

# God and His World

Foundations for Life in Genesis 1 – 11

Part One: Genesis 1:1-2:3

# The delight and the mystery of Genesis

One of the most-  
read books of the  
Old Testament!

One of the most-  
debated books of  
the Old  
Testament!

# Two key questions for effective Bible reading

What DID it mean?

What DOES it  
mean?

The issue of *meaning*

The issue of *significance*

# Two contexts for 'what did it mean?'

## Historical Context

Biblical texts can have meaning only within the time and place in which they are written

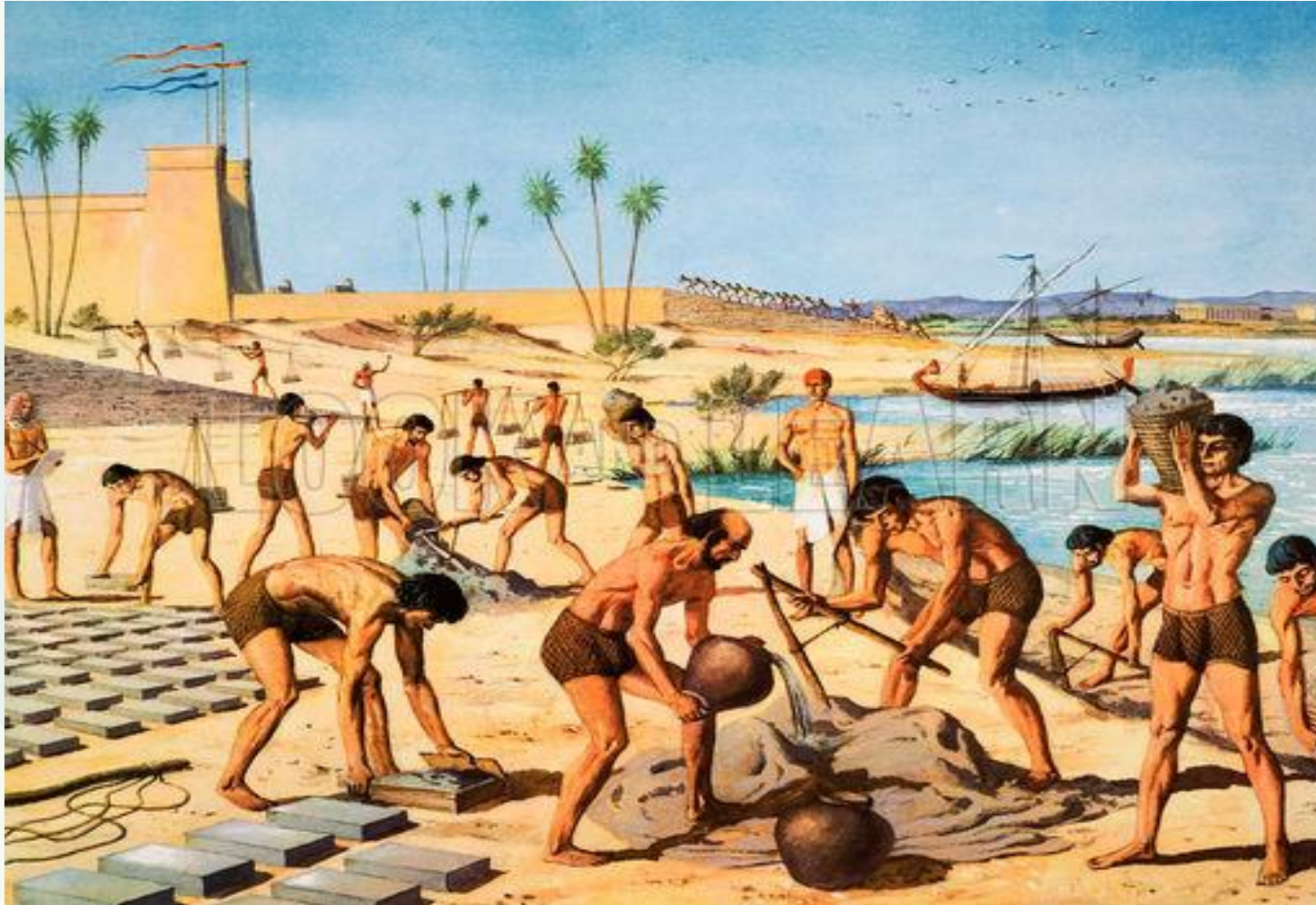
## Literary Context

Biblical texts can have meaning only within the language and literature in which they are written

Who was the  
Author?

