

Commentary on Genesis 1-2

Commentary

This "Commentary" section is an explanation of the text as it has been translated. In this section comments are added to help clarify my understanding of the account. This is important in two areas. First, in the various instances to explain why a *waw* is translated as it is. And second, for the verbs, to explain why the tense of the verb is understood as it is. Also, in this section bracketed comments in the text portion indicate either the form of the Hebrew verb or where an English verb has been supplied. As was true in the "Translation" section, for chapter 1 the bracketed headings indicate the segment divisions mentioned in the "Explanations" section as well as the end-of-day (EOD) statements.

Chapter 1

This chapter begins with a declaration of God's creation of the universe, including earth. It continues with a description of a subsequent state of "ruin" followed by God's activities over six days in making the earth habitable for mankind and other creatures.

1:1 – Creation

This verse describes God's initial act of creation. It accounts for the creation of the entire universe, including the earth.¹

[Initial Creation]

¹ At a starting-point God created [qal perfect] the heavens and the earth.

I think the phrase "in the beginning" used by most translations should be understood as "at a beginning" or better "at a starting-point."² The phrase references a point in time, rather than a period of time, as the first event in a series of events.³ Given that there is no definite article in the Hebrew text, it seems better to use the English indefinite article rather than to imply an

¹ The view presented herein is that the earth was created prior to day 1 of creation week in a fully formed, fully finished state that was ready for habitation. Subsequent to its creation but also prior to day 1, the earth came to have the uninhabitable state described in 1:2.

² *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner*, Holladay (ed.), provides "starting-point" as a definition of the Hebrew word translated "beginning" and cites Genesis 1:1 as an example.

³ The Hebrew noun *reshith* is used as the opposite of "end" in Isaiah 46:10.

absolute starting-point.⁴ Perhaps there is a sense that this is not the absolute beginning of God's creative activities, but a beginning of his activities as it relates to man's creation, fall, redemption, and glorification. Alternatively, because the Hebrew word normally translated *beginning* is anarthrous, perhaps we could simply understand the phrase as "in beginning" with the idea that this marks the first thing that God did making the earth we know.⁵ The phrase modifies the verb *create*, telling us when God created the heavens and the earth. The author, as he begins this account of origins, is telling us the first action that God took.

This opening phrase suggests a question regarding what God himself was doing prior to beginning his creative work. God himself is an eternal being.⁶ No doubt God could have been involved in other activities before he undertook this creative activity.⁷ I think it best to understand this starting-point as the beginning of the creative activities that involve God's work ultimately with mankind. It represents the point where God for his own glory begins to execute his plan relative to Man's creation, fall, and ultimate rescue.

This statement tells us that God created the heavens and the earth.⁸ It is not just a summary for the entire creation account as some would contend.⁹ This verse should be understood as a statement of God's initial action in a series of actions. It marks the creation of the heavens and the earth. Although those originally reading the text understood "earth" and "heavens"

⁴ This leaves open the idea God may have earlier "starting-points" about which we have no direct revelation. One such starting-point may be the earlier creation of spirit beings, like angels, seraphs, and cherubs.

⁵ It has been objected that this approach makes a noun into a verbal form, like a participle. See, e.g., Authur Custance, *Time and Eternity*, "The Doorway Papers," Volume 6, Part 3: "Between the Lines: An Analysis of Genesis 1:1,2," p. 78.

⁶ By eternal I mean that God has always existed. Beyond the scope of this paper is the consideration of God's relationship with time. Does God experience succession in the sense of past, present, and future in and of himself apart from creation? What is written here assumes that this is the case; God experiences time.

⁷ Certainly, we may conclude that the members of the Godhead made decisions prior to this beginning. At the very least, before they created anything they decided (1) that they would create and (2) precisely what they would create. Creation took place only after these decisions were freely made.

⁸ See also Isaiah 42:5.

⁹ For example, see John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*. He writes, "If the 'beginning' refers to the seven-day period [as Walton proposes] ..., then we would conclude that the first verse does not record a separate act of creation ... but that in fact the creation that it refers to is recounted in the seven days. This suggests that verse 1 serves as a literary introduction to the rest of the chapter" (p. 43-44). He suggests that Genesis 1:1 serves the same function as 2:4, etc. In this regard he writes, "Such a conclusion [regarding his understanding of 1:1] is also supported by the overall structure of the book of Genesis" (p. 44).

in a more limited sense than we do today, as suggested in the “Explanations” section, I think understanding these words given our additional natural revelation does not violate the text. They may have thought of the land on which they were standing, having no planetary concept. But certainly, in creating “the land” on which these people lived God necessarily created the entire earth. And in creating “the heavens” where they observed the sun, moon, and stars, God necessarily created the universe.

That this verse is not just a summary can be seen in that this verse is the only one in the creation account that speaks of the creation of the earth itself.¹⁰ Furthermore, the very next verse assumes earth’s existence. Thus, this statement that God created is operative. That means that after this statement in the narrative the heavens and the earth exist. We know this because, as just noted, the next verse describes the condition of the earth as we find it on day 1 (1:3). And if the earth exists, then according to this statement so too do the heavens.

So then, given that this statement is a statement of God’s creative activity, what is God creating here? The author wrote that God created the heavens and the earth. The Hebrew words for *heavens* and *earth* are *šāmayim* and *’ereš* respectively. First, consider the word *’ereš*. From the perspective of those living when this narration was first given, it is likely that they understood this as “land” in the sense of it being the land that they lived on. Today, given our contemporary concept of the planet earth, we have a different perspective. We envision the entire planet earth. Therefore, we understand this statement to refer to the creation of the planet earth. Does this understanding over-read the text? I think not. If this statement records God’s creation of the land on which these people lived, then it also records the creation of planet earth where we find that land. You cannot have the former without the latter. As noted earlier, we today have the advantage of further natural revelation and can understand the text accordingly.

Second, how are we to understand *šāmayim*? Again, the original readers had no concept of the vast universe as we understand it today. As those looking up day and night, their concept of heavens was simply as the place where we find the sun, moon, and stars. They had no concept of the size of these objects nor of their distances away from the earth. As with our 21st century understanding of the earth, so too our 21st century understanding of the heavens far surpasses that which these people possessed. Today we would understand *šāmayim* different than did they. But again, given our

¹⁰ Given my understanding of day 4 this is also the only verse that speaks of the creation of the material universe. As will be suggested, the day 4 account refers back to this original creation of the universe which would include the sun, moon, and stars.

greater natural revelation, such an understanding is not inconsistent with the text as we have it here in Genesis 1. We can rightly say that Genesis 1:1 records God's creation of the entire universe.

So then, the text says that God created the heavens and the earth and that both were created at the same time, "at a starting-point." Therefore, to me the best explanation of this verse is that it documents the creation of the earth and the rest of the universe, including the sun, the moon, the planets, and the stars in their galaxies as well as any other objects we have discovered in our solar system and in the far reaches of space. Of course, if this is the case, then it means that some clarification is needed regarding what took place on day 4 where the sun, moon, and stars are specifically mentioned.

What about there being no "God said" for this statement of God's initial creation? True, such a statement is lacking here. However, what is lacking here is supplied elsewhere. In Psalm 33:6 we read, "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host." Here the psalmist states that the universe was spoken into existence. So yes, as the creation account begins here in Genesis, there is no explicit statement that God spoke the universe into existence. But according to the psalmist, he did.

So then, as suggested before, at this point in the narrative, the universe exists. God created both the heavens and the earth.

1:2 – Observation

At this point the narrator describes the earth. However, the description of the earth is not as one would expect given the previous verse. Why might this be the case? If a person who did not know anything about this creation account in Genesis were told that God created the earth, that person would naturally think that what God created looked very similar to what we see today. But such is not the description we find in verse 2. So then, how should we understand what we read about this earth?

There are two possibilities. First, the earth God created was exactly as described in Genesis 1:2. It was created as a water-covered, dark planet not ready for human habitation. We must acknowledge that God created the earth as he pleased. So, God could have purposely made it that way. How he created it depended on his intentions. If something is designed to meet God's purpose, then, regardless of what it looks like from our perspective, it is perfect.

Or second, when God created the earth, it was a habitable place. Therefore, it was not created as described in verse 2. If so, what we read in verse 2 is a state into which the earth subsequently came to be. If this is the case, then what happened? Does Scripture provide any insights?

In thinking about the question whether the earth, as created, was like that described in 1:2, there are two avenues to address the question. One avenue involves the word *create*, the Hebrew verb *bārā'*. What does this word mean or imply? The other avenue considers passages of Scripture that may provide commentary regarding what had taken place on the earth to make it as described in 1:2. Interestingly, both avenues seem to point in the direction that the earth's appearance when created was not like that described in verse 2. The earth had undergone a change from its original state.

First, consider the verb *create*. Regarding this verb, Authur Custance argues that the word implies creation of something that is perfect. He writes, "The word [*create*] means strictly 'to cut out' or 'to carve out,' and thence from the idea of sculpture it came to mean 'to put the finishing touch,' 'to polish,' and so 'to prefect.' The basic idea appears to be that God's creative work is a finished product and therefore perfect."¹¹ After citing passages regarding perfection, Custance writes, "From these passages we might conclude that as originally created, the universe was in every way beautifully appointed for the purposes for which God brought it into being."¹² Of course, the difficulty is knowing God purposes. However, in a parallel situation, one might consider Isaiah 65:17 where God creates "new heavens and a new earth." It would be hard to envision this new earth resembling that described in Genesis 1:2. Instead, we would expect it to be a perfect abode for God's creatures, even as it comes from his hands. So, perhaps that is the way we should also envision the original earth when it was created.

Do other passages support the idea that God made the earth in what we might call a "polished" or "finished" state? The passage most often cited in this regard is Isaiah 45:18. There Isaiah writes, "[The LORD] did not create [the earth] empty." This statement of itself says nothing about God's intentions, only his actions. The word translated "empty" has the idea of being worthless or void of value, like a wasteland. It is used of things that are desolate. This word is used in Genesis 1:2. There the text describes the earth using this word "empty." The earth was "empty." However, in Isaiah we read that the earth was not created "empty." It seems reasonable to conclude that originally the earth was not "empty" but later came to be that way.

Second, if it is correct to say that the earth was not created "empty" as we find it in Genesis 1:2, it might be helpful to consider the question of how the earth came to be in that state. Does Scripture provide any ideas regarding

¹¹ Authur Custance, *Time and Eternity*, "The Doorway Papers," Volume 6, Part 3: "Between the Lines: An Analysis of Genesis 1:1,2," p. 83. However, as noted, we must keep in mind that what is perfect from God's perspective may not seem so from ours.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

what might have happened to bring the earth to this state and thereby help us understand what we find there?

