, there is an even more precise definition available. That definition identifies a day as *“the 24-hour period during which Earth completes one rotation on its axis.”* ⁽²⁾ Since the earth was a large, unformed mass at this stage in its development, this second definition carries great importance.

If the earth was a stationary mass, it would be difficult to understand how “day” and “night” could exist. However, the Genesis account of creation does not say that this unformed mass was immobile. If the shapeless, unformed earth was rotating on an axis, then any external light source might produce a “daytime” and a “night time”

Therefore, if God Himself served as a light source during the earth’s rotation, it would be possible to have a day and a night, even in the sun’s absence. This also corresponds to the description of God given to us later in 1John 1:5: ***“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”*** If the unformed earth was rotating at the same 1070 mph (1722 kph) rate as it does today, then morning, daytime, evening, and

night time would also exist, even though the planet was still “under construction.”

However, this verse also raises a controversial question. You see, the Scriptures will later tell us, “**By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing...**” (*Genesis 2:2 NIV*). In other words, God finished His creative work in six days.

The controversy doesn’t center on the question of why God took six days to do something He could have accomplished instantaneously. Instead, the debate centers on the question of whether God completed His work of creation in six literal 24-hour periods. To be more precise, did God actually create time, space, matter, energy, and everything else in six 23 hour, 56 minute, and 4.09 second increments?

This has been a topic of discussion for a great deal of time. Fortunately, scholars have identified several potential solutions that are worthy of further exploration.

(1) “day” *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved. Retrieved 03 June 2023 from <https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=%20DAY>

(2) Ibid.

The Hebrew word *yom* serves as the basis for our translation of the word “day” in Genesis 1:5. When this word appears in the Old Testament, it is rendered in the following manner...

- This word is translated 1181 times as a normal, 24 hour solar day.
- It is translated sixty-seven times as a reference to time in general.
- There are thirty instances where this word is translated as “today.”
- There are eighteen translations of this word as “forever.”
- This word is translated ten times as “continually.”
- There are six examples where this word is translated as “age.”
- It is translated four times as “life.”
- And finally, this word is translated twice as “perpetually.”⁽¹⁾

So *yom* may have different meanings depending on its context. Nevertheless, it is clear that this word is most often used to refer to a traditional 24-hour day. However, there are many other examples where *yom* refers to an extended period of time.

This has led scholars to assume two basic positions regarding the length of time God used in creating the universe. The first position holds that God completed His creative work in six 24-hour days, just as we normally understand this word today. The second position states that God finished His work of creation in six separate periods of time. This view associated the word “*yom*” with a reference to an age or extended length of time.

(1) See Dr. Raymond Barber, “*What The Bible Teaches*” Copyright 1992 by Sword Of The Lord Publishers, [pg 38]

Below is a brief summary of arguments for and against each position...

Arguments In Favor Of a 24 Hour Creation Day Arguments In Favor Of The Day-Age Position

When the Old Testament word for “day” is paired with a number in the Bible, it always refers to a literal 24-hour period of time.

God’s “*seventh day of rest*” (Genesis 2:2) still continues today.

Terms like “evening” and “morning” hold little meaning if we define a day as an “extended period of time.”

Light from distant stars and galaxies that are thousands of light-years away must have had an extended period of time to reach Earth.

God specifically associates the “seventh day” with the Sabbath day ([Exodus 31:14-15](#)) which is an actual, literal 24 hour period. “*With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day*” (2 Peter 3:8).

It has been said that if a passage of Scripture makes good sense, then we should accept it as it is, lest we end up with nonsense. In considering God’s creative work in Genesis chapter one, we must acknowledge that the most straightforward meaning of the text is that God created the universe in six days just as we commonly understand that word today.

We shouldn’t assume that time has always been as it was during the creation period. 2 Peter 3:4 implies that we can fall into error if we assume that “...*everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.*” We now know that time is also affected by mass, acceleration, and gravity. These advancements tell us that God has allowed for too many variables to be completely certain.