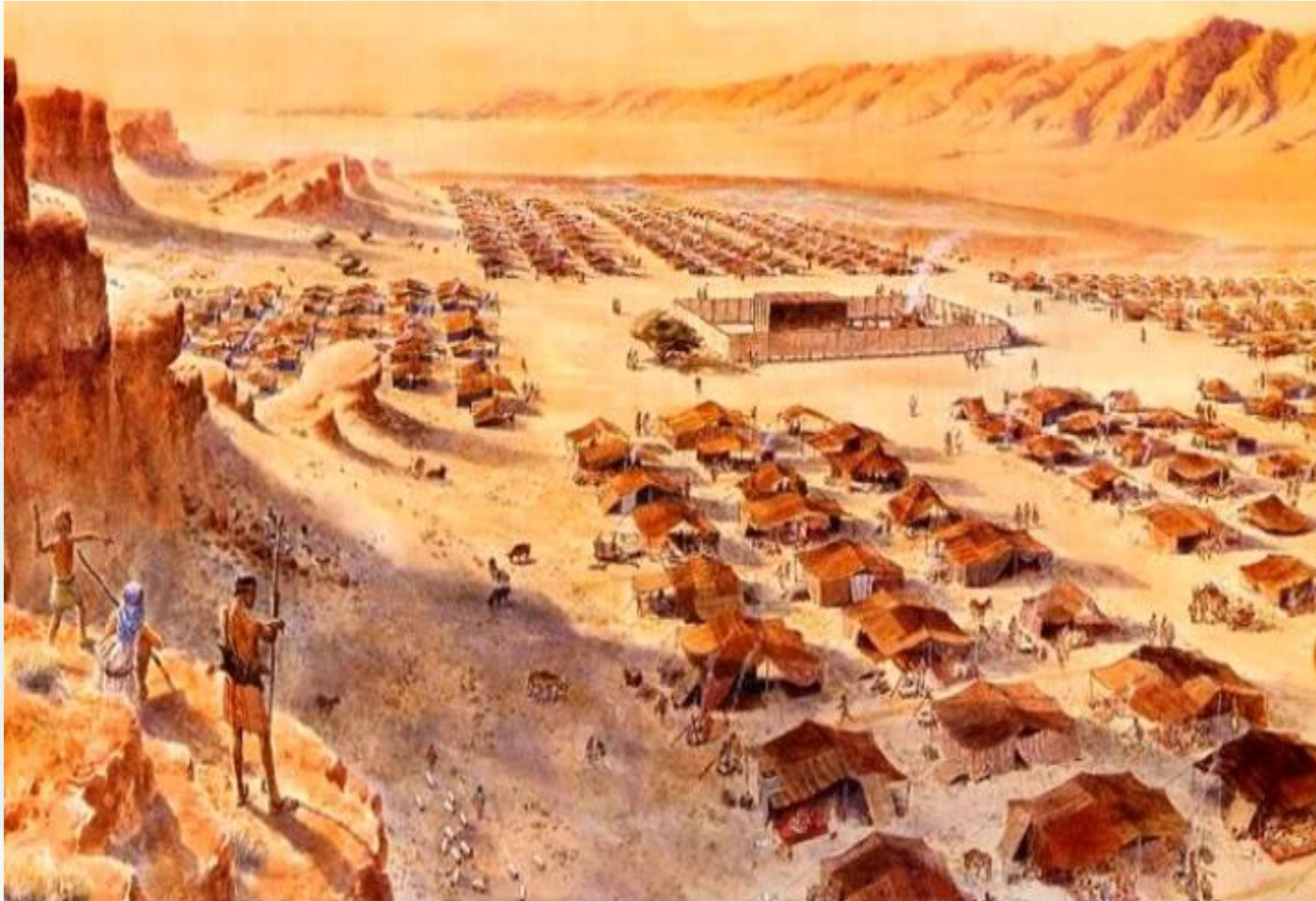
Who were the  
Hearers?