A possible explanation is as follows.¹³

- God established a plan and made a decree. This plan included the creation of a material universe to be inhabited by moral creatures. Heaven and earth would hold special places in that universe. These creatures would include some having a spiritual nature and others having a physical nature.
- God created the creatures having a spiritual nature. These creatures were of various types and orders. A particular creature, Lucifer, was placed as the supreme authority with only God himself being higher.
- God created the physical universe. This included the heavens and the earth. The spiritual creatures were witness to that creating. This is the creation recorded in Genesis 1:1.
- God gave the spiritual creatures dominion over his physical creation. The earth was the center of that dominion and only heaven, the place of God's throne, being exempt. Lucifer operated from the earth as a king on an earthly throne.
- After some time, Lucifer rebelled against God's dominion over him. He sought to usurp God's authority and to elevate himself from earth to heaven. Other spiritual creatures rebelled along with him.
- Because of Lucifer's rebellion, God judged Lucifer and those who rebelled with him. It seems that this judgment also included the earth from which Lucifer had been operating. It is this judgment on the earth that changed the earth from its original "non-empty" state to the "empty" state we find in Genesis 1:2.
- After some time, having taken dominion over the earth from Lucifer and having judged the earth, God made the earth ready for beings he would create having physical natures. To these creatures God would grant dominion over the earth. This is the activity described starting in Genesis 1:3.

This scenario seems reasonable considering what we find in Scripture about God's and Lucifer's activities. It takes into consideration such passages as Genesis 1-3; Job 1-2; 38:4-7; Isaiah 14:12-16; Ezekiel 28:11-19; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 6:11-12; and Revelation 12:3-4, 7-9.

Thus, the originally created earth subsequently came under judgment. It is this judged earth that is described in Genesis 1:2. This conclusion leads to the idea that there is a period of unknown duration between Genesis 1:1 and 1:3. This period started with creation as recorded in 1:1 and ended with the day 1 activity of creation week recorded in 1:3-5. This being the case, verse

¹³ It is beyond the scope of this paper to develop the details of this scenario.

two is describing the state of the earth when those day 1 activities commenced.

[Subsequent Observation]

² But the earth had become [qal perfect] without form and void. And darkness was [supplied] over the surface of the deep. And the Spirit of God was [supplied] hovering [piel participle] over the surface of the water.

Verse 1 records the creation of the earth. This second verse then describes state of the earth. As just suggested, this is the earth as we find it at the beginning of the first day of creation week. There is no creative activity in this second verse. What we have is a description of the earth's condition, dark and water covered, and of a work of the Spirit of God associated with that earth. As it concerns the "darkness" on the earth, it is important as we examine this verse to be careful not to read into the account more than is written.

The conjunction starting this verse is left untranslated by some versions (e.g., ESV, NASB, and NKJV). Others translate it as "now" (e.g., NETB, CSB, and NIV). However, it seems to me that this *waw* conjunction (not a *waw* consecutive) should be translated and is perhaps best understood in an adversative sense. Without additional information, anyone reading verse 1 would naturally expect that the earth would resemble something like what is presently observed. However, as verse 2 indicates, that was not at all the case. As the author records here, the earth was an inhospitable place that was not in any way ready for the habitation of Man and other creatures. It was nothing like what it would become. So, I think the adversative conjunction *but* works well here.

We now have a description of the earth as it existed when creation week commenced. First, it was "without form and void." Much has been said about what this might mean. It seems best to simply understand it to mean that the earth was basically empty in the sense that it was not ready as the habitation for plants, animals, and human beings. God created the earth to be inhabited. It was not his intention that the earth remain in this desolate state. Perhaps this is how we should understand Isaiah 45:18. "For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): 'I am the LORD, and there is no other'" (ESV). God's plan at this point was for earth to be inhabited by various creatures and ultimately by human beings. As it presently stood, the earth was not at all a habitable place for these creatures. Over the course of creation week, God would make it such.

Second, the earth was covered with “the deep,” with water. I think most Bible students would agree that this verse indicates a water-covered earth. Here the writer refers to both “the deep” and “the water.” This seems consistent with what we read happening on day 2 where we find specific references to water, and day 3 where dry land first appears. From our perspective today, we would understand that the planet earth was entirely covered by water, perhaps of uniform depth.

Third, the deep was enveloped in darkness. It is significant to note that twice the author mentions “the surface,” i.e., the surface of the water covering the earth. The perspective here is that from the water-covered surface of the earth. Thus, we should not extrapolate that it is dark anywhere else, but only where God specifically tells us it is dark. The perspective is not that of a space traveler, as of someone out in space looking down on a dark planet earth. Scripture says that it is dark “over the surface of the deep.” There is nothing here or elsewhere in Scripture that would lead us to believe that it is dark anywhere else. God, the ultimate author, was quite explicit.

The presence of this darkness raises a question. Why might the surface of the earth be dark, especially if we agree that earlier God had created the universe including the sun? If we look at the activities of day 2, perhaps we can understand the reason for the darkness. From verse 2 we know that the earth was covered with liquid water, “the deep,” also designated “the water.” But that does not seem to be the whole story. From the activity described for day 2 we read about a separating of “the water from the water.” It would seem then that there was also water above the deep, water in this case that would be in the form of clouds of water. Evidently this water was like a thick fog. In this case the fog was so dense that no light from the sun could penetrate it to reach the earth’s surface. Thus, the surface of the deep, where the Spirit was hovering, was dark. However, if one could have risen above this fog, he would have seen the light of the sun shining on a cloud enshrouded earth.

Fourth, the Spirit was “hovering over the surface of the water.” This is an interesting revelation by God, especially given the choice of the verb, *hover* or *moving over*. Why was the Spirit of God mentioned in this relationship with the water covered earth? We are not told. Perhaps the Spirit is involved with activities that are taking place at this point and in the subsequent days of the creation week, activities specifically attributed to him. However, there is no compelling answer to this question. What we do know is that the Spirit of God was present here on the earth.

1:3-5 – Day 1

With the description of earth just given, the author begins a day-by-day account of activities, undertaken by God. These activities would change the

earth from its then “desolate” state to a state where it could be inhabited by Man and other creatures God would make. Here on day 1 God completes the task of bringing light to the surface of the earth where it had been dark.

[Day 1 – Creative/Reconstructive]

³ **Then God said** [qal waw consecutive imperfect], **“Let there be** [qal imperfect jussive] **light,” and there was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **light.**

With this verse we now move to actions that God took with reference to the earth and overhead sky. This verse begins a long series of verbs of the imperfect form accompanied by a “waw consecutive.” Concerning such a series, Gesenius writes, “One of the most striking peculiarities in the Hebrew consecution of tenses is the phenomenon that, in representing a series of past events, only the first verb stands in the perfect, and the narration is continued in the imperfect.”¹⁴ In this case, the verb in the perfect tense is that found in verse 2, namely, “had become.”

This third verse indicates the activity of day 1. It is the beginning of a “Creative/Reconstructive” segment. I think the translation of the waw consecutive as “then,” emphasizing a temporal sequence is helpful.

In the jussive verb forms used in this account, some indicate God’s action whereas others indicate God’s intention. The context helps us distinguish these uses. Here, the jussive form indicates God’s action. We recognize this to be the case because of the following “and there was light” indicating the action was completed.

Again, as with verse 2, care is needed when we examine this verse. We must be careful not to assume to be true more than is stated. And, it is important to keep in mind that even though God says, “Let there be light,” there is not necessarily a creative act described here.

If we accept that the sun was created earlier, “at a starting-point,” then nothing needs to be created for this verse to be true. And the verse does not specifically say that God created light. There is no verb for “create,” or for that matter “make,” and the phrase “let there be” does not require a creative act (e.g., similar to 1:6, the expanse, and 1:9, the dry ground, where nothing is created). It seems best to conclude that no creative act occurred here but that God took some “reconstructive” action using the things previously created. And whatever God did reconstructively, it caused light to appear where it had previously been dark.

¹⁴ *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, Section 49, “The Perfect and Imperfect with Waw Consecutive,” cited from BibleWorks Version 10.

If the sun was already in existence and light was not *created* here, then what does “Let there be light.” mean? It is dark somewhere and in that place God wanted it to be light. Knowing where it is dark will help us understand where there needs to be light. If the light came from the sun which had been created earlier then what was the extent of this enlightening? Where was darkness being dispelled by light? In the context, the only safe conclusion is that light now reached to the surface of the deep where it had been dark. After all, we are explicitly told that the surface of the deep was dark. It seems obvious then that it was that darkness just mentioned that was being addressed by this command. We should not extrapolate that there was darkness everywhere in God’s creation. We are told where it was dark and should leave it at that.

What changed when God said, “Let there be light.”? Perhaps the Spirit of God who was himself “hovering over the surface of the water” where it was dark took an action permitting light to penetrate to the surface of the deep. If so, the actual work accomplished by the command to let there be light may have been some sort of operation on the water cloud which was over the surface of the deep. In some way, God caused the dense fog to thin or clear to the point that it no longer kept the sun’s light from penetrating to the surface of the deep.¹⁵ However, we should be careful in understanding what that might mean and what we should conclude. That light now reached the surface of the earth does not mean that one observing from the earth’s watery surface would be able, *at this point*, to see the sun itself. For this “let there be light” to be complete, it is only necessary for the light from the sun to be visible, perhaps just as on a cloudy, heavily overcast day. It is not required that one be able to see the orb of the sun for this command to be completed.

Following the “let there be light” we find the expression “and there was light.” This expression is basically equivalent to the “and it was so” that we find in other places in the account. It means that the action of bringing light to where it had been dark is complete at this juncture in the storyline. What God intended to happen has now been completed. At this point in the account light is reaching the watery surface of the earth. The next two verses provide commentary based on what had just taken place.

[Day 1 – Observation/Follow-up]

⁴ **So God saw** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **that the light was** [supplied] **good. Now God had separated** [hiphil waw consecutive imperfect] **the light from the darkness.** ⁵ **And God called** [qal waw

¹⁵ It was Dr. Bernard Northrup at what is now Baptist Bible Seminary (Clarks Summit, PA) who suggested this idea to me (and other students) while we were studying Hebrew.

consecutive imperfect] **the light “day,” and the darkness he called** [qal perfect] **“night.”**

At this point in the narrative we have observations and additional commentary based on what God had just done in causing light to penetrate to the surface of the water-covered earth. As noted earlier, the *waw* consecutive that begins a “Observation/Follow-up” segment is translated so to suggest logical sequence.

What does the author tell us? First, God’s assessment is that what he had just done was good. Now light reached the surface of the earth where God would place plants, animals, and human beings. It was no longer totally dark there. From God’s perspective this is good. Here the author is very specific. It is the light which dispelled the darkness that is pronounced to be good.

Second, we see a by-product of the light now reaching to the surface of the earth. Light is now separated from darkness there. From our perspective today we would take this to mean that half of the water-covered earth, the sun-facing side, had light and the other half was dark. We understand this half and half scenario. It is not likely the original readers understood the reason for the light-darkness separation even though they were fully aware of a 24-hour day and night cycle. Because the action had already been completed and in fact was deemed to be good, the statement “God separated” is better understood as “God had separated.” This separation is not a distinctive act. The separation happened by default when God said, “Let there be light.” Light by its very nature dispels darkness. Where there had been only darkness at the surface of the deep, now there was both light and darkness. The light did not fully envelop the earth.