So it appears that there are legitimate arguments for both sides of this discussion, and perhaps it’s possible that God intended it that way. Consider the following passage from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes...

“...(God) has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NLT).

This may explain why it has been difficult to arrive at a definitive answer that satisfies everyone in this debate. God has supplied us with some of the information needed to answer this question, but not all of it. Since we cannot see the entire scope of God’s work from beginning to end, we simply don’t have all the evidence necessary to formulate a conclusive answer.

So far, the book of Genesis has depicted the earth as a watery mass within the newly formed universe. Now that is about to change, for verses six and seven go on to detail the next stage in the earth’s development...

“Then God said, ‘Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.’ Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so” (Genesis 1:6-7).

This passage appears to describe the formation of Earth’s atmosphere by way of this expanse that separated the waters above from the waters below. This likely included the elements that comprise the air we breathe, including nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide and other atmospheric components.

Genesis 1:8 tells us that God referred to this expanse as “sky.” This word has several meanings depending on the context where it is used. For example, this word may refer to the place where God dwells, a place outside the physical universe. It is also used to describe the realm of the stars and planets, a region we know as “outer space” today.

Finally, the word “sky” is also used in the conventional sense to identify the areas within earth’s atmosphere where clouds form and birds fly. This is the meaning of this word as it is used here in Genesis 1:8.

Nevertheless, it’s likely that the expanse mentioned here in Genesis 1:8 is one that differed from the atmosphere we know today. One potential indicator of that difference comes from Genesis 2:5, where we’re told that “...*the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth.*”

“Then God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear'; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:9-10).

It’s possible that some of the materials God used in forming the dry land were dissolved or suspended in the waters that remained after God divided a portion of them to form the atmosphere. The fact that the word used for “land” in verse ten is the same word that’s translated “earth” in Genesis 1:1 lends credence to that possibility.

So it appears that God began to arrange these elements in various ways to form the nascent earth. The result was a planet with three primary features: an inner core, a surrounding mantle, and an outer crust.

Another differentiating feature from the earth we know today is the lack of continental separation among the land masses. We know the individual continents did not exist during this period in earth’s history because God commanded the “...*water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear*” (*emphasis added*).

This indicates that the dry land areas were concentrated in one location while the earth’s waters were gathered in another area.

“Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth'; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day” (Genesis 1:11-13).

There is something that occurs in these verses that differs from the other aspects of creation we’ve seen thus far. You see, God has called every specific element of creation directly into existence up to this point. But that methodology changed on the third day. Notice that God did not produce these individual trees and plants. Instead, He had them produced from the ground He already created.

This tells that it would be a mistake to assume that God will always choose to follow the same methodology He has employed in the past. Just because God has done something one way in the past doesn’t ensure that He will use that same approach in the future.

It is God’s prerogative to move forward on His agenda in ways that may seem unexpected. This remains true whether His ambition involves creating the world or working out His individual plan for our lives.

So Genesis chapter one presents three broad classifications of plant life in verses 11-13. This first category comprised ground-covering plants and vegetation. This includes various forms of grass, moss, algae, mushrooms, and fungi.

Next, we have “*plants bearing seed*” (NIV). This covers other forms of plant life such as vegetables, grains, bushes, shrubs, and flowers. The final division includes larger fruit-producing trees. This refers

to substantial wooden plants that bear cones, nuts, berries, and various types of fruits. These categories represent a vast array of complex living organisms, none of which existed until God spoke them into being.

Our exploration of Genesis chapter one has thus revealed God's handiwork in the formation of things like time, space, and matter. We have also seen God fashion a planet with a dry land mass from a watery, formless beginning. Along the way, we've also seen the addition of an atmosphere along with an abundance of plant life.

God's next creative act involved a physical source for the light He created...

"Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth'; and it was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night..." (Genesis 1:14-16).

These references to "greater" and "lesser" lights obviously refer to the creation of the sun and moon. It's probably accurate to say that most of us give little immediate thought to these objects as we go about our daily lives, unless the weather interferes with our plans. This makes it relatively easy to neglect these passages and the incredible work of creation that God performed.