# Who first heard Genesis being read?





# The first hearers of Genesis were the Israelites who escaped slavery in Egypt



# The Book of Genesis: Its Purpose and Preamble

The Patriarchal Stories (Genesis 12-50) is the **Purpose** of the Book of Genesis

The Primeval Stories (Genesis 1-11) is the **Preamble** of the Book of Genesis



The main characters in the Genesis drama

The LORD God

Humanity

# Genesis introduces the biblical theme of God's Purpose

*God has created humanity as his representative, to grow numerically and govern the world, and so to flourish as a community of diverse peoples among whom God may live and over whom he will reign!*

# Genesis 1:1 – 2:3: Our God and His World!



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# Genesis 1:1-2:3 in summary

*The biblical story of creation (Genesis 1:1-2:3) tells us about the Sovereign God who orders the natural world with purposeful design and creates humans to flourish so that they may govern the world as God's representatives, imitating his character*



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# Sherlock Holmes and Watson out Camping!



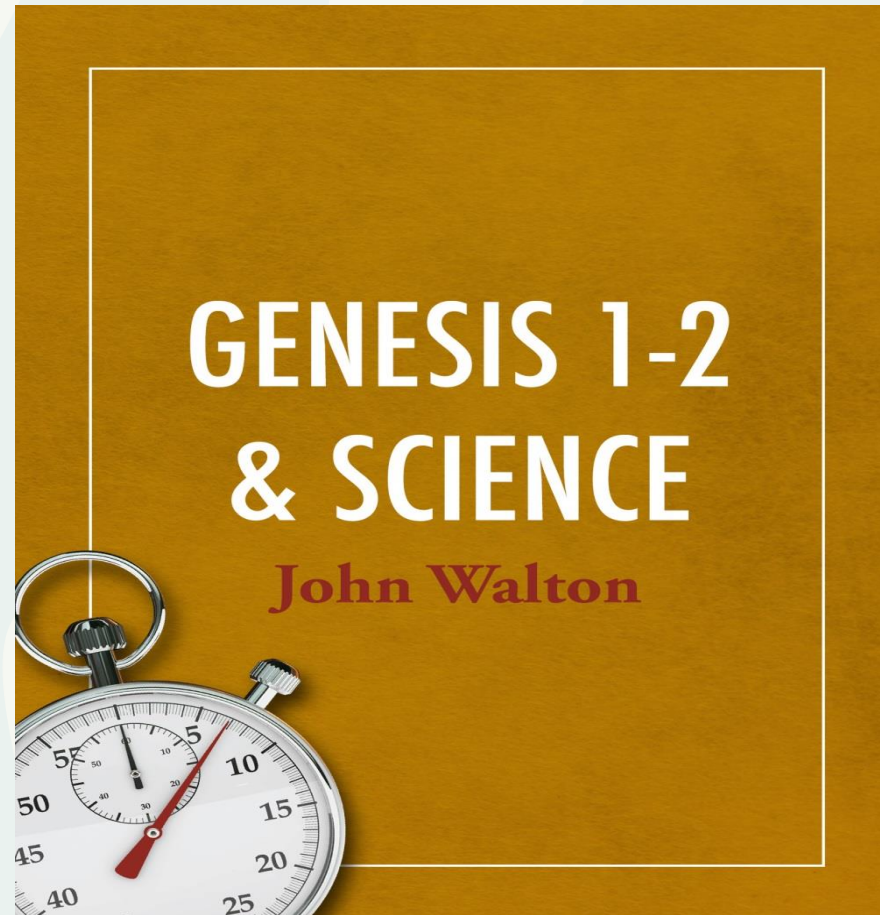
# SCIENCE & THE BIBLE



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# Does Genesis 1 conflict with Science?