Third, based on the now existing light and darkness, God designated the light “day” and the darkness “night.” Again, this is just as we would expect given our present knowledge of the earth-sun relationship. The light source is the sun, now providing light to the surface of a spherical, half-light and half-dark earth. Light from the sun, created earlier, is now penetrating the cloud-enshrouded earth and reaching the surface of the earth. From the surface of the earth, it is now possible to distinguish day (on the sun facing side) and night (on the opposite side). Before this the entire surface of the earth had been in darkness. On the earth, which is already rotating on its axis while revolving around the sun, evening and morning are now apparent with the separation of light and darkness on its surface.

The Hebrew word *yôm* is translated as “day” throughout this first chapter. It is used of both a 12-hour daylight period in contrast to nighttime, as in this

verse,¹⁶ and a 24-hour day-night period as in the next and later verses which mark the evening-morning cycle.¹⁷

[Day 1 – EOD]

And there was [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **evening and there was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **morning, the first day.**

This verse has two *waw* consecutives used in reference to the sequence of days. “And there was evening and there was morning.” Even though these are temporal in nature I have chosen to simply translate these *waw* occurrences marking the days with the word *and* leaving the word *then* for the flow of the creative and reconstructive acts.

The reference to evening followed by morning suggests a rotating earth, just as we would expect today. The word *day* here and in the remaining evening-morning verses is accompanied by a number: first, second, etc. Given this and the repetition of “and there was evening and there was morning” we should understand this as a solar day. We understand “evening” and “morning” in a non-figurative way. We should understand “day” that way as well.

This statement marks the end of the first day of the creation week. On this day God took a single action. He caused light from the previously created sun to reach the surface of the earth so that half of the earth was in this light and half of the earth was in darkness. We would conclude, based on the evening-morning cycle, that the earth was rotating on its axis.

1:6-8 – Day 2

These verses describe the activity of day 2. The single activity of this day involved establishing an expanse. This expanse would exist between the liquid water covering the earth and the cloud water that was above it.

[Day 2 – Creative/Reconstructive]

⁶ **Then God said** [qal waw consecutive imperfect], “**Let there be** [qal imperfect jussive] **an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let** [qal imperfect jussive] **it separate** [hiphil participle] **the water from the water.”** ⁷ **Thus God made** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **the expanse and separated** [hiphil waw consecutive imperfect] **the water that was** [supplied] **under the expanse from the water that was** [supplied] **above the expanse. And it was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **so.**

These two verses resume the temporal account of God’s Creative/Reconstructive activity, but now for day 2. This is the start of

¹⁶ See also 1:14, 16, and 18 where daytime is again contrasted with nighttime.

¹⁷ The word *day* is also used in 2:4 to refer to the entire creation week period.

another Creative/Reconstructive segment. Again, I think the translation of the *waw* consecutive of verse 6 as “then” indicating a temporal sequence is helpful.

In verse 6 the two jussive expressions “let there be” may be understood as indications of God’s intentions. Such statements of intention are like the “let us make man” on day 6. Here the first expression describes an action to be taken and the second one describes what that action will cause. With the statement of verse 7, which precedes the completion statement “and it was so,” God carried out those intentions.

How are we to understand what God is making here, namely “an expanse?” The Hebrew word *rāqîaʿ* refers to a beaten, metal plate. Some suggest that the idea is perhaps of a heavenly vault or a solid dome.¹⁸ Citing this verse and those following, Brown, Driver, and Briggs say the word refers to “the vault of heaven, or ‘firmament,’ regarded by Hebrews as solid, and supporting ‘waters’ above it.”¹⁹ With this understanding the NIV translates this word as “vault” and the KJV and NKJV translate it as “firmament.”

However, the idea that God is creating something solid or firm that holds up water is misguided.²⁰ The idea is of an open expanse or of the sky or atmosphere as we understand it today. This is the understanding as translated by the ESV, the NASB, the CSB, and the NETB. For this Hebrew word *The Theological Workbook of the Old Testament* includes the following commentary.

The Mosaic account of creation uses *rāqîaʿ* interchangeably for the “open expanse of the heavens” in which birds fly ..., i.e. the atmosphere ..., and that farther expanse of sky in which God placed “the lights... for signs and for seasons” (vv. 14,17, referring apparently to their becoming visible through the cloud cover; the stars, sun, and moon presumably

¹⁸ Holladay (ed.), *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner*, *rāqîaʿ* (in BibleWorks 10).

¹⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew-Aramaic and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, *rāqîaʿ* (in BibleWorks 10).

²⁰ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *The Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*, *rāqîaʿ* (in BibleWorks 10). The article there includes this commentary. “In pre-Christian Egypt confusion was introduced into biblical cosmology when the LXX, perhaps under the influence of Alexandrian theories of a ‘stone vault’ of heaven, rendered *rāqîaʿ* by *stereōma*, suggesting some firm, solid structure. This Greek concept was then reflected by the Latin *firmamentum*, hence KJV ‘firmament.’ To this day negative criticism speaks of the ‘vault,’ or ‘firmament,’ regarded by Hebrews as solid, and supporting ‘waters’ above it (BDB, p. 956).”

having been created already in v. 3), i.e. empty space ..., over which, as Job said, "He stretches out the north" (Job 26:7, ESV).²¹

Verse 7 serves to clarify the action whereby God made the expanse and used it to cause a separation between the waters. This clarification helps the reader understand the phrases "the midst of the waters" and "the water from the water" of verse 6.²²

Note that in translating the Hebrew word for *water*, which is plural in each instance in these two verses, I have chosen a plural for the first and singulars for the others.²³ In the first instance in verse 6 the word is referring to the two forms of water. In the other instances there is a distinction being made between these two forms. On the one hand there is a sea of water on the surface of the earth and on the other hand there is a cloud of water above that sea.

What is happening here? Apparently, the process described here is one of "lifting" or "elevating" the cloud waters that were over the deep to a place above earth's surface to create a space or "expanse" between the two "bodies" of water. This expanse would exist over the entire surface of the earth. The size of the expanse, i.e., the distance between the "bodies" of water, is not known. Note too that as the expanse was being made one would expect that the clouds would thin as they rise and are "stretched" over a larger area. This expanse may not have reached its final form until day 4.

Here God is operating on previously created materials, on things he had created "at a starting-point." Even though the waters over the surface of the deep are not mentioned in verse 2, we know they existed because their presence is simply assumed for the account of day 2. Thus, there is no creative action described here. The action is reconstructive. As God made the expanse, he "separated the water which was under the expanse from the water which was above the expanse."

The "water that was above the expanse" is thought by some to have created a filtering "greenhouse effect" on earth that lasted, as they propose, from this day 2 until the time of Noah's Flood at which time this water was caused to fall to the earth in the form of rain. If this is the case, it could help explain two things that took place at the time of the Flood. First, if these waters were precipitated during the Flood, it may help explain the source of

²¹Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *The Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*, *rāqîa'* (in BibleWorks 10). However, as suggested earlier, I would see "the stars, sun, and moon" as having been created in verse 1 rather than verse 3.

²² Perhaps Psalm 148:4-5, which references creation, is speaking of the expanse and waters mentioned here.

²³ This is consistent with the approach used in the NIV and NETB versions.

the 40 days and nights of global rain. Second, the absence of this water after it precipitated may help explain the drop in Man's longevity that started after the Flood as more intense radiation reached the surface of the earth once this water above the expanse was no longer present. Third, with the understanding that this account is pre-Flood, it would have been written when this water was still in place.

It is important to note that the writer defines this *expanse* as the area between the water covering the earth and the water now lifted (or being lifted) high above the earth. This definition will become significant when on day 4 we read "let there be lights in the expanse, the sky."

The "and it was so" of verse 7 shows that at this point in the storyline the action mentioned has been undertaken. An expanse now exists. What follows is additional information about what was just accomplished.

[Day 2 – Observation/Follow-up]

⁸ So God called [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **the expanse "sky."**

The translation of the *waw* consecutive is *so*, since this verse begins a logical "Observation/Follow-up" segment.

The commentary here is the briefest regarding all of God's activities. God simply designated the just made expanse "sky." The Hebrew word here is the same as that translated "heavens" in 1:1. But the two uses are to be distinguished.²⁴ Translators recognize this because they translate this plural word as "heavens" in 1:1 and here as singular "sky" or "heaven." There in 1:1 the word is a reference to the universe. Here the word is a reference to the area or atmosphere just above the earth's surface. On day 2 God made the sky as an area between the waters, an area, as we will see, where the birds will fly.

[Day 2 – EOD]

And there was [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **evening and there was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **morning, the second day.**

This statement marks the end of the second day of creation the week. On this day the one activity was the making of an expanse between water on the earth and water above the earth.

It is significant to note that there is no pronouncement of good regarding the activity of day 2. This absence raises the question, "Why?" This is especially the case when we find such pronouncements with respect to activities of the other five days. Why is this action not said to be good? Is

²⁴ Those holding that 1:1 is a summary could conclude that the two uses are identical, both referring to the sky, the expanse just made.

this absence simply an oversight? Did God really pronounce this activity as good but fail to tell us so? I think not. It is a deliberate omission? Did God withhold the pronouncement of good in this case? I think so.²⁵ But then, "Why?"

Here on the second day perhaps this omission is because the purpose for and work with the expanse or sky has yet to be completed and will not be completed until the fourth day. At this point on day 2, still only diffused light is reaching the surface of the earth, as one would experience during a cloudy, overcast day. The sun, moon, and stars would still be invisible to the earth-bound observer. So then, with a view toward day 4, it seems safe to conclude that someone at the surface of the earth could not yet see the actual source of the light, the sun, though it had been created at the starting-point. In this instance, pronouncement of good will await God's completion of "expanse" activity. For this day 2 activity, that pronouncement of good could be the one on day 4 after the lights are set in it or it could be the final pronouncement of good on day 6 when God's work with the earth is complete and everything God has done is deemed to be "very good."

1:9-13 – Day 3

These verses describe two activities taking place on the third day. On this third day dry land appears so that there is now land and sea on the surface of the earth. Once the land has appeared, God causes the land to bring forth all varieties of vegetation. These are two distinct activities. One action involved God "working on" things previously created and the other involved his making of plant life. Both activities are accompanied by the expression, "And it was so." And, the results of both activities are deemed to be good.

[Day 3 – Creative/Reconstructive 1]

⁹ **Then God said** [qal waw consecutive imperfect], **"Let the water below the sky be gathered together** [niph'al imperfect jussive] **into one place, and let the dry ground appear** [niph'al imperfect jussive]."**" And it was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **so.**

Verse 9 resumes the chronological account of God's Creative/Reconstructive activity, but now for day 3. Thus, I think the translation of the waw consecutive as "then" to be helpful.

