

Genesis 1: Creation Week

8/13/00 6:25 AM

Overview

Six days, with a regular structure to each day, and a clear alternation among the days.

Individual Days

Seven standard formulae:

	Prototype	Significance
Announcement	God said	Emphasizes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who is doing the creating. This is God's work. 2. How it is done: simply by speaking.
Command	Let there be X	God expresses his wishes in a word
Fulfillment	It was so	The conformity of experience with that word. Without this formula we would not know whether the creation was a result of his word alone, or of subsequent acts in the execution. This shows that the execution is a description of the results of the word, not a description of actions successive to the word.
Execution	(description of the result of the command)	Describes the results of the word
Approval	God saw that it was good	The world is not morally neutral. God has created it good, and takes pleasure in that.
Word	God called/blessed	Shows his sovereignty over the creation. Both naming and blessing proceed from the greater to the lesser.
Day	E and M were the xth day	Difficult to handle this honestly except as a claim to literal days of creation.

Structure of the Whole

Each of the first three days forms a house within which the elements created on the corresponding member of the last three days lives.

House (forming; answer to <i>tohu</i> "without form")	Inhabitant (filling; answer to <i>bohu</i> "void")
1. Light/Darkness	4. Heavenly Bodies (Sun, Moon, Stars)
2. Firmament dividing the Waters	5. Birds and Fish
3. Dry land and seas; plants (doubled)	6. Land Creatures; Man (doubled)
God names these things	God does not name these, but does bless.

Note also the hinge between heaven (days 1-2, 4) and earth (days 3, 5-6).

First Day, 1:3-5

Announcement.—God’s word is effective. He speaks, and it is so. See the commentary in Ps 33:6-12, esp. v.9, “for he spake, and it was [done]; he commanded, and it stood fast.” Two important lessons here:

1. The certainty of his prophetic word elsewhere. Cf. Isa 55:11, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper [in the thing] whereto I sent it.” Prophecy is not looking into the future to see what will happen; it is itself the creative force that brings the future into being.
2. The seriousness of verbal sin. Made in the likeness of God, we are able to plan, speak, and create. Imitating him requires that our speech conform to reality. Lying, deceitful speech betrays the foundational purpose of language as illustrated here by its creator.

The announcement is constant across the six days, so we need not comment further on it in later days.

Command.— God starts the creation with light, like a workman turning on the lamp in his shop so that he can get on with his work.

He is not commanding anyone to do the work, just describing the state of affairs he wishes to be established, and it springs into being. The contrast with the dominant ancient concept of creation through the conflict of opposing gods could scarcely be greater.

Fulfillment.—Follows the command immediately in every case (except Day 5, “fish and fowl,” where it is lacking).

This is the only instance where another expression is substituted for “and it was so.” In Hebrew, the difference is only one word; instead of “and it was so,” we read, “and it was light.” This is possible here because the command is expressed with only the single noun, “light.” The other commands are longer and more complex, requiring the fulfillment statement to be more of a summary.

Approval.—Throughout the creation, with the sole exception of the second day, God takes pleasure in his work. He steps back at the end of the task, reviews what he has done, and approves. As creatures in his likeness, it is our privilege to do the same, not rushing on anxiously from one task to the next.

This is the only time when the approval precedes the execution. The execution will inform us that the darkness is not gone, merely segregated. Both the light and the darkness come from him (Isa 45:7 “I form the light and create darkness”; Psa 104:20 “thou makest darkness, and it is night”), and in fact darkness is a time of rest for man and thus a blessing from God, but God calls only the light good. In the new creation, it will prevail, and there will be no more night (Rev 21:23-25; 22:5). We will be back in the direct illumination of God, as things were before the creation.

This selectivity of the approval is an important clue to the nature of the creation. While not sinful, it is still not 100% “good.” It was intended as a temporary setting, not man’s permanent home.

Execution.—The execution paragraph explains in detail the effect of the divine word. The separation of light from darkness is the first example of a principle that pervades this chapter, the

principle of separation. God's creation moves from undifferentiated mass to distinct things; the current philosophy of this world is in the opposite direction.

God could have replaced darkness entirely with light. Instead, he chose to bound the darkness. Now, it serves his purposes, but in the new creation it will be done away completely.

Word.—Here as throughout the first three days, the divine word is one of naming. In giving names, God asserts his sovereignty over that which he names; cf. how ancient conquerors renamed the kings they conquered:

Reference	Namer	Old Name	New Name
Gen 17:5	God	Abram	Abraham
Gen 17:15	God	Sarai	Sarah
2 Kings 23:34	Pharaoh Necho	Eliakim	Jehoiakim
2 Kings 24:4,17	Nebuchadnezzar	Mattaniah	Zedekiah
Rev 3:12	God	Overcomer	Name of God

This naming is particularly significant with regard to the basic entities of light, heaven, earth, and seas, because these had been themselves worshipped as gods by ancient cultures. In naming them, Israel's God is asserting his dominance and superiority over them.

Day.—Ordering of day and night: This passage has been interpreted in both ways.

- One might suggest that the initial darkness was the evening, and the creation of light the morning, which would make the night the first part of a calendar day.
- More likely, God creates the light, then turns it off and on once to show how it works. Then the evening and morning conclude the first day, so that the day starts in the AM. Cassuto cites numerous passages from the Pentateuch to confirm that the evening before a holy day is reckoned with the previous day, to get a head start on that day's activities.

Like the announcement, this is a constant detail that does not require discussion in the later days. Note only that its absence shows that days 3 and 6 have two parts each.