Francis Bacon



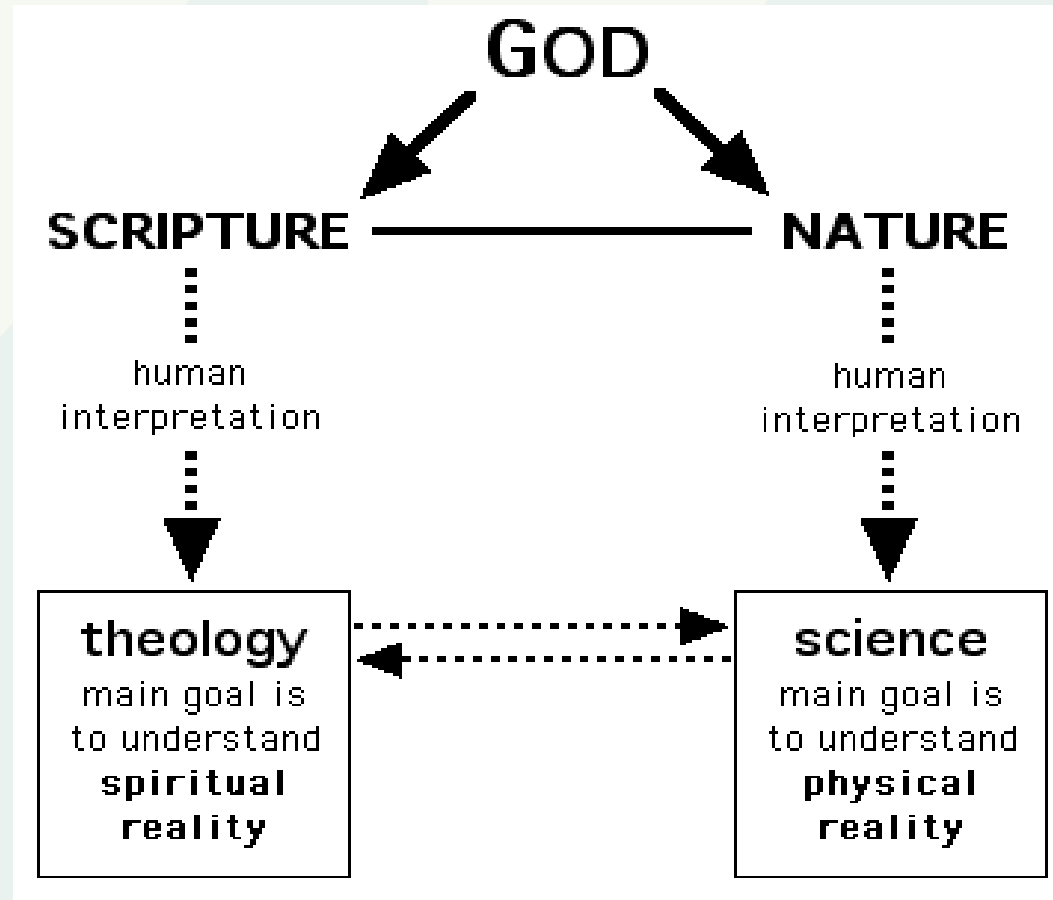
There are two books laid before us to study, to prevent our falling into error; first, the volume of the Scriptures, which reveal the will of God; then the volume of the Creatures, which express His power.

# God has given us TWO books . .



“The great Galileo said that God wrote the book of nature in the form of the language of mathematics. He was convinced that God has given us two books: the book of Sacred Scripture and the book of nature. And the language of nature – this was his conviction – is mathematics, so it is a language of God, a language of the Creator.”

Pope Benedict XVI, 2006



- 2 Timothy 3:15-17


...and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

At Hand worship visual - PM  
[www.at-hand.org](http://www.at-hand.org)



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A photograph of two birds, possibly frigatebirds, flying in a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The birds are dark with white underparts and are shown in profile, wings spread wide.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies  
proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day  
they pour forth speech; night after night they  
reveal knowledge.

**Psalms 19:1-2**

DailyVerses.net



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The theologian searches God's Word to find out *who* God is and *why* he has made the world and humanity (2 Timothy 3:14 – 17).