For instance, let's consider the sun. The interior regions of the sun are at least 10 million degrees Fahrenheit (555537 C). The diameter of the sun is approximately 870,000 miles (1.4 million km). This means we could fit approximately one million earth-sized planets within the diameter of the sun. The sun is also 93 million miles (150 million km) away from the Earth. If we could traverse that distance in an automobile traveling at 60 miles per hour (97 kph), it would take approximately 176 years to complete that journey.

If the sun was in closer proximity to the earth, then life on this planet might be comparable to life on the planet Venus. The average surface temperatures there reach a balmy 847 degrees F (468 C). If the sun was further away, then living on Earth might resemble living on the planet Mars, where temperatures can plunge to -200 degrees Fahrenheit (-129 C). So the sun's distance from the earth is perfectly suited for human life on this planet.

Then we have the moon. The moon is situated approximately 240,000 miles (386,000 km) from the earth. This distance provides the gravitational pull and tidal forces necessary to keep the oceans from growing stagnant.

If the moon was smaller or further away, the earth's oceans would be more like swamps. If the moon was larger or closer, the increased gravitational pull would place many coastal cities under water for a portion of each day. So the moon and sun are each positioned in a way that is ideal for human life.

In addition to their more obvious functions, the sun and moon play another role that may be overlooked: ***"...let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years"*** (NIV). This may seem to be an insignificant function given the other attributes we've discussed. However, this reference serves to illustrate how we can avoid errors by simply reading the Scriptures and putting them into practice.

For instance, let's consider those who rely on astrology to make decisions in life. Proponents of astrology believe that the movement and arrangement of various celestial bodies has an effect upon human events. Those who accept this notion feel that certain events are likely to occur when the sun, moon, or other stellar objects are aligned in a specific manner.

However, this portion of Scripture tells us that the sun and moon have no part in such things. Instead, these objects serve as tools that help us measure the progression of time. So while some contend that the positions of the sun and moon will influence the events of our lives, the Scriptures tell us something different. These celestial bodies do not control human events; rather, they benefit humanity in serving as a clock, a compass, and a calendar. Those who are familiar with this passage from Genesis 1:16 can thus avoid the errors presented by astrology.

We should also consider something else regarding the description of sun and moon that is given to us here in Genesis chapter one. Genesis 1:16 tells us, “...**God made two great lights— the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night..**” (NIV). The sun represents the greater light, of course, and certainly emits light. However, the moon (which is called the “**lesser light**”) isn’t really a light at all. It simply reflects the light provided by the sun. Thus, this reference would seem to be inaccurate.

In addressing this question, we find that word for “light” in the original language of passage refers to “*light (as an element) or luminous body.*” ⁽¹⁾ Each definition thus fits with the description of the sun and moon given to us in Genesis chapter one. The sun provides “light as an element,” and the moon serves as a “luminous body” that reflects the sun’s light to illuminate the night.

(1) H3974 mā’ôr Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h3974/kjv/wlc/0-1/>

“...He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the fourth day” (Genesis 1:16-19).

It might be said that no other sentence in the Bible packs more significance into fewer words than, “**He also made the stars**” (NIV). To pardon the pun, these five words represent an understatement of astronomic proportions when we consider the enormity of this creative work.

For instance, astronomers estimate there are over 100 billion major galaxies within range of current telescope technology. If that figure is accurate, it means that the total number of stars in the known universe is 10²⁶ power, or one hundred million, billion, billion stars. No wonder the Old Testament book of Proverbs tells us, “**The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; By understanding He established the heavens**” (Proverbs 3:19).

Since we’re on this subject, it’s also interesting to note how the Bible has predicted some of our more recent astronomic discoveries. For example, the book of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah alludes to the idea of an expanding universe...

“I have made the earth, And created man on it. I —My hands— stretched out the heavens, And all their host I have commanded” (Isaiah 45:12).