The first action for this day is the causing of "dry ground" to appear. What happened? Apparently, a land mass was lifted up and/or the ocean bottom was lowered down so that in any case water from the deep ran off the higher place leaving "dry ground." God thus speaks, "let ... be gathered together"

²⁵ See footnote on 2:18. In that verse we read that God specifically pronounced a situation or state as being "not good."

and "let ... appear." God's speaking is sufficient to the task for the writer notes, "and it was so."

As noted, there is no creative act here. God is working on things created at the starting-point. He is doing reconstructive work, not creative work. Underneath the water covering the earth mentioned in verse 2 was the solid structure that God used to form the dry land here on day 3.

As before, the "and it was so" marks the completion of this activity. What follows is commentary on what has just taken place.

[Day 3 – Observation/Follow-up 1]

¹⁰ **So God called** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **the dry ground "land," and the gathering together of the water he called** [qal perfect] **"sea." And God saw** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **that it was** [supplied] **good.**

I think it is helpful to translate the initial *waw* consecutive as *so*. This is consistent with the pattern I have been following to indicate a logical Observation/Follow-up segment.

We now read what God does as a result of his action. He designates the dry ground "land." And he designates the water "sea." Interestingly, even though the water is "gathered together into one place" this one place is designated using a Hebrew plural noun, "seas." It seems that as a result of God's action there is at this time a single land mass surrounded by a single sea. The inclusion of "into one place" (verse 9) regarding the water suggests these singularities. Thus, the singular "sea" as a designation for the water seems to work well. Observe that later in the account (verses 26 and 28) the author uses the singular form of the word *sea* when he refers to dominion over "the fish of the sea."

If there was at that time, in fact, only one land mass,²⁶ subsequent earth history would need to account for the multi-continent, multi-sea arrangement we see today.

What God has just accomplished is deemed to be good. The account now moves on to the second activity of this third day. The land and sea are ready for plant life and eventually for animal and human life.

[Day 3 – Creative/Reconstructive 2]

¹¹ **Then God said** [qal waw consecutive imperfect], **"Let the land sprout** [hiphil imperfect jussive] **vegetation, plants yielding seed** [hiphil participle], **and fruit trees bearing** [qal participle] **fruit in which is**

²⁶ Strictly speaking the text does not say there was only one land mass. It only says that the water below the sky was "gathered together into one place" (1:9).

[supplied] **their seed, each according to its kind, on the land.” And it was** [qal *waw* consecutive imperfect] **so.**

This verse resumes the chronological account of God’s creative or reconstructive activity on day 3. Thus, for consistency, the *waw* consecutive is translated as “then.”

The second action for this third day is the making of plant life. God said, “Let the land sprout vegetation.” The hiphil form of the verb indicates that this action is causative. God would do something to “the land” to cause it to bring forth vegetation. Perhaps this association with the ground suggests that, as with human beings, the material used for the creation of plant life was earthy. God introduced plant life into lifeless, earthy matter from whence those plants would get their sustenance. It seems reasonable to think that the sprouting would include the emergence of plants from the earth of every variety known to Man.

Given later statements (chapter 2) regarding the nature of vegetation and the need for God to plant a garden, I would conclude that the extent of this creative activity is earth-wide. Furthermore, although animals²⁷ and Man are commanded to fill the land and sea, we find no such spreading or filling idea relative to plants.

There is no verb for either *create* or *make* used here with regard to God’s actions. Nevertheless, the bringing forth of plant life indicates that God’s action here involved the making of something new, something not previously existing. Living plants are arising from the ground. Interestingly, the Hebrew verb *‘āśâ*, meaning “make” and used elsewhere of God’s activity, is used here of fruit trees bearing or making fruit.

The mention of plants that provide seed and plants that provide fruit seems to emphasize not only the reproductive capacity of these plants (and thus, “according to its kind”) but also importantly their food providing capacity. This will be significant later when God gives these plants to animals and Man for food.

This is the first occurrence in this chapter of the qualifier “according to its kind.” Here it is applied to the newly made plant life. Built into these plants is the ability to reproduce, but only to reproduce within the limits of each plant’s “kind.” This property of “according to its kind” will be repeated later for the animal creatures created on days five and six. The significance is

²⁷ Although there is no command recorded for the animals created on day 6, I think these too were situated local to the garden and needed to populate the remainder of the earth as they did after the Flood.

that God set bounds on the ability for plants, and later animals, to vary as they reproduce.

Again, “and it was so.” God has spoken and the storyline confirms that what he had spoken has happened. What follows is commentary on what was just completed.

[Day 3 – Observation/Follow-up 2]

¹² **So the land had brought forth** [hiphil waw consecutive imperfect] **vegetation, plants yielding seed** [hihpil participle] **according to their own kinds, and trees bearing** [qal participle] **fruit in which is** [supplied] **their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **that it was** [supplied] **good.**

The *waw* consecutive, translated as “so” here, can be understood in the sense of a logical succession. This verse begins an Observation/Follow-up segment.

Here we have a description of what had just taken place when God caused the land to bring forth vegetation. The earth produced all kinds of land-based vegetation, plants and trees. What God had spoken had been fulfilled. The extent of plant life mentioned here is apparently limited to that growing on the dry land God had made earlier in the day. Interestingly, nowhere does the creation week account mention the making of water-based plant life. Certainly, God did create such plants. It may well have happened here on the third day. But we simply are not told anything about water-based plant life.

Because the activity for this day has already been completed, the verb “brought forth” should be understood as a previous past. God had accomplished this bringing forth by his previous command as indicated by the “and it was so” of verse 11.

How should we imagine this plant life at this point in the creation week? It would seem that at this time the vegetation was apparently not full-grown plants but sprouting plants, plants that grew from “the land” as God made the seeds or sprouts or whatever was needed to produce plant life across the face of the earth. In this regard note the statement of chapter 2 verses 4-5 where the author comments, “no shrub of the field had yet been on the land and no plant of the field had yet sprouted up.” And, significantly, God placed Adam in a garden in Eden. That garden is described as a place that God specifically “planted.” “The LORD God planted a garden in the east, in

Eden, and there he put the man" (2:8). This was a garden where Adam and Eve could immediately get the food they needed to live.²⁸

Again, as with the earlier activity on this day, that which God has now accomplished in producing plant life is deemed to be good.

[Day 3 – EOD]

¹³ **And there was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **evening and there was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **morning, the third day.**

This statement marks the end of the third day of the creation week. On this day God brought forth the dry land and then caused vegetation to spring forth from that dry land.

1:14-19 – Day 4

These verses describe the activities of the fourth day. On this fourth day God set lights in the expanse or the sky, a greater light and a lesser light.

Of the six days mentioned in chapter one, day 4 is in some ways the most difficult to understand and perhaps the one provoking the most controversy. Many arguments regarding the sequence of the six days center on the activities described for this fourth day. Just how do the events that take place on this day relate to those having already been completed? Two basic questions need to be answered. First, what is meant by "let there be lights *in the expanse*" and "God had set them *in the expanse*?" It is unlikely that anyone would argue that the sun and moon are literally placed "in the expanse" as it was defined on day 2. And second, does any actual creation activity take place on this day? Does God really create the sun, moon, and stars at this point? Or, should we understand their creating as something having been previously accomplished? Is the real activity of day 4 that "God *had set them* in the expanse, the sky?" And if so, what exactly might this mean? I believe that on this day, as had been true during the earlier three days, God's activity is reconstructive rather than creative. He is working with things created at the starting-point.

[Day 4 – Creative/Reconstructive]

¹⁴ **Then God said** [qal waw consecutive imperfect], **"Let there be** [qal imperfect jussive] **lights in the expanse, the sky, to separate** [hiphil infinitive] **the day from the night. And they will be** [qal waw consecutive perfect] **for signs and for seasons, and for days and years,** ¹⁵ **and they will be** [qal waw consecutive perfect] **lights in the expanse, the sky, to**

²⁸ Note that if plant life outside of the garden was immature, it may show that there was some extended period of time between Man's creation on day 6 and Man's fall and expulsion from the garden later. Adam and Eve would have needed food outside of the garden to sustain their lives.

give [hiphil infinitive] **light upon the earth.” And it was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **so.**

This verse resumes the storyline of God’s Creative/Reconstructive activity, but now for day 4. Thus, the translation of the waw consecutive as “then” is helpful.

Verse 14 describes the action God is undertaking on the fourth day. “Let there be lights in the expanse, the sky.” Following this action statement we find stated the reason God is doing this. The lights will be used “for signs and for seasons, and for days and years” and they will provide light upon the earth. The first reason given relates to as yet uncreated mankind. Man is to use these two “lights,” and the stars also, as aids for marking off time. The earth in its relationship to the sun establishes seasons, days, and years. The earth in relation to the moon establishes months. Secondly, these lights will serve to give light upon the earth. The sun, created on day 1, has been providing some light to the earth. Now it will attain its full brightness. And at this point for the first time the light of the much dimmer moon will be seen from the surface of the earth. Now both the sun and the moon are to be objects that are visible “in the expanse” or, as we would say, “in the sky.” And now, noting the “and the stars” in verse 16, the stars too will be visible.

So then, in what sense are we to understand the expression “in the expanse?” It has been proposed that since the starting-point, when the sun, moon, and stars were created along with the earth, light from the sun had been shining on planet earth as observed from space. Given the conditions described in verse 2, this light did not reach the surface of the earth when day 1 activities commenced. However, since the day 1 activity, diffused light reached the surface. Apparently, up to day 4 the orb of the sun had not been visible. This, of course, would also mean that the moon and the stars had not been visible. In fact, it is possible that before day 4 no light at all from the moon and stars was detectable on the surface of the earth. It was on this fourth day that for the first time during creation week an earth-bound observer would see actual sources of the light, i.e., the sun as well as the moon and the stars.

In the account for day 2 we read that “God made the expanse.” But, if as suggested, this making was an action undertaken by lifting the water above the deep to cause an expanse to come into existence, there was no creation activity involved. God was simply adjusting things that were already in existence, as he did with the sea and the dry land on day 3. We could come to a similar conclusion regarding “let there be lights in the expanse.” God is not creating them at this point for they already exist.

If this understanding is correct, then what was God actually doing when he said, “let there be lights in the expanse?” What is apparently happening on

day 4 is that the water above the expanse is now completely diffused or cleared so that these previously unable-to-be-seen objects are now able-to-be-seen from the surface of the earth. From the surface of the earth the orb of the sun and the orb of the moon are now visible for the first time. And, of course, from earth's perspective where do they appear to be? They appear to be *in the expanse*, in the beautiful blue sky as we know it. This is the language of perception we use. The sun and moon and stars appear to be in the sky even though we really know they are in space far beyond our sky. What God is doing on this day 4 is making these objects appear to an earth-bound observer by setting them "in the expanse" and endowing them with significance for Man.