The scientist searches God's world to find out *what* God is like and *how* he has made the world and humanity (Psalms 19:1; Romans 1:20).



# St. Augustine: About the Theologian and the Scientist

“It happens that even a non-Christian knows some things about the earth, heaven, and other elements of this kind, about the motion and the rotation, size and intervals of stars, about the eclipses of the sun and moon, about the orbits of years and times, about the animals, crops, jewels and other things of this kind in such a way that he holds those by a most certain reason and evidence.”

# St. Augustine: About the Theologian and the Scientist

“But it is a disgraceful and deadly thing – and one most certainly to be avoided – that an unbeliever would hear a Christian speaking about these things as if expounding Christian writings in some delirious manner so that by seeing him wrong about all of heaven, he could scarcely keep from laughing. And it is not so annoying that such a Christian errs but that those outside believe that our authors [of the Scriptures] were in fact saying such things.”

“It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun in just this way, except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us”

*Stephen Hawking (Theoretical  
Physicist commenting on the theory  
of the ‘Big Bang’)*



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# What DID Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 mean?



How would Genesis have sounded to people with an ancient worldview?



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# *Enuma Elish*: A Mesopotamian Creation Story (discovered in 1849)



*Enuma Elish* is a story about gods and goddesses of Mesopotamia, and a decisive battle between *Tiamat* (the goddess of the sea) and *Marduk* (a young and daring god of the divine council)

# Tiamat the chaotic goddess of the sea



# Marduk the chief god of Babylon





And how Marduk killed Tiamat in battle . . .



# How Marduk creates the heavens and the earth!

*Marduk cuts Tiamat's corpse in half, and  
with one half **he creates the heavens** and  
with the other **he creates the earth**.*