The phrase translated “stretched out” means “*to stretch forth,*” or “*spread out.*” It can also mean, “*to extend in every direction...*” ⁽¹⁾ This is consistent with our current understanding of the universe’s origin.

Jeremiah 33:22 also tells us, “**I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me as countless as the stars of the sky...**” (NIV). It was impossible to validate the Bible’s claim that the stars of the sky were innumerable before the advent of the telescope. But that claim has since been proven accurate. While we can estimate the number of stars in the universe, it

would be futile to attempt to count them all.

The New Testament epistle of 1 Corinthians also makes the following statement...

“There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory” (1 Corinthians 15:41 NIV).

Stars are considerably more than the pinpoints of light in the night sky they seem to be. Today, we know that individual stars differ in color, temperature, and luminosity. There are blue giant stars, red giant stars, white dwarf stars, and neutron stars among others. Thus, we can say that one star differs from another star in glory, just as the Scriptures told us long ago.

Finally, there is another passage from the prophet Isaiah that merits our attention. The book of Isaiah dates to approximately 740-680 B.C. Yet Isaiah 40:22 tells us, ***“He (speaking of God) sits enthroned upon the circle of the earth” (NIV).***

In an era when most people assumed the earth was flat, God’s spokesperson told them it was actually spherical. This was *centuries* before that belief found general acceptance. This brings us to Psalm 8:3-4 and the Psalmist’s response to God’s creative work in establishing the heavens...

“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?”

As we grow in our understanding of the universe, we should also grow in our respect and admiration for the divine creativity of God.

(1) H5186 Natch Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., Thomas Nelson Publishers. See <https://www.studydrive.org/dictionaries/eng/vot/s/stretch-out.html>

We have already witnessed the creation of plant life during our look at Genesis chapter one. Now we’re about to see the emergence of birds and various forms of aquatic life...

“Then God said, ‘Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.’ So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’ So the evening and the morning were the fifth day” (Genesis 1:20-23).

This marks a significant departure from the life forms that God had already brought into being. For instance, “life” is broadly defined as, *“The property or quality that distinguishes living organisms from... inanimate matter; manifested in functions such as metabolism, growth, reproduction, and response to stimuli or adaptation to the environment...”* ⁽¹⁾

However, there is more to life than the ability to grow, reproduce, and respond to the environment. In contrast to the plant life of verse eleven, the animals of verses 20-23 were endowed with an additional attribute: consciousness. While a flower may be alive, it does not possess the capacity to make choices and act upon them. Unlike a typical bird or sea creature, plants lack the cognitive ability to process and respond to information. That illustrates one difference between the life that was created on day three and the life that was created on day five.

However, there is at least one similarity between these creative works. It appears that God had already

determined what He desired before He brought each form of life into existence. It is as if the Creator said, *“This is what I have in mind”* and immediately brought forth every variety of bird and marine animal.

So much like a painter who envisions a masterpiece before he or she has touched a brush to the canvas or a musician who conceives the melody of a beautiful song, God brought each of these magnificent conceptions to reality.

(1) “life” *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition* copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved. Retrieved 03 June, 2023 from <https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=life>

The repeated use of the phrase ***“according to its kind”*** is also important to understand, especially when we evaluate evolutionary theory in light of the Biblical account of creation. In respect to the creation narrative from Genesis chapter one, this phrase references to the genetic distinctiveness of each kind of creature.

From a contemporary perspective, we can associate the word “kind” with the word *species*. Unlike simple life forms that evolve into more complex life forms, each Biblical kind maintains its genetic distinction and reproduces within its kind, or species exclusively.

Nevertheless, we should recognize that there is a difference between “evolution” and “evolutionary theory.” For example, Genesis chapter one tells us that single-celled organisms did not take several steps on the evolutionary ladder on their way to more complex life forms as proponents of evolutionary theory maintain.