"And it was so." God has spoken. With this statement the "let there be" is now completed. That being the case, it should be noted that there is no verb for create or make at this point in the account for this day. The writer makes no statement that for it to be so God had to make something that did not already exist. This "let there be" is in the same sense as those found in verses 3, 6, and 9. God is arranging previously created objects. Thus, no creative activity takes place on this day. God is simply working with things already made (as he had done on days one, two, and three). However, if this is the case, how are we to understand the following "making" and "setting" mentioned in verses 16 and 17? Whatever we conclude regarding the meaning of the following verses, it is important to keep in mind that the actions they reference follow the "and it was so" refrain found here in verse 15. At the end of this verse God's "let there be" has been completed. Therefore, these subsequent statements can be considered explanatory in nature, telling us what had previously taken place.

[Day 4 – Observation/Follow-up]

¹⁶ **So God had made** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night. Also, he had made** [supplied] **the stars.** ¹⁷ **And God had set** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **them in the expanse, the sky, to give light** [hihpil infinitive] **upon the earth,** ¹⁸ **to rule** [qal infinitive] **over the day and over the night, and to separate** [hihpil infinitive] **the light from the darkness. And God saw** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **that it was** [supplied] **good.**

The waw consecutive in verse 16 is translated "so." As is the pattern in earlier instances, this verse and the next two are explanatory in nature. They provide additional information about the action just completed by God. Here, in verses 16 through 18, two distinct actions are mentioned. I believe that the action in verse 16, "making," precedes the action in verse 17, "setting," the former having occurred at the starting-point and the latter on

this day 4. Both actions had been required to produce the desired result. Verses 17 and 18 go on to provide God's reasons for "setting" these lights as he did.

Because these verses follow the "and it was so" of verse 15, the tense of the verb *made* in verse 16 should be understood as a previous past, "had made." But that raises an important question. How far in the past had God done this making? If we accept that the universe, including earth, sun, moon, and stars, was created at the starting-point, then this making goes back to that point. The previous past tense understanding for the verb is consistent. This understanding of the tense is similar to the previous past understanding for the verb *separated* in 1:4 and *brought forth* in 1:12. Here, these two great lights, the sun and moon, were already in existence, having been created earlier than day 4. When the earth was judged and found to be as described in verse 2 these objects themselves were not visible from the earth's surface and were not yet endowed with any special significance.

Twice in this account for day 4 the idea of separation is mentioned. This separation is that same one mentioned on day 1 in verse 4. There it was referred to as the separation of light from darkness. Here it is in reference to the separation of day from night.

The "also, he had made the stars" indicates that at this time they too would be visible in the expanse. Day 4 is concerned primarily with the sun and the moon appearing in the expanse. But the stars too are helpful in determining time, specifically the length of a year. Given that the stars are now visible in the sky, these objects are also within the scope of the "let there be lights" of verse 14.

The tense of the verb *set* in verse 17, like the verb *made* in verse 16, should be understood as a previous past, "had set." Where the making of verse 16 took place at the starting-point, this setting of these lights in the expanse had just taken place on day 4. This "setting" was what God was doing when he said, "let there be lights in the expanse." Effectively God is making visible to the soon to be created humans these lights he had created.

Verses 14 and 15 had listed purposes for these lights. Now, the purposes are restated and expanded. These lights would "give light upon the earth," "rule over the day and over the night," and "separate the light from the darkness." God had reasons for creating these objects and for making them visible to the human beings who soon would be living on the earth.

What God did on day 4 is pronounced to be good. Interestingly, God on this day has been working with the expanse that came into existence on day 2. Recall that on day 2 there was no pronouncement of good, a significant absence. Now, the two lights and the stars have been "set" *in the expanse*.

In some sense God is now finished with the expanse. It is now ready for the creation of animals and Man. Thus, at this point we see God's pronouncement that this was good. It is possible that day 4 in some sense "completes" God's design for the expanse in its revelation of the "the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night" and "the stars." Now that these lights are visible God assigns to them their enduring significance, a significance for yet to be created human beings. And now, and perhaps in some sense including the expanse which was not pronounced good on day 2, all these "heavenly" things are pronounced good. At this juncture these objects are functioning as they should and are ready for the habitation of Man.

[Day 4 – EOD]

¹⁹ **And there was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **evening and there was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **morning, the fourth day.**

This statement marks the end of the fourth day of the creation week. On this day God set or made visible in the expanse, which he had made on day 2, the sun, the moon, and the stars, which he had made at the starting-point. In doing so he provided for timekeeping by the human beings he would create on day 6.

1:20-23 – Day 5

These verses describe the activities of day 5. For this day the author describes the creation of various living creatures, namely those living in the water and those able to fly in the sky. The water is that mentioned in verse 2 and adjusted on day 3 to form the sea separate from the land. The expanse or sky is the area between the waters, brought into existence on day 2 and set with lights on day 4. The creatures made on this day will populate the sea and the sky. And later, on day 6, God would give to human beings dominion over these creatures.

[Day 5 – Creative/Reconstructive]

²⁰ **Then God said** [qal waw consecutive imperfect], **"Let the water swarm** [qal imperfect jussive] **with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly** [poel imperfect jussive] **above the land across the expanse, the sky."**

²¹ **Thus God created** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves** [qal participle], **with which the water swarmed** [qal perfect], **according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.**

The waw consecutive is again resuming the Creative/Reconstructive activities taken by God, so "then" seems helpful.

Two categories of creatures²⁹ are created on this day: creatures that will live in the sea and creatures that will fly in the sky.

Regarding the creatures of the sea we read that God created “the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the water swarmed.” Interestingly these “living creatures” are divided into two groups. This is similar to the threefold grouping of land animals created later, on day 6. Here the first group is represented by the Hebrew word *tannin*. In the ESV we find that word translated as “creature,” “monster,” and “dragon” when used in the context of the sea. I have chosen to translate the word as “sea monsters.”³⁰ Unfortunately, the words *monster* and *dragon* have negative connotations that I think were not present originally. However, the word *monster* may better reflect the Hebrew word *tannin* than the more general word *creature*. The second group includes all other creatures of the sea. What the distinction entails is not clear.³¹ Perhaps the distinction is air breathers versus water breathers. Both groups taken together would include everything from the jellyfish to the seahorse to the shark to the cod to the dolphin as well as creatures like the clam, the squid, and the lobster. Also included would be larger air breathing sea life like whales and porpoises.

²⁹ Different words are used in the Hebrew text to refer to beings created by God. One word is *hayyâ* which means “animal” and is so translated. The other word is *nepeš*. The Hebrew word *nepeš* can refer to “what makes man & animals living beings” [Holladay (ed.), *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner*, *nepeš*, (in BibleWorks 10).] In this sense it is referring to the “non-physical” part of a creature’s being (human or animal), the invisible, life-giving part. In Genesis chapters 1 and 2 this word is used in two ways. Here in 1:20 it refers to the entire creature including its physical and non-physical components. As such it is used as a synecdoche, a part for the whole. See also 1:21, 24; 2:7, 19. However, in 1:30 the word is used of solely the non-physical, invisible part of the creature. In each of these instances the word is modified by the attribute “living.” Where used as a synecdoche, I have translated the word as “creature.” In 1:30 I have translated the word as “breath.” This is consistent with what is found in many contemporary versions.

³⁰ See the Brown, Driver, and Briggs and Holladay lexicons cited earlier. Both use “sea monster” as a definition and cite Genesis 1:21.

³¹ Some hold that the “sea monsters” are evil (as opposed to good) creatures which were created by God and yet deemed by him to be good (later in verse 21) in spite of being evil. For example, John Master writes, “God creates these beings *who are His own enemies*. ... Evil was part of God’s ‘very good’ creation” (unpublished paper, “Sea Monsters: Harbingers of Things to Come,” 2006, p. 1, 10, emphasis added). While the Hebrew word *tannin* found here may be used of dreadful creatures later in the Old Testament, it seems best to me to understand that any evil disposition they might later possess is a result of judgments taking place after the Fall and the Flood. I find it difficult to think that in the context of God’s creating he would pronounce something designated as good which is, in reality, truly evil. Furthermore, understanding them as God’s “enemies” seems to attribute to creatures, other than angels and humans, an awareness of God and a disposition, as his enemy, to oppose him.

With regard to those creatures that will fly in the sky we read that God created “every winged bird.” These flying creatures would include everything from the hummingbird to the sparrow to the bluebird to the eagle, and perhaps even the ostrich.

The verb for create is the Hebrew *bārā’*. As noted earlier, likely this verb emphasizes the fact that these are living creatures. Their life was created. Although not explicitly stated here, I am inclined to think that as with plant life, the material from which these sea and sky creatures were made was from the previously created earth material. Though not stated of sea creatures, this is certainly the case for the birds as is indicated in 2:19. There the narrator says, “Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every animal of the field and every bird of the sky.”

Here, as with the plants created on day 3, the concept of “kind” applies to these sea and sky creatures. Again, God set limits on the ability of these sea and sky creatures to change and adapt as they reproduce.

In this account of the creation of sea and sky creatures, there is no explicit “and it was so” completion statement. Verse 21 serves this function. As such it has been included here in the Creative/Reconstructive segment.³² So here the “thus God created” may be the “and it was so.” The commands to let the water swarm and the birds fly are now completed. Alternatively, there may be no actual completion statement for this day 5 activity. If so then verse 21 should be included in the Observation/Follow-up segment. In either case, the statement at the end of verse 21 that what God had just done “was good” indicates that at that point in the narrative the actions mentioned had been completed. So, the balance of verse 21 and verse 22 provide commentary following the creation of these creatures.

[Day 5 – Observation/Follow-up]

So God saw [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **that it was** [supplied] **good.**
²² **And God blessed** [piel waw consecutive imperfect] **them, saying** [qal infinitive], **“Be fruitful** [qal imperative] **and multiply** [qal imperative] **and fill** [qal imperative] **the water in the sea, and let birds multiply** [qal imperfect jussive] **on the land.”**

The *waw* consecutive is translated “so.” As in earlier instances, the balance of this verse and the next are explanatory in nature. We now have commentary on what took place following God’s two creative acts on this day.

First, the author observes that God sees that what he had just done is good. Having done so, God then pronounces a blessing on these creatures. In so

³² In this regard, compare verse 7 which is included with the creative or reconstructive segments. However, even there the statement is followed by an “and it was so” statement.

doing he commands the creatures of the sea to “be fruitful and multiply and fill” the sea. Likewise, he commands the birds to “multiply” on the land. These creatures will fulfill this command according to their kinds.

One might question what these creatures of the sea and of the sky would eat. This is especially the case for the birds if the earth was only beginning to sprout vegetation. We may assume that whatever they needed was available for them, since plant life had been created on day 3. This would be the case even if the plants created on the third day were still sprouting forth from the ground. With regard to the sea creatures, we may assume that whatever they would need had previously been created. As suggested earlier, the creation of plant life in the sea likely took place on day 3.

[Day 5 – EOD]

²³ **And there was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **evening and there was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **morning, the fifth day.**

This statement marks the end of the fifth day of the creation week. On this day God created creatures to live in the sea and birds to fly in the sky above the land. Human beings later would be given dominion over these creatures.

1:24-31 – Day 6

The sixth day is the final day of God’s creative work. On this day God creates land animals and then his ultimate creation, Man. Subsequently, God gifts food to Man and to the animals now living on the earth.