# How Marduk creates human beings using the blood of a defeated god!

*"I will knead blood and bone into a savage,  
'Aborigine' will be its name.*

*These aborigines will do the divine assembly's work.*

*These savages will set the divine assembly free.*

*Marduk put the aborigines to work*

*He set the divine assembly free.*

*What an incredible accomplishment!"*



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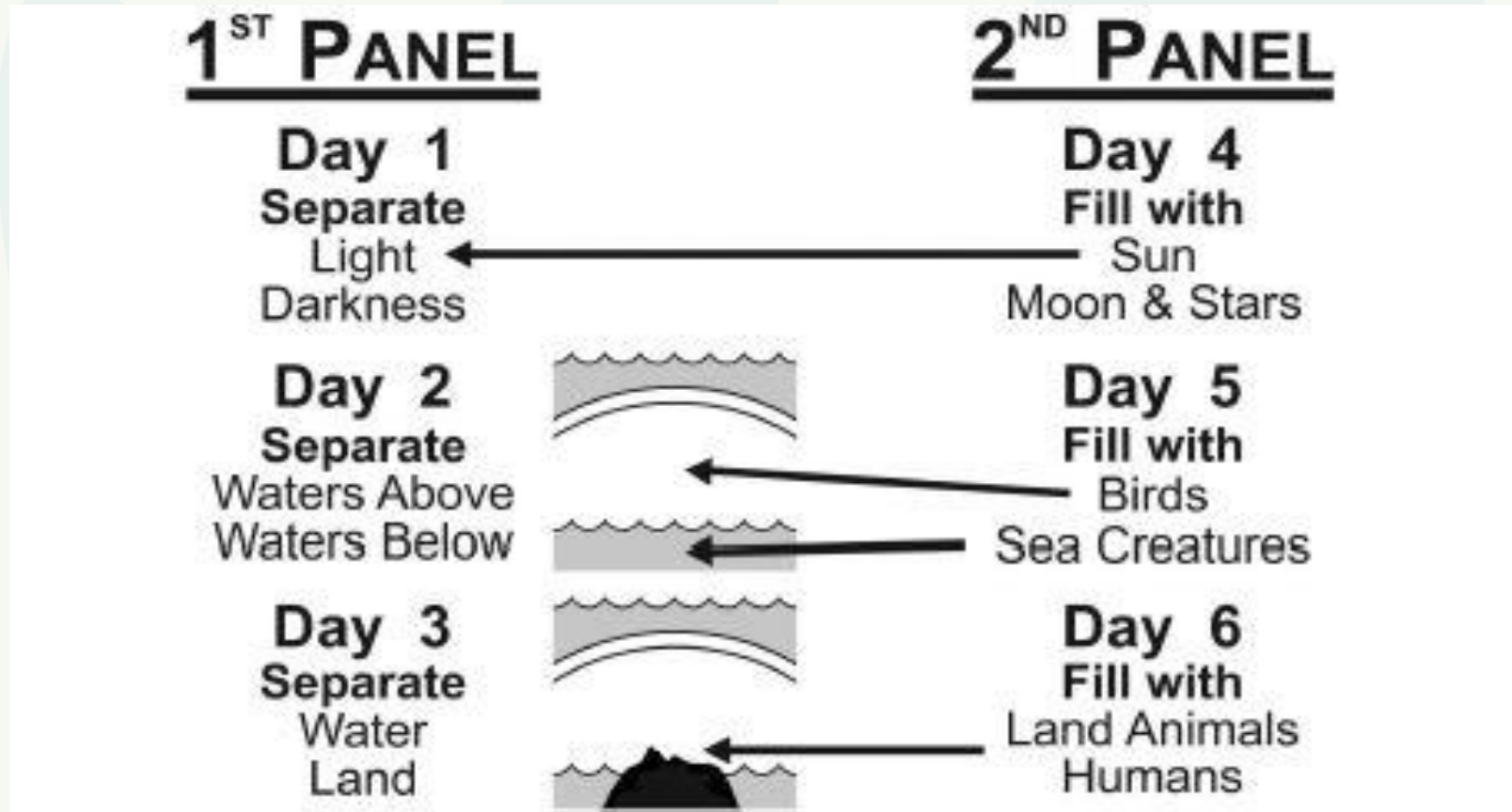
*Enuma Elish* and other similar 'creation-stories' would have formed the worldview of the people of the ancient world.

How might the biblical story of creation have challenged the prevailing view of the world and humanity?

# Reading Genesis 1 on its own terms – Some outstanding features

1. The six days of creation: Forming and Filling
2. The emphasis on words and phrases
3. The 'opening' and 'concluding' sections
4. The "seventh day"

# 1. The Six Days of Creation: Forming and Filling



## 2. The Emphasis on Words and Phrases

- "God" – 35 times
- "Earth" – 21 times
- "Heavens" – 21 times
- "And it was so" – 7 times
- "God made" – 7 times
- "God saw that it was good" – 7 times

### 3. 'Opening' and 'Concluding' sections

#### Genesis 1:1 – 2

1:1 is made up of  
exactly **7 words** ( $7 \times 1$ )

1:2 is made up of  
exactly **14 words** ( $7 \times 2$ )

#### Genesis 2:1 – 3

2:1-3 is made up of  
exactly **35 words** ( $7 \times 5$ )

## 6. The “Seventh Day”?

The “seventh day” is mentioned three times in 2:1-3 in three separate sentences, and each sentence is made up of exactly 7 Hebrew words!



<sup>2</sup> And on *the seventh day* God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on *the seventh day* from all his work that he had done.

<sup>3</sup> So God blessed *the seventh day* and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