However, this does not eliminate the potential for variations or adaptations within the development of each kind. For instance, human beings are not the same as they once were. On average, human beings are taller and heavier than they once were. Perhaps the easiest way to see this progression is in the evolution of athletes who compete in professional sports.

Today’s professional athletes are typically bigger, stronger, and faster than they were in previous generations. We may largely attribute this evolutionary progression to advances in nutrition, training, and exercise methods. But human DNA remains the same, even though today’s professional athletes have evolved into bigger and stronger competitors than they were in the past.

Even though there may be wide variations in the DNA of various species, one “kind” does not evolve into another kind. While it is not unusual to see a particular species change and adapt to its environment over time, a bird is still a bird, a dog is still a dog, and a fish is still a fish. This places the Biblical account of creation in direct conflict with evolutionary theory.

“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind’; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:24-25).

We’ve already seen how God created specific life forms to live within the sea and air environments He created earlier. Now our attention will turn to those creatures that will live on the land areas that God established on day three. These land animals were divided into three general classifications:

- *Livestock*. This serves as a general reference to large domesticated animals one might raise for food or agricultural production. It might also include any animal that we would typically find on a farm or ranch.
- *Creatures that move along the ground*. This would include creatures like worms, snakes,

reptiles, and certain types of insects. It also encompasses other animals that typically move close to ground level.

- *Wild animals.* This refers to undomesticated animals such as elephants, hyenas, lions and similar wild felines, or other untamed animals.

So this section ends by saying, ***“And God saw that it was good.”*** As with God’s other creative works, these land animals perfectly reflected His purpose in creating them.

“Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'”(Genesis 1:26-28).

So now we have reached the point of origin - the place where everything began for humanity.

The words, ***“Let us make man...”*** tell us that God conceptualized and designed humanity before He ever brought the first human being into existence. ***“Let them have dominion”*** also tells us that God had a specific purpose in mind for humanity as well. Whether or not we are aware of it, the direction of our lives will be shaped and influenced by our decision to accept or reject these foundational truths concerning humanity.

For instance, there are some who feel an overwhelming sense of futility. They view the world as a place without reason, purpose, or hope for the future. That sense of futility may arise from the underlying notion that a Creator does not exist and that our lives are simply a product of random chance.

If that belief is true, then it means that human beings are nothing more than cosmic accidents. It also implies that everyone came from nothing and then returns to “nothingness” when they pass from this life.

Anyone who seriously contemplates those beliefs will eventually face a critical question. ***“If I came from nothing and return to nothing when I die, what does everything in-between amount to?”*** When phrased in that manner, the answer must be, *nothing*.

Of course, most people probably don’t actively consider such questions as they go about their daily routines. Nevertheless, that fundamental conviction is revealed in the decisions we make and our attitudes towards life, even when we not immediately conscious of it. You see, people generally act in accordance with their convictions, even if they cannot articulate the underlying causes of their behavior. If we believe that life is ultimately pointless, then that belief will surely lead to feelings and behaviors that reflect that conviction.

Some might challenge that reasoning by saying, ***“If you want to believe ‘God’ exists because that belief offers a sense of meaning and purpose, then that’s OK for you.”*** But here’s the issue: if God does not exist, then our belief in Him will not cause Him to exist. However, if God is real, then our disbelief in His existence is also of no consequence. Either God exists or He doesn’t; our thoughts, feelings, and desires have no bearing on His existence or non-existence.

The word “image” from Genesis 1:26 refers to a ***“resemblance (or) a representative figure.”*** ⁽¹⁾ The word “likeness” means ***“(to) model.”*** ⁽²⁾ So “image” involves the idea of appearance. “Likeness”

implies a kind of similarity. In this, we find that human beings have been made to resemble, model, and represent the God who created us.

So how are human beings made in the image and likeness of God? Well, let's consider some examples:

- The God of the Scriptures possesses consciousness, or awareness. Humans are also conscious beings as well. This would entail moral consciousness (distinguishing right and wrong), self-consciousness (being aware of one's self as an individual), and social consciousness (understanding the proper way to interact with others).
- God has a personality. Human beings also maintain their own distinctive personalities.
- God possesses knowledge, will, and emotions. Human beings possess these attributes, too.
- God has the power to love. Humanity resembles God in the sense that human beings also possess this capacity as well.

