

A Commentary on the Story of Creation (Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 RSV)

The opening chapters of the Bible are essential for our understanding of the rest of it. These opening chapters tell us what had been desired by God from the very beginning. The intent of the creation story is not to give a lesson in physics or biology, but a lesson in the theological order of things.

^{1:1} In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters

The key to understanding this reading is contained in the second verse. Before creation, there was no shape to anything and everything was empty. God created everything out of nothing.

³ And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And 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. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

Day 1 = light and dark (day and night)

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

Day 2 = sky and water

⁹ And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ And God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

Day 3 = land and vegetation

At the end of 3 days (three being the number of completion in Hebrew numerology) we have a creation which is no longer formless; God has completed forming it. He has created series of realms. Now let's continue looking at the creation story:

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. ¹⁷ And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over 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 4 = sun, moon and stars (which have dominion over the creation of day 1)

²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens." ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

Day 5 = birds and fish (which have dominion over the creation of day 2)

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in his own 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 earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he

had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

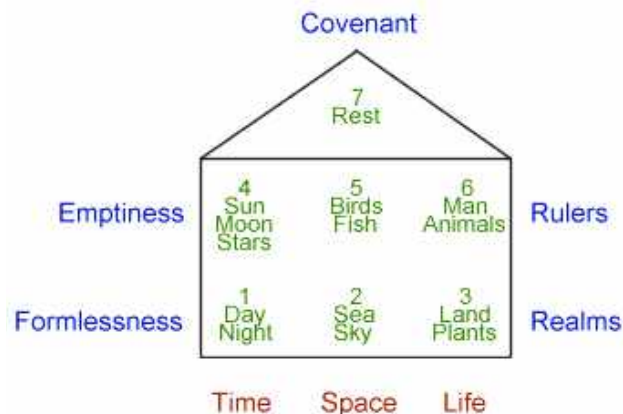
Day 6 = animals and man (which have dominion over the creation of day 3, as well as the creation which rules over day 2)

At the end of the second group of three days (again, the number of completion) the earth is no longer void; God has completed filling it. He has created rulers for the realms.

^{2:1} Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

Day 7 = rest

The third group of days (once again the number of completion) is the seventh day (7 in Hebrew numerology is the number of perfection, the number of the covenant). God has completed covenanting ("sevening") Himself with His creation and He has blessed it (given it the place of primacy) and made it holy.



Since light and dark were created on day one and the sun, moon and stars weren't created until day four, what do the day and night of day one represent? **Time** which is measured by the passage of day and night. St. Thomas Aquinas is reported to have asked "What did God do before He created?" He then he answered his own question "Nothing, He didn't have the time."