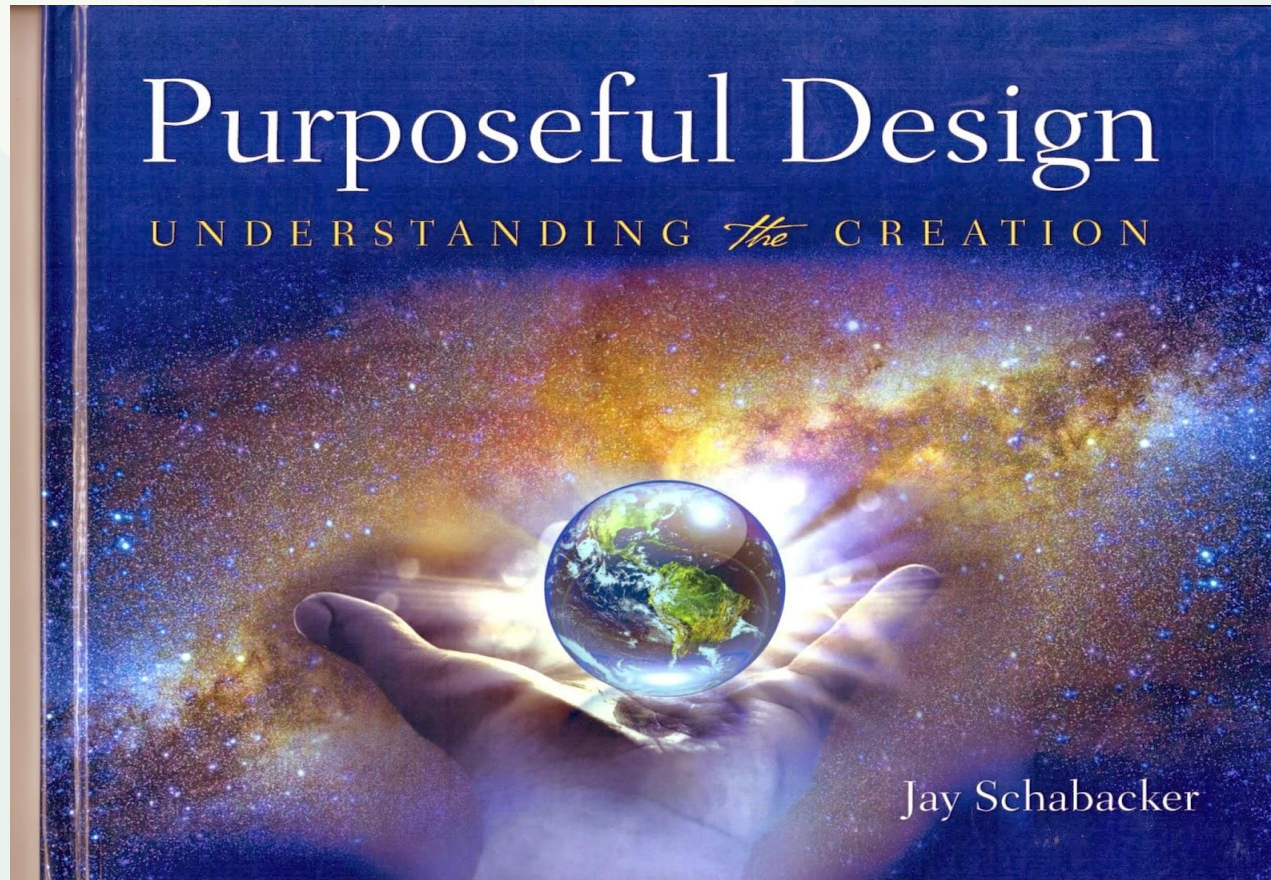
GENESIS 2:2-3

# 5 Timeless Emphases from the opening chapter of the Bible!

# 1. Creation is about “God” not “gods”



## 2. The Created Universe is Purposeful not Random



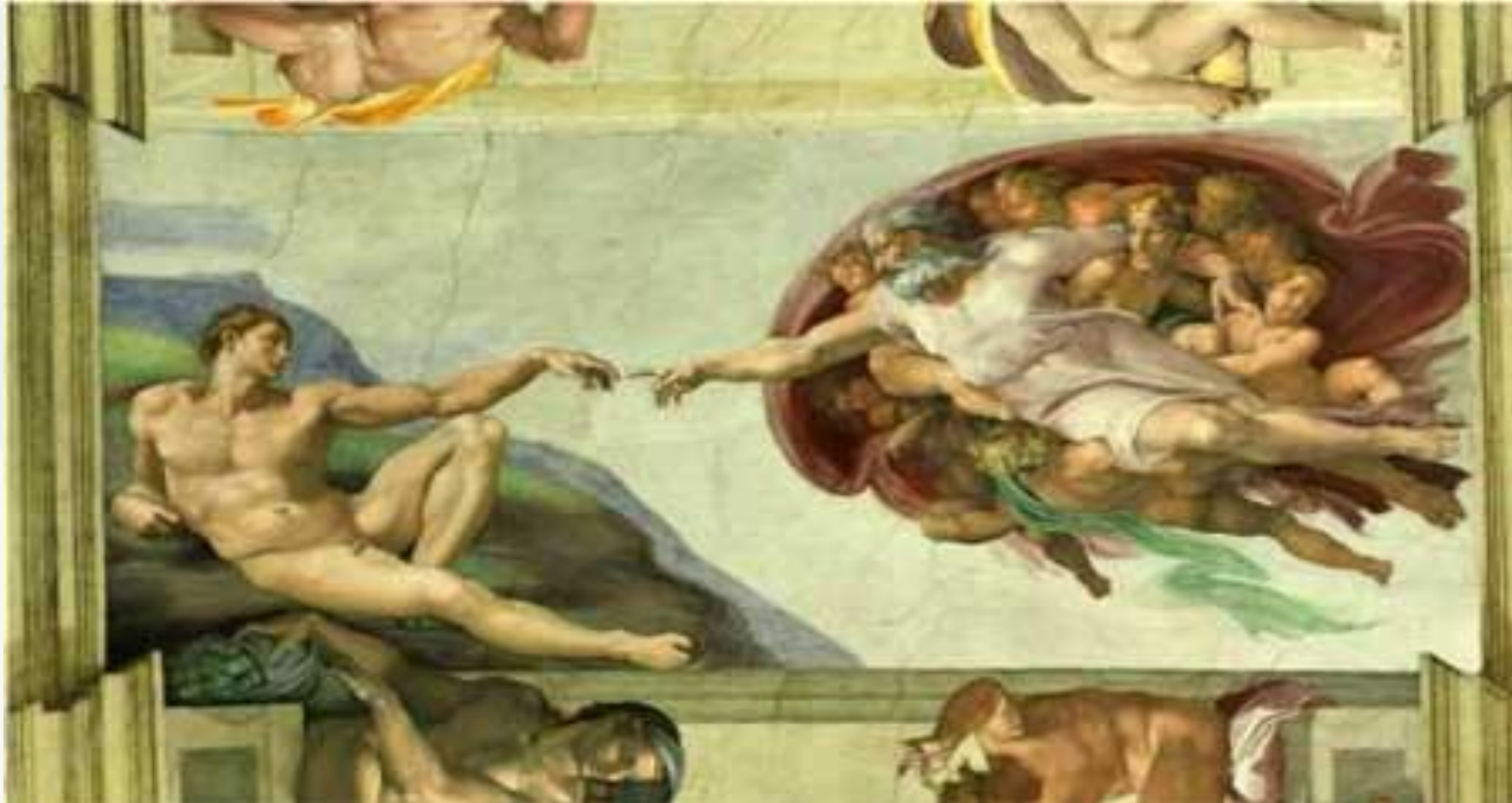
The categorical emphasis is on purpose and function: the sun and moon to rule the day and night, the plants to produce seed and provide food for the living creatures, the fish, birds and animals, to produce after its own kind, and humanity to be God's image-bearer in the world.

# Remove God – Remove Purpose!

“In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.”



### 3. Humanity is the Special Focus of Creation





“You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well”

(KING DAVID IN PSALM 139:13-14)

## 4. Humanity is the “Image of God” – Representing God in the World



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# Humans represent God to His creation!

“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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth”

(Genesis 1:28)

*Humanity's interactions with the rest of the creation must demonstrate the character of God, and the purposes of God for his world*



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## 5. A Work-Rest Pattern in Creation?

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and <sup>w</sup>all the host of them. 2 And <sup>x</sup>on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

# God's design of a 6+1 work week!

In our categories of time, the seven-day week is the only such that is not based on the movements of the sun or the moon. All other categories – the day, the month, and the year – depend on these.

If these are some of the things Genesis  
One DID MEAN to the first readers, then  
what DOES IT MEAN to us today?



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HEARING BECOMING SERVING

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