Because human beings are made in the image of God, we can interact meaningfully with our Creator. This also means that every human being possesses an inalienable value that is worthy of respect.

Nevertheless, these references to image and likeness should not be taken to imply that God possesses a physical body as we do. For instance, the New Testament Gospel of John tells us, ***“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24)***. Instead, we can understand this to mean that God has given us a physical form that allows us to interact with Him, as well as with the world around us.

For example, [Genesis 16:13](#) tells us that God can see. Human beings possess this ability as well. [Psalm 94:9](#) references God's ability to hear. Human beings maintain that ability too. [Genesis 8:21](#) reports that God ***“...smelled a soothing aroma”*** on one occasion. Human beings also have that capacity.

The Scriptures also tell us that God can [speak](#), [move](#), and [touch](#). Human beings can also do these things through the physical bodies He has given us. These examples illustrate some of the ways we reflect God's image and model, or resemble Him.

(1) H6754 *šelem* Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h6754/kjv/wlc/0-1/>

(2) H1823 *d'mût* Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h1823/kjv/wlc/0-1/>

We find another interesting element within Genesis 1:26...

“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...”

So who is God addressing when He employs words such as “us” and “our” within this passage? Well, earlier we spoke about the Hebrew word *Elohim*, the word translated “God” in Genesis chapter one. We previously discussed the use of this plural word in a singular manner when God is the subject in Genesis chapter one.

We can find another example of this usage here in Genesis 1:26: ***“God (singular) said, “Let us (plural) make man in our (plural) image, in our (plural) likeness.”*** So this passage identifies one Person (God) who is speaking in a plural manner; namely, the creation of humanity in “our” image and likeness. Since the Scriptures tell us there is one God ([Deuteronomy 6:4](#)), this foreshadows the triune nature of God that will be fully unveiled later in the Biblical record.

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27).

So here we find that male and female human beings are a direct creation of God. The original word used for “created” in this passage is another word we've already seen- it's the word *bara* which means

to create or make something out of nothing.

However, Genesis 2:7 later states that, “...***the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground...***” (NIV), thus signifying that God used pre-existing materials in creating humanity. This may seem like an inconsistency until we note the emphasis on the term “image” in Genesis 1:27.

Genesis 2:7 tells us that human beings are physically composed of the same elements God made on the first day of creation. However, Genesis 1:27 emphasizes the idea that humans reflect or “image” their Creator.

It’s also important to note that Genesis 1:27 speaks of men and women as two equal components of humanity. The word “man” is a general descriptor for humankind, which comprises two equal parts: male and female. These male and female components are both distinct and equal, each having been created in the image of God.

“Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'” (Genesis 1:28).

So the very first thing God did with His new creation was offer them His blessing. This stands in sharp contrast to the misleading characterization of God as an austere disciplinarian.

He then assigned leadership responsibilities to the man and woman He created. It is almost impossible to fully appreciate the blessing associated with this God-given privilege. For instance, consider the opportunities that would await a perfect human being with the authority to oversee God’s creation.

Every avenue of science and achievement would be available for study and exploration. And if the earth ever exhausted its potential for human growth, there was an entire universe with a virtually inexhaustible supply of worlds waiting to be discovered.

“And God said, 'See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food'; and it was so” (Genesis 1:29-30).

This arrangement produced a nearly unlimited food supply, since every seed-bearing plant held the capacity to replicate itself and produce fruit that could be eaten again. We should also note this reference to every seed-bearing plant “...***on the face of the whole earth.***” This suggests that plant life could be cultivated in any location on the planet during that time.

Thus, it appears that the newly created earth had no deserts, glaciers, salt flats, or other areas that were unsuited for growing food. This provided human beings with the potential to inhabit any region on earth in the beginning.