[Day 6 – Creative/Reconstructive 1]

²⁴ **Then God said** [qal waw consecutive imperfect], **“Let the land bring forth** [hiphil imperfect jussive] **living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and animals of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **so.**

As in earlier verses, the *waw* consecutive is resuming the Creative/Reconstructive activities taken by God and is translated “then.”

Living creatures here includes land, air breathing creatures as opposed to sky and sea creatures. The language here is interesting, “let the land bring forth.” The verb form is hiphil, so causative. It is similar to the expression used on day 3, “the land had brought forth” (1:12). Again, this may be an indication that the material used to make these creatures came from the earth (cf. 2:19).

As with plant life, sea life, and sky life, the notion of “kinds” is specifically stated here with reference to these land animals. These creatures will

reproduce. But there will be bounds on how much they can change and adapt. Each will reproduce within the limits of its kind.

What is the scope of this command as it regards land animals? Three categories are named: "cattle," "creeping things," and "animals of the land." These categories encompass in some way the vast array of land animals that we know.

But, in particular, what are the "creeping things?" With regard to "creeping things" perhaps we should not assume that this refers to insects, spiders, etc. as might seem to be the case on first reflection. But instead, the "creeping things" might refer to creatures like snakes and reptiles. The NIV translates "the creatures that move along the ground." And notice that the ESV in 1 Kings 4:33 translates the Hebrew word used here for "creeping things" as "reptiles."

In the account of the creation of various kinds of animal life on days five and six, it seems that we are dealing with creatures that have a non-physical component, what we might call a "life-force." These are creatures for which life is in their blood. For the animals created here, also note the later reference to these creatures in which there is "the breath of life" (1:30). This language is like that used of creatures taken by Noah onto the ark (7:15, 22).

If these passages refer to creatures with a life-force, then there is no accounting in this chapter for when "non-life-force" creatures were created (as there is no accounting for when plants of the sea were created). Along with what we call plant life, included in this "non-life-force" category would be lower forms of existence, like single celled creatures up through insects, spiders, and the like; or even still lower forms of "life" like bacteria and viruses.³³

The command to "let the land bring forth" is operative. It is marked as completed by the refrain "and it was so." The creation of land animals is finished. What now follows is commentary on what just took place.

[Day 6 – Observation/Follow-up 1]

²⁵ So God had made [qal waw consecutive imperfect] the animals of the land according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw [qal waw consecutive imperfect] that it was good.

³³ Jason Lisle makes the following observation in his book *Understanding Genesis*. "When God created the land animals on day 6, He made 'living life' (*nephesh chai*) often translated as 'living creatures' (Genesis 1:24). The term is also applied to birds and water creatures (Genesis 1:20) and to human beings (Genesis 2:7). It does not apply to soul-less organisms such as bacteria and (most likely) insects. Only soul-possessing animals and humans are *alive* in the biblical sense of the word" (p. 275).

The *waw* consecutive is translated so. We now have commentary on what took place following God's first creative act on this sixth day.

Because this verse is commentary on what God's command had just accomplished, the verb *make* should be considered a previous past tense, i.e., "had made." The author is commenting on the action that God had just completed.

The notion of "kind" is here emphasized since it is repeated with reference to each of the three categories of animals mentioned. As all categories of life reproduce, they are limited in their ability to change as they do so. Although never stated, this includes human beings as well.

I don't think we should assume that the entire earth as we understand it today was populated with animals at this time. It may well be that only a pair, or several pairs, of each kind was created. At the time of the Flood the population of these land animals was reduced only later to again fill the earth. We saw earlier that the sea creatures and sky creatures were specifically commanded to multiply and fill the sea and the land (1:22). Even though such a command is not here recorded for these land animals, there seems to be no reason not to assume that these creatures would do as the earlier sea and sky animals, namely multiply and fill the land.

At this juncture of his work on day 5 God pronounces what he had just accomplished to be good. It is fascinating to see the variety in the things which God has made, not only on this day, but also on day 3 with plant life and on day 5 with sea and sky life. As we observe the world around us, particularly when we visit zoos and aquariums and gardens, we can enjoy God's handiwork. And we can see his imagination on display in the many differing things he has made. We can glorify him as the marvelous creator God.

[Day 6 – Creative/Reconstructive 2]

²⁶ **Then God said** [qal *waw* consecutive imperfect], **"Let us make** [qal imperfect (cohortative)] **human beings in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion** [qal imperfect (jussive)] **over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the livestock and over all the land and over every creeping thing that creeps** [qal participle] **on the land."** ²⁷ **Thus God created** [qal *waw* consecutive imperfect] **the human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created** [qal perfect] **them; male and female he created** [qal perfect] **them.**

Having completed the creation of land animals, God moves on to create human beings. The *waw* consecutive is resuming the account of God's creative activities on the sixth day and is translated here as "then."

Here God creates the crown of his creation, Man. This “let us make human beings” is in some respects different than the other “let” commands. In the earlier cases³⁴ God simply spoke, and what he commanded was fulfilled. Not so in this case with human beings. We know from the details in chapter 2 that this is not a command like the others, because in this case God followed this command by fashioning Adam from the dust of the earth and breathing into him to make him a living creature and then subsequently creating Eve from Adam. Additional information on how the “let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness” is accomplished is described later, in chapter 2. Interestingly, this is a command that God is in some sense addressing to himself. It is a first-person verb form rather than a third. Perhaps it is used in the sense of one member of the Godhead speaking to the other two.

In addressing this command to himself, God sets some parameters that will be used in making the creature Man. First, Man will be made “in [God’s] image, according to [God’s] likeness.” Man will correspond to his creator in ways that no other creatures created during this week will. Second, Man will “have dominion” over the other creatures created during this week. This includes the living creatures of the sea, the sky, and the land. In this “have dominion” sense human beings also “image” God for God ultimately possesses all dominion.

The statement “thus God created the human beings in his own image” is the “and it was so” with regard to the creation of Man. (See comments below regarding the “and it was so” of verse 30.)

Interestingly, the account literally reads “in the image of God he created him” using a singular form. The translations vary here, some retaining the singular “him” (ESV, NASB, CSB, NKJV, and KJV) and others using “them” (NIV and NETB). Having translated the singular *’ādām* as “human beings” I have opted to use “them” as the translation. Furthermore, at this point in the account both Adam *and* Eve have been created because we read “male and female he created them”³⁵ followed immediately by the statement that he blessed “them” (verse 28).

What follows verse 27 is description and commentary on what God had just completed.

³⁴ It was noted in the commentary on verse 6 that the jussives there indicated intention as do the cohortative and jussive here. In both passages, the intention is followed by another statement carrying out the intention.

³⁵ God created Adam and then from Adam he created Eve. This statement “he created them” indicates that both Adam and Eve were creations of God, one using the dust of the earth and the other using material from Adam. While God did use previously existing material to make Adam and Eve (so their physical making was reconstructive), ultimately their endowment with life by God was creative.

[Day 6 – Observation/Follow-up 2]

²⁸ **So God blessed** [piel waw consecutive imperfect] **them. Thus God said** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **to them, “Be fruitful** [qal imperative] **and multiply** [qal imperative] **and fill** [qal imperative] **the land and subdue** [qal imperative] **it, and have dominion** [qal imperative] **over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every animal thing that moves** [qal participle] **on the land.”**

The waw consecutive is translated so. We now have commentary on what took place following God’s second creative act on this day.

This verse begins the account of what took place following the creation of both the man and the woman. Notice the plural pronouns *them*. At this point in the storyline both Adam and Eve have been created. They are both addressed. Giving this command to be fruitful to only Adam would not have made any sense and would have been impossible for Adam, by himself, to fulfill.

God blessed Adam and Eve. His blessing included five commands in two categories. The first category involves their reproducing. They are (1) to be fruitful and (2) to multiply and (3) to fill the land. The second category involves their authority over the land. As they reproduce, they are also (4) to subdue the land and (5) to have dominion over the three categories of living creatures that God had made before making Man.

[Day 6 – Gifting of Food]

²⁹ **Then God said** [qal waw consecutive imperfect], **“Behold, I give** [qal perfect] **you every plant yielding seed** [qal participle] **that is on the face of all the land, and every tree with seed** [qal participle] **in its fruit. You shall have** [qal imperfect] **them for food.** ³⁰ **And to every animal of the land and to every bird of the sky and to everything that creeps** [qal participle] **on the land, everything that has the breath of life, I give** [supplied] **every green plant for food.”**

The translation of the waw consecutive as *then* seems to well represent the sequential activity here on the sixth day.

God further addresses Adam and Eve (the “you” is plural). Since this is a quotation of God’s statement to Adam and Eve, perhaps it is better to understand this as a present tense, “I give” (as NIV or NETB’s “I now give”). The “I give” at the end of verse 30 is supplied and should also be a present tense. The “you shall have” in verse 29 points to the future.

These two verses record God’s gifting of food to Man. But, as verse 30 states, not only does God give plant life for food for Adam and Eve, he also gives it to the land animals and birds created earlier on this day 6 and on

the previous day. It is this food that will be used to sustain life, not only for Man but also for these other creatures. Both Man and these creatures were originally vegetarian.

These “gifting” verses apply to creatures that span multiple creative activities taking place on more than one day. With this gifting there is a change in the pattern of God’s activity from that having taken place earlier.

And it was [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **so**.

The gifting, rather than Man’s creation, is followed by “and it was so.” Thus, here at the conclusion there is a further break in the foregoing pattern where each activity is considered in turn.

This statement concludes the creation of and instruction to Man as well as the giving of food to Man and the other creatures. Essentially it concludes not only God’s creation activities of the sixth day but also of the entire six-day sequence of activities.

With the creation of human beings as God’s final creative act of the six days, this final “and it was so” seems to be encompassing in nature, including everything God made and did up through Man’s creation and blessing. This is the case for two reasons. First, it follows the pronouncement of blessing on Man and God’s instructions to him as well as the granting of food to both Man and animals. In earlier cases the “and it was so” or “completion statement” immediately followed the creative or reconstructive acts themselves. And second, this expression immediately precedes a summary pronouncement regarding everything God had made (verse 31).

[Day 6 – Final Assessment]

³¹ **So God saw** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **everything that he had made** [qal perfect], **and behold, it was** [supplied] **very good**.

The Hebrew form of the verb *make* is a perfect (without a *waw* consecutive) indicating a completed action. Creation and making activities are now done even before the close of the sixth day. God saw it all, everything. In some sense it seems as if God is standing back, observing what he has now completed; he gives his assessment.

Now that everything is done, including the creation of human beings and the gifting of food, God is ready for a final pronouncement of good. What God has done is deemed to be “very good.” Earlier statements about what was good were related to the results of what God had just finished. Now in this case, with the creation of human beings now completed, God pronounces not only what he had just done but everything he has done over the six days not just “good,” but “very good.”

