

# Genesis 1:1–2:3 – "In the Beginning"

## Text: Genesis 1:1–2:3 (CSB)

**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

**2** Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. **3** Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. **4** God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

**6** Then God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water." **7** So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. **8** God called the expanse "sky." There was an evening, and there was a morning: a second day.

**9** Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. **10** God called the dry land "earth," and the gathering of the water he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. **11** Then God said, "Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds." And it was so. **12** The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. **13** There was an evening, and there was a morning: a third day.

**14** Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for seasons and for days and years. **15** They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth." And it was so. **16** God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night—as well as the stars. **17** God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, **18** to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. **19** There was an evening, and there was a morning: a fourth day.

**20** Then God said, "Let the water swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." **21** So God created the large sea-creatures and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. **22** God blessed them: "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." **23** There was an evening, and there was a morning: a fifth day.

**24** Then God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. **25** So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

**26** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."

**27** So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

**28** God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth." **29** God also said, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you, **30** for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that

crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it—I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. **31** God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. There was an evening, and there was a morning: the sixth day.

## Chapter 2

**1** So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. **2** On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. **3** God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.

## Key Background:

- **"In the Beginning":** The opening words of Scripture establish that there was a definite starting point to creation. Everything that exists—time, space, matter, energy—had a beginning, and God existed before it all. This foundational statement refutes eternalism (the idea that matter has always existed) and establishes God as the eternal, self-existent Creator who depends on nothing outside Himself.
- **"God Created":** The Hebrew word *bara* (created) is used exclusively for divine activity—only God can create *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). *Ex nihilo* is a Latin phrase meaning "from nothing," indicating that God did not use pre-existing materials but brought the universe into existence by His word alone. This word appears three times in Genesis 1: at the initial creation (v. 1), the creation of animal life (v. 21), and the creation of humanity (v. 27). God spoke everything into existence by the power of His word, demonstrating absolute authority and unlimited creative power.
- **The Trinity in Creation:** While Genesis 1:1 uses *Elohim* (a plural form of God), verse 26 explicitly uses plural language: "Let *us* make man in *our* image." Combined with references to the Spirit of God hovering (v. 2) and the Word of God speaking creation into existence (echoing John 1:1-3), we see hints of the Triune nature of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—working together in creation.
- **"Formless and Empty":** The Hebrew phrase *tohu wabohu* describes the initial state of creation as unformed and unfilled—not chaotic in the sense of disorder or evil, but rather unfinished and awaiting God's purposeful design. This sets up the pattern of the six days: Days 1-3 focus on *forming* (creating spaces), while Days 4-6 focus on *filling* (populating those spaces).
- **The Pattern of Formation and Filling:** Creation follows a deliberate pattern. Days 1-3 establish realms or domains (light/darkness, sky/seas, land/vegetation), while Days 4-6 populate those domains (sun/moon/stars, birds/fish, animals/humans). This demonstrates God's methodical wisdom and intentional design—He is not haphazard but purposeful in every detail.
- **"God Said":** The phrase "God said" appears ten times in Genesis 1, showing that God creates by His powerful word. He doesn't labor or struggle—He simply speaks, and it is so. This establishes God's absolute sovereignty and connects to John 1:1-3, where Jesus (the Word) is revealed as the agent of creation. Hebrews 11:3 confirms: "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God."
- **"And It Was So":** This phrase appears seven times, emphasizing God's complete authority. When God speaks, nothing can prevent His word from accomplishing His purpose. What God decrees happens immediately and perfectly. Isaiah 55:11 affirms this: "My word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please."
- **"God Saw That It Was Good":** This evaluation appears seven times throughout the chapter (verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). God's repeated assessment that His creation is "good" establishes that the created order reflects

His character—moral goodness, functional excellence, and purposeful design. The final declaration "very good indeed" (v. 31) indicates creation's perfect completion.

- **The Seventh Day—God's Rest:** God's rest on the seventh day doesn't mean He was tired or needed recuperation. Rather, it signifies completion, satisfaction, and the establishment of a rhythm for creation. God blessed and sanctified (made holy) the seventh day, establishing the pattern of Sabbath rest that would later be commanded in the Law (Exodus 20:8-11) and ultimately pointing to the eternal rest found in Christ (Hebrews 4:9-10).
- **Humanity Created in God's Image:** Among all creation, only humanity is described as made "in the image of God" (*imago Dei*). This means humans uniquely reflect God's nature—possessing rationality, morality, creativity, relationality, and the capacity for spiritual communion with God. This divine image gives humanity inherent dignity, worth, and purpose that no other creature possesses.
- **Dominion and Stewardship:** God commands humanity to "rule" and "subdue" the earth (v. 28). This is not license for exploitation but a call to responsible stewardship. As image-bearers of God, humans are to reflect His wise, caring rule over creation—cultivating, protecting, and managing the earth in ways that honor the Creator and care for what He has made.
- **The Significance of "Very Good":** The climactic declaration "very good indeed" (*tov meod*) in verse 31 indicates that creation perfectly fulfilled God's intentions. There was no sin, no death, no suffering, no corruption. Everything functioned harmoniously according to God's design. This establishes the baseline against which the Fall (Genesis 3) and all subsequent brokenness must be understood.