[Day 6 – EOD]

And there was [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **evening and there was** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **morning, the sixth day.**

This marks the end of the sixth day of the creation week. On this day God first created land animals and then subsequently, culminating his creative activity, he created Adam and Eve.

In the account recorded here in chapter 1 there are five reconstructive works and five creative works. The five reconstructive works are (1) the bringing of light to the earth's surface, (2) the making of an expanse between the waters, (3) the gathering of water together to make dry land appear, (4) the making of plant life, and (5) the setting of the lights in the expanse. The five creative works include the creation (1) of the heavens and the earth, (2) of sea animal life, (3) of sky animal life, (4) of land animal life, and (5) of the life of Adam and from him Eve. Interestingly, after the creation of the material universe at the starting-point the creative works³⁶ of God only involved creation of living beings, namely sea, sky, and land animals and human beings. At the starting-point God had created everything he would need materially to accomplish his work.

Chapter 2

This chapter completes the account of the 7-day creation week.³⁷ The chapter then goes on to provide additional details regarding the creation of Man on the sixth day as well as certain events that took place during the first six days as they relate to Man's creation.

2:1-3 – Day 7

These verses mark the completion of the God's work during the first six days as well as his setting apart of the seventh day. Though God rested from his Creative/Reconstructive work on this day, he did act on this day by blessing the seventh day and making it holy.

¹ Thus the sky and the earth were finished [pual waw consecutive imperfect], **and all the host of them.** **² Now on the seventh day God had finished** [piel waw consecutive imperfect] **his work that he had done** [qal perfect], **and he rested** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **on the seventh day from all his work that he had done** [qal perfect].

In 1:1 we read that God created "the heavens and the earth." But in 1:2 we find that the earth is not in a condition that his habitable for mankind. In

³⁶ It should be noted that the four life-giving creative works also include reconstructive work. The physical material used was previously created earthy material.

³⁷ From a storyline perspective the first three verses of chapter 2 are really the completion of the narrative of chapter 1. At verse 4 there is a break between the earlier account and the balance of chapter 2.

balance of chapter 1 we see God take actions to ready the earth for Man and then create Man. The question here is whether this first verse of chapter 2 is accounting for everything from 1:1 or only from 1:3. Given that the word “finished” in 2:2 applies only to the creation week activities, it seems better to assume that same for “finished” in verse 1. So, “the sky and the earth were finished,” thus limiting the scope.

But this leaves a question about the meaning of “and all the host of them.” One might assume that “hosts” refers to the objects in space, namely, the planets, the stars, etc. However, that is not necessarily the case. It may be better to understand this host as God’s work in populating the sky and earth. I would agree with the NETB note on this verse. It reads, “Here the ‘host’ refers to all the entities and creatures that God created to populate the world.”³⁸ This is similar to the statement in Exodus 20:11. There Moses refers to the making of the sky, the land, and the sea and “and all that is in them.”³⁹ God made places of habitation and then populated them.

The verb in 2:2, “finish,” is a previous past, “had finished.” Compare this, e.g., to the NIV’s translation of this verb. God did not finish his creative and reconstructive work on this seventh day. He was already done with that work. This verb is parallel with the previous past later in verse 2, “had done” (also in verse 3). Apparently, the only things that God did do on the seventh day were to bless that day and to designate it as holy.

The narrative says that God rested. The idea of rest here is in the sense of cessation of God’s creative and reconstructive activities, not in the sense of resting to recoup from exertion. This is the rest taken by a lawyer after he has presented his case when he says, “I rest my case.” God was done with his work. In saying God was done with his work, this is intended to apply only to his creation and reconstructive work. God is very much active in other ways as he continues to work to accomplish his plans for that creation.

³ **So God blessed** [piel waw consecutive imperfect] **the seventh day and made** [piel waw consecutive imperfect] **it holy, because on it he rested** [qal perfect] **from all the work which God for making** [qal infinitive construct] **had created** [qal perfect].

God did no creative or reconstructive work on the seventh day, but he did pronounce that day as blessed and did make it holy. These actions come about because God was finished with his work of making Man and his abode. He blessed the seventh day and set it aside as holy.

³⁸ Cited from NETB note on Genesis 2:1 in BibleWorks Version 10.

³⁹ The first part of Exodus 20:11 could be rendered, “For in six days the LORD made the sky and the land, the sea and all that is in them.” Here the “all that is in them” refers to those creatures populating the earth.

The last clause of this verse, "*bārā' ʿēlōhîm la ʾăśôt*," is difficult. In it the verbs *bārā'* and *ʾăśâ* are used together.⁴⁰ Regarding this phrase the NETB has this note. "The last infinitive construct and the verb before it form a verbal hendiadys, the infinitive becoming the modifier—'which God creatively made,' or 'which God made in his creating.'"⁴¹ If the infinitive form of *ʾăśâ*, which is preceded by a preposition, modifies the verb *bārā'*, perhaps the translation "God for making had created" is possible, albeit awkward. Conceivably there is an intentionality expressed here. Maybe the idea here is that God's creative work had a purpose, a "for making" purpose.

There is no end-of-day statement for this seventh day, no "there was evening and there was morning." Lacking this statement some have suggested that this seventh day is not a solar day but is a day of unending duration. However, there is nothing in the text to suggest that this seventh day is a day of a different sort. Notwithstanding the figurative use of the word *day* in the next verse, this day is just like the previous six days. Here too, as is the case with the other six days, the word *day* is accompanied by a numerical modifier.

2:4 - Transition

This verse, parenthetical in nature, marks the end of the initial creation account. It is followed immediately by a second account with further details focusing on events related to Man's creation.

⁴ (These are [supplied] the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created [niphil infinitive construct], in the day that the LORD God made [qal infinitive construct] the earth and the heavens.)

I have followed the KJV, as does the ESV, in translating this verse. Phrases like this "these are the generations" phrase recur through the book of Genesis and are used to mark junctures or divisions in the accounts in Genesis as the book unfolds. The next occurrence is at 5:1 and references "the generations of Adam" (ESV). As such, this verse is parenthetical. It was likely added by Moses when account documents were assembled and/or Genesis was written.

How is this phrase "these are the generations" to be understood? The phrase is normally applied to individuals and used in the sense of a line of descendants. That is how it is understood in the other occurrences found in Genesis. But here the sense is "this is the history" (as NKJV) or "this is the account" (as NASB and NIV). This parenthetical verse marks the end of the account of the creation week activities and the start of a new account.

⁴⁰ See also Isaiah 43:7 where three different words refer to God's creative activity.

⁴¹ NETB, note on Genesis 2:3 (from BibleWorks 10).

The word *day* in this verse is used figuratively, not literally as in chapter 1 and in 2:1-3 where it refers to a solar, 24-hour period or to a daytime, 12-hour period. Here *day* refers to the entire period recorded in 1:1-2:3.⁴² This use of the word *day* is not that of the original story teller. As Moses wrote Genesis this and the other “generations” statements were used to divide various sections.

With this verse, there is a shift in the name used to refer to God. Up to this point the creator has been referred to simply as “God” (’ēlōhîm). With this verse there is a change to “LORD God” (yhwh ’ēlōhîm). This change may further indicate that the preceding account given in 1:1-2:3 was written at a different time perhaps by a different author than the account that follows as recorded in 2:5-25. As such it may indicate further revelation to Man since at this point we see included a name of God associated with his covenant keeping.

2:5-25 – Additional Details

These verses provide additional details that help fill out the account of the creation of Man. The earlier account of Man’s creation merely records statements regarding the creation of human beings, both male and female. That account is written as if Man’s creation was just like that of the plants and animals, namely God spoke and it happened. But for human beings there is more to the story. Man’s creation was not that simple. Details are provided in these verses that fill out the account in chapter 1.

The details of the activities that are recorded in these verses largely appear to be ordered chronologically and regard activities taking place on day 6. However, some details also provide background based on God’s work before day 6. Some of what is described here occurred before Adam’s creation, even before the day of his creation. Events are also described regarding what took place with Adam before Eve was created and then what followed her creation. The passage is interrupted with some parenthetical comments regarding the area of pre-Flood Eden and then later with a statement about leaving one’s father and mother at the time of marriage.

As noted, the narrative in these verses focuses on the activities surrounding the creation of Adam followed by that of Eve. In doing so, at times the writer references events that took place prior to Adam’s creation. Therefore, in these instances the verbs should be understood as previous pasts and have been so translated.

⁴² I would include 1:1-2 in the scope of this day since those verses are included in the account.

2:5-9 – Adam’s Creation

These five verses provide additional details regarding Adam’s creation and his placement in the garden in Eden.

⁵ When no shrub of the field had yet been [qal imperfect] on the land and no plant of the field had yet sprouted up [qal imperfect] (for the LORD God had not caused it to rain [hiphil perfect] on the land, and there had been [supplied] no human being to work [qal infinitive] the ground, ⁶ and a mist had been going up [qal imperfect] from the land and had been watering [hiphil waw consecutive imperfect] the entire surface of the ground), ⁷ then the LORD God formed [qal waw consecutive imperfect] the man of dust from the ground and breathed [qal waw consecutive imperfect] into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became [qal waw consecutive imperfect] a living creature.

In verses 5 and 6 several specific descriptions are given regarding the environmental conditions on the earth at the time Adam was created on day 6. First, there was “no shrub of the field.” And second, there was “no plant of the field.” These two notes indicate the nature of the landscape.

Apparently, it was uninhabitable in that plants and shrubs and probably also trees were still just sprouting from the ground. Food needed to sustain the land animals and human beings was not yet available.

Three corollary facts are then mentioned. First, at this point there had been no rain on the land. We should not postulate, as have some, that it did not rain on the earth until the time of the Flood. While that could be the case, based on what is written here we can only conclude that it simply had not rained during this first week of creation. Second, human beings had not yet been created, so there was no one to work the ground. And third, “a mist had been going up from the land and had been watering” the ground. Again, we cannot know for how long after this account this continued to be the case.

As noted earlier, from the description given here it appears that plant life created earlier in the week before Man was created was as yet undeveloped; it was not mature. What we read here seems to be a description of what we might think of as a recently planted or recently seeded plot of ground.

In that environmental context, God “formed the man.” Here, in verse 7, we are given details not provided in chapter 1. Man was fashioned from “dust from the ground,” referring to Man’s visible, physical substance. Then God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,”⁴³ referring to Man’s invisible,

⁴³ Interestingly, the Hebrew word here translated *life* is a plural. I have followed the ESV, NIV, NASB, NETB, etc. in using a singular form. Note too that the LXX also translates this word as a singular.

spiritual substance.⁴⁴ As a result “the man became a living creature.” In one sense, Man too, like the animals created earlier, is a “living creature,” a creature having come from the hand of the creator God. However, Man, having been created in the image of his creator, is unique among living creatures.