## Questions from the Story:

- What does the opening phrase "In the beginning" (v. 1) tell us about time, creation, and God's eternal existence?
- What does it mean that "God created the heavens and the earth" (v. 1)? What does this reveal about God's power and authority?
- How is the earth described before God begins His creative work (v. 2)? What does "formless and empty" suggest about the initial state of creation?
- What is the Spirit of God doing in verse 2? What does His "hovering" over the waters indicate about His active presence in creation?
- What is the first thing God creates by His word (v. 3)? Why is light significant as the first creative act?
- What pattern do you notice in how God creates throughout the chapter? How often does the phrase "God said" appear?
- What does God do after He creates light (v. 4)? What does His act of separating light from darkness demonstrate?
- What does God name the light and darkness (v. 5)? Why is naming significant in establishing authority and order?
- What phrase concludes the first day in verse 5? What does "there was an evening, and there was a morning: one day" indicate about the nature and duration of this day?

- How many times does the phrase "there was an evening, and there was a morning" appear in Genesis 1? What does this repeated structure suggest about each creation day?
- What does God create on the second day (vv. 6-8)? How does the "expanse" (sky) continue God's work of forming and separating?
- How is the second day concluded (v. 8)? What pattern is being established with this evening and morning formula?
- What happens on the third day (vv. 9-13)? What two major creative acts does God accomplish?
- How is each day of creation marked and numbered in the text? What does the consistent use of ordinal numbers (first, second, third, etc.) communicate about these days?
- What does God create on the fourth day (vv. 14-19)? How do the sun, moon, and stars relate to what God created on the first day?
- What specific purposes does God give for the lights in the sky (v. 14)? How do "signs for seasons and for days and years" relate to measuring time?
- What pattern emerges when you compare Days 1-3 with Days 4-6? What is God doing in each set of days?
- What does God create on the fifth day (vv. 20-23)? What blessing does God pronounce over the creatures?
- What does God create on the sixth day (vv. 24-31)? What is different about the creation of humanity compared to everything else?
- What unique phrase does God use before creating humanity (v. 26)? What does "Let us make" suggest about God's nature?
- What does it mean that God made humanity "in our image, according to our likeness" (v. 26)? How does this distinguish humans from all other creatures?
- What mandate does God give to humanity (v. 28)? What does it mean to "rule" and "subdue" the earth?
- What provision does God make for food in verses 29-30? What does this reveal about God's care for His creation?
- How many times does the phrase "God saw that it was good" appear in the chapter? What does this repeated evaluation reveal about God's creation?
- What is different about God's final assessment in verse 31? What does "very good indeed" indicate about creation's completion?
- How is the sixth day marked in verse 31? Why is the consistent evening and morning pattern important throughout all six days?
- What does God do on the seventh day (2:2-3)? Why does God rest if He doesn't grow tired?
- How is the seventh day different from the first six days? Notice that the seventh day does not have the "evening and morning" formula—what might this suggest?

- What makes the seventh day different from the other days (2:3)? What does it mean that God "blessed" and "declared it holy"?
- Why do you think God follows a pattern of forming (Days 1-3) and then filling (Days 4-6) rather than creating everything at once?
- What is the significance of the repeated "evening and morning" formula after each of the six creation days? How does this phrase define what constitutes a "day" in this passage?
- Why does the text use numbered days (first day, second day, third day, etc.) if these are not literal sequential days? What would be the purpose of such specific numbering?
- How does the Hebrew word *yom* (day) function throughout Genesis 1 when it's paired with "evening and morning" and a number? Does this usage suggest a literal 24-hour period?
- What does the fact that God creates the sun, moon, and stars on Day 4 to mark "days and years" (v. 14) tell us about God's intention for measuring time from the beginning?
- What does the fact that God creates by speaking reveal about the power of His word and His sovereignty over all things?
- How does the repeated phrase "and it was so" demonstrate God's absolute authority and the reliability of His word?
- What does the creation account teach us about God's character—His wisdom, power, creativity, and intentionality?
- How does being made "in the image of God" give humanity unique dignity, purpose, and responsibility that no other creature has?
- What does God's pattern of work and rest teach us about how we should structure our own lives and priorities?
- How should the truth that God declared His creation "very good" shape our view of the physical world, our bodies, and material reality?
- In what ways does the creation account refute the idea that the universe came about by random chance or purposeless processes?
- How does God's command to "rule" and "subdue" the earth call us to responsible stewardship rather than exploitation of creation?
- What does it mean to live as an image-bearer of God in your daily life, relationships, work, and interaction with creation?
- How should the reality that God rested and sanctified the seventh day influence our understanding of Sabbath rest and worship today?
- How does understanding that God created everything "very good" help us grasp the tragedy of sin and the brokenness we see in the world today?