⁸ Then the LORD God planted [qal waw consecutive imperfect] a garden in the east, in Eden, and there he put [qal waw consecutive imperfect] the man whom he had formed [qal perfect]. ⁹ Thus out of the ground the LORD God had caused to grow [hiphil waw consecutive imperfect] every tree that is pleasing [niphil participle] to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was [supplied] in the middle of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Apparently, because of the immature state of vegetation across the land at this point, it was necessary for God to specifically make a place for Adam, and later Eve, to live until the vegetation across the face of the land developed to the point where it could be used for food. This need would be true for the land animals as well.⁴⁵

We are told that “the LORD God planted a garden.” I take this to mean that God took plants created earlier and placed them as he desired in the garden causing them to come to maturity immediately. I do not believe this “planting” is a separate creative/reconstructive act by God. What we have here is a miracle, perhaps like that at the time of Jonah when God caused the plant to grow rapidly as a shade for Jonah. I believe that the creation of Adam and Eve were God’s final, and ultimate, creating and making acts during the 6 days described in Genesis 1.

Here we learn of two important trees that God placed in the middle of the garden. One is designated “the tree of life” and the other “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”⁴⁶ Both trees are significant. The latter is mentioned again in this account of Adam’s creation when God gives an explicit command to Adam regarding that tree. Subsequently, both trees are mentioned in the account of Man’s fall.

Interestingly, the garden was “in the east, in Eden.” The reference is likely from an historical perspective, true at the time when the account was

⁴⁴ Consider Psalm 102:18 regarding the creation of the immaterial part of Man. See also Hebrews 12:9.

⁴⁵ If this was true for Adam and Eve, it may well have been true for the land animals as well. The animals God created earlier on day 6 may have been situated within the confines of the garden along with man. These animals were certainly there when Adam named them. Recall that the gifting of plant life for food for land animals and man occurred after Adam’s and Eve’s creation.

⁴⁶ God refers to this tree by name in 2:16.

written. When God planted the garden on the newly refinished earth, there were no place names. At some point in time the area where the garden had been planted came to be called Eden. In writing this account, the author refers to that name since that is how others would know its location. The following verses provide some details about this location and the areas around it.

2:10-14 – The Area of Eden

These five verses interrupt the account of God's placing the man into the Garden of Eden before he created Eve. They serve to describe the setting of Eden itself, of the garden and areas around it. Present tenses used here are to reflect the pre-Flood situation. That is, when the account was originally written this was the current state of Eden. No such place existed after the Flood.

Apparently then, the descriptions here are of pre-Flood conditions and do not reflect the situation after the Flood. Some names here are identical to those found post-Flood. However, it would seem best to understand these names as the reuse of pre-Flood names to identify post-Flood rivers and lands. They refer to different rivers. For example, the Tigris and Euphrates are described here as having a common source, a river flowing out of Eden. After the Flood these two rivers do not have a common source.

¹⁰ **(A river flows out [qal participle] of Eden to water [hiphil infinitive construct] the garden, and there it divides [niphil imperfect] and becomes [qal waw consecutive perfect] four headwaters. ¹¹ The name of the first is [supplied] the Pishon. It is [supplied] the one that flows around [qal participle] the whole land of Havilah, where there is [supplied] gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is [supplied] good; bdellium and onyx stone are [supplied] there. ¹³ The name of the second river is [supplied] the Gihon. It is [supplied] the one that winds through [qal participle] the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is [supplied] the Tigris, which runs along [qal participle] east of Assyria. And the fourth river is [supplied] the Euphrates.)**

These verses are parenthetical, interrupting the storyline. The perspective of the descriptions here is some time post-Fall but before the Flood (which was more than 1600 years after Adam's creation). These descriptions seem to reflect on the spread of Man from the area of the garden as the population on earth increased.

A passage like this may suggest that records written before the Flood were carried by Noah onto the Ark and eventually received by Moses, the author of the book of Genesis, who included the account unchanged, as it had been written. If this passage had been written after the Flood directly by Moses

the descriptions would have required clarifications because of the pre-Flood versus post-Flood differences in topology (e.g., the source of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers).

The tenses of verbs in the various versions are mixed in these verses. I have adopted the present tense as used in the NETB. This is consistent with the idea that the passage was written pre-Flood when all these statements were still true and simply incorporated into the book of Genesis as Moses wrote it.

The fact that one river is the source of four subsequent rivers is not what we would normally expect today. We tend to think the opposite. A river flows from *its* source and is subsequently joined by other rivers from *their* sources as they combine and flow together to the sea. Perhaps the situation described here is an indication of pre-Flood topology around Eden.

2:15-17 – Adam Alone in the Garden

These verses provide additional details regarding what happened with Adam when God “put” him in the garden. Here is recorded what appears to be the first commands given to Man, in this case to Adam alone. Subsequent commands to be fruitful, etc. were given to both Adam and Eve as recorded in 1:28-30.

¹⁵ Then the LORD God took [qal waw consecutive imperfect] the man and put [hiphil waw consecutive imperfect] him in the Garden of Eden to work [qal infinitive construct] it and keep [qal infinitive construct] it. ¹⁶ Then the LORD God commanded [piel waw consecutive imperfect] the man, saying [qal infinitive construct], “You may freely [“eat,” qal infinitive absolute] eat [qal imperfect] of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat [qal imperfect], for in the day that you eat [qal infinitive construct] of it you will surely [“die,” qal infinitive absolute] die [qal imperfect].”

Having planted a garden, God placed Adam there. He then gave Adam the task of working and keeping that garden.

God then gave Adam a command regarding what he may and may not eat in that garden. Chronologically, what is recorded here appears to have taken place prior to the gifting of food in chapter 1. There both Adam and Eve were present. These statements are addressed to Adam only. The second person verb forms are singular. With one exception, Adam, and subsequently Eve, could eat freely from every tree in the garden. The one exception was “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” If Adam ate from that one tree God would bring judgment on him. Adam was told that that he would die and do so that very day.

Note the repeated verbs in the two phrases “you may freely eat” and “you will surely die.” The repeated verbs serve as emphasis.

This command directed by God to Adam begs the question of Adam’s, and subsequently Eve’s, understanding of concepts like good versus evil and life versus death. Surely Adam and Eve were created with a great deal of “working” knowledge. We must assume that when this command was given to Adam, he had sufficient knowledge to know what it meant even though he may not have fully understood the ramifications of disobeying it.

2:18-22 – Eve’s Creation

At this point in the storyline God has created Adam and placed him in the garden. God has also instructed and commanded him. But as a human being Adam is still alone. Eve has not yet been created. It seems that before God created a mate for Adam, he wanted him to see this lack. At this point the account continues with an “object lesson” for Adam and the subsequent creation of Eve.

18 Then the LORD God said [qal waw consecutive imperfect], **“It is** [supplied] **not good for the man to be** [qal infinitive construct] **alone; I will make** [qal imperfect] **for him a complementary-to-him helper.”**

God said, as if to himself, that Adam’s state of being alone was specifically *not* good⁴⁷ and that Adam needed a “complementary-to-him helper.” But before God took any action to remedy this situation, he evidently wanted Adam to understand this need as well.

Three characteristics are mentioned regarding the one God would make. The one made would be (1) for Adam, (2) complementary to Adam, and (3) a helper. God needed to resolve the “not good” situation for the male Adam. He would create someone “for Adam.” He would do so by creating a complement to Adam, in this case a female. The one God created would correspond in kind to Adam but would have different gender. And the one God would create would be a helper for Adam. This one would serve to assist Adam.⁴⁸

19 Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **every animal of the field and every bird of the sky. And he brought** [hiphil waw consecutive imperfect] **them to the**

⁴⁷ The “not good” situation here demonstrates that at various junctures in God’s working, namely when the particular state of something was not yet as he designed or intended, that state could not be deemed to be good.

⁴⁸ In saying that God would create a helper for Adam we must be careful not to imply more than the text says. The text does not exclude the idea that Adam would be a helper as well. The two complement each other not only in gender but also in their helping each other, albeit in different ways.

man to see [qal infinitive construct] **what he would call** [qal imperfect] **them. Then whatever the man called** [qal imperfect] **every living creature, that was** [supplied] **its name.** ²⁰ **So the man gave names to** [qal was consecutive imperfect] **all cattle and to the birds of the sky and to every animal of the field. But for Adam there was not found** [qal perfect] **a complement suitable for him.**

Before Man's creation God had created the land and sky animals of various kinds. This, no doubt, included both male and female for each kind. God caused these animal pairs to come to Adam to name. But in the process, surely Adam noticed that each animal kind had male and female complements. Furthermore, he no doubt came to realized that he did not have such a complement. There was no one like him. He was unaccompanied; and only he was unaccompanied.

²¹ **Then the LORD God caused a deep sleep** [hiphil waw consecutive imperfect] **to fall upon the man, and he slept** [qal waw consecutive imperfect]. **And he took** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **one of his ribs and closed up** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **its place with flesh.** ²² **So the rib which the LORD God had taken** [qal perfect] **from the man he made** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **into a woman. And he brought** [hiphil waw consecutive imperfect] **her to the man.**

Having completed the "object lesson" for the man Adam, God put him to sleep, performed surgery on him removing a rib, and from that rib created a woman, Eve. When Adam awoke, God brought to him the newly created woman.

The text does not use the word create here with reference to Eve. However, in 1:27 we read "male and female he created them." Eve too, like Adam, was created.

2:23-25 – Subsequent Observations

²³ **Then the man said** [qal waw consecutive imperfect], **"This one at last is** [supplied] **bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called** [niphil imperfect] **'woman,' because she was taken** [qal passive perfect] **out of a man."**

As a result of naming the animals perhaps Adam had come to yearn for a complement. Now he had one. Adam's response, "at last," may reflect his joy. He was no longer unaccompanied. Now, like the animals God had brought to him to name, he too had someone like himself. In fact, she is "a complementary-to-him helper" (1:18) who was of his own flesh and bones. Knowing that she had been taken from him, a man, Adam designated her "Woman."

²⁴ **(Therefore, a man shall leave** [qal imperfect] **his father and his mother and be joined** [qal waw consecutive perfect] **to his wife; thus, they shall become** [qal waw consecutive perfect] **one flesh.)**

The parenthetical statement recorded in verse 24 regarding “his father and his mother” is consistent with the fact that this account was written sometime after the Fall, when families had formed and had started reproducing. The timeframe for what is true in the next verse is pre-Fall and before Adam and Eve, who had no father or mother, had produced offspring and had become the first father and mother.

Like the parenthesis at 2:10-14 describing the setting of Eden, but unlike that of 2:4 marking a new account, this parenthetical statement may well be part of the original narrative.

²⁵ **And the two, the man and woman, were** [qal waw consecutive imperfect] **naked, but they were not ashamed** [hithpael imperfect].

This final verse of chapter 2, which refers to “the man and woman,” provides additional details about the state of Adam and Eve as they lived before the Fall. They were naked. They were not ashamed. If this account (2:5-25) originated at the same time as the account in chapter 3, perhaps this statement was included to help set the context for the situation at the time of the Fall as recorded in that chapter. The lack of shame at being naked that Adam and Eve experienced before the Fall was different from the then present situation. The storyteller’s perspective is from a time when one would expect shame for living unclothed.