Second Day, 1:6-8

Command.—Firmament: "beaten surface." Cf. the comparison of heaven with

- a curtain, Ps 104:2
- a metal looking-glass, Job 37:18

It is to support the clouds, separating the water above the earth from the water on the earth. Cf. Job 26:8, "He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them." Thus God is here creating the hydrological cycle, perhaps the most fundamental mechanism in the large-scale operation of the earth.

Execution.—This is the one case where the execution precedes the fulfillment statement. The water under the heaven is the seas; the water above the firmament is the clouds. Even after the flood, the scriptures speak of water in the heavens (Ps 148:8), so we probably are not to understand this of a one-time reservoir that was later removed (although on other grounds we might believe in such a reservoir).

Fulfillment.—On “and it was so,” cf.

- Judg 6:38, the result of Gideon’s request to God about the fleece.
- 2 Kings 7:20, the death of the Samaritan vizier according to the word of Elisha
- 2 Kings 15:12, the extent of Jehu’s dynasty, according to the word of the Lord
- Amos 5:14, the presence of the Lord with his people, as they have said

Everywhere it is used, the formula indicates the conformity of reality with a spoken word. Thus shows that the execution is describing the result of his word, not relating a separate action (as though the command were only a resolution that God later carries out).

Approval.—This is the only one of the seven creative words that is not said to be good! Salt water, like night, is a remnant of the original primeval unformed nature of the earth, and will be removed in the new creation: Rev 21:1, “no more sea.” Again, we see that this creation was intended from the first as temporary, partial. (The omission may also be to achieve a sevenfold repetition of the approvals, like the executions and fulfillments, but this does not explain why there are eight announcements and commands, or why there are only five namings.)

Word.—He names the firmament “heaven.” This is distinct from the heaven created in v.1, the abode of God. The name is actually a pun on the word “water,” highlighting the function of the sky in the hydrological cycle.

- “Water” is *mayim*
- “Heaven” is *shamayim*.

Third Day, 1:9-13

Like the sixth, this day, which ends a panel of the creation, has two parts. In the first, the dry land is separated from the waters. In the second, plants appear.

Note three deviations in these two parts from the overall pattern:

- The separation of water from dry land has no execution.
- The creation of the plants has no naming section.
- In the execution section for plants, the wording is different from the other days: not “God made,” but “the earth brought forth,” the earth just formed in the first half of the third day.

Perhaps these omissions emphasize the essential unity of these two parts of the third day. The purpose of the first three days is to replace the formlessness *tohu* of the original creation with distinctions. The main shaping here is clearly the division of Earth and Seas. The creation of plant life is an adorning of the earth, but still part of the forming rather than the filling.

Dry Land

Command.—This command is analogous to the execution on the first day. There, God divided light (which was good) from darkness (which was not proclaimed good). Here he divides dry land from the seas. Once again, we see the principle of separation, of adding new distinctions, that permeates the creation and continues into his call for holiness on the part of his people.

Execution.—This is the only creative segment that lacks an execution paragraph! Perhaps this is done to emphasize the close unity with the creation of the plants, one execution paragraph sufficing for both parts of the third day. It also achieves another “seven” (like the fulfillment and approval paragraphs).

Approval.—From now on the approval is not specific to named items, but simply asserted of the creative activity of the day, and it is ubiquitous, culminating in the general approval of v.31 over the entire six days. Here alone, it follows the Word rather than preceding it.

Word.—Israel’s neighbors believed that “earth” and “sea” were ancient gods. By creating and naming them, God shows that they are not, and that he alone is worthy of worship.

Plants

Command.—The passage names three categories of plants. Most commentators take *de\$e*) as a generic term, further refined into (*e&eb* and (*ec*, but *de\$e*) does not seem to be nearly as general a term as (*e&eb*. I’d rather follow the structure of vv.29-30 and see the first of these (the one without reference to seeds) as intended primarily for animal food, while the second and third (both described in terms of seeds) are intended for people. My reading recognizes the generic nature of (*e&eb*, which in 1:30 covers the ground represented by *de\$e*) in 11-12.

11	12	29 (Man’s Food)	30 (Animal Food)
de\$e) <1877>	de\$e)		Yereq <3418> (e&eb <6212>; cf. association of yereq with de\$e), e.g., Ps 37:2; 2 Kings 19:26 = Isa 37:27 <3419>
(e&eb <6212> mazria(zera((e&eb mazria(zera(lmiynehuw	(e&eb zorea(zera(
(ec priy (o&eh priy lmiynow)a\$er zar(ow-bow	(ec (o&eh priy)a\$er zar(ow-bow lmiynow	(ec)a\$er ow priy (ec zorea(zara(b	

The divisions are emphasized by an alternation:

Human Food	Animal Food
29 And God said, Behold, I have given	
To you	30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein [there is] life,
every herb bearing seed, which [is] upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which [is] the fruit of a tree yielding seed;	every green herb
to you it shall be for meat.	for meat

1. Grass, green herbs.
2. Non-tree seeded plants (grass proper, flowers, vegetables), for food and beauty.
3. Trees, also for food and beauty.

What about mushrooms? Two possibilities.

- They may simply be out of focus, created but not highlighted.
- As agents of decay, perhaps they are only added after the fall, but this would mean creation after the first week, which is counter to Exod 20:11.

Note the emphasis on reproduction true to kind, reflecting the overall concern for distinction throughout the chapter.

Execution.—Not “God made,” as in the other execution paragraphs, but “the earth brought forth.” This wording emphasizes two things.

1. God uses intermediate means. His creation is full of processes that are themselves productive. Plants reproduce, ecologies interact and self-organize. This is not contrary to his role as creator.
2. The earth is obedient to him. Cf. our Lord’s observation that if the people welcoming him into Jerusalem fell silent, the rocks would cry out (Luke 19:40).

Word.—God neither names nor blesses the plants! Is this because they are more directly for man’s use (as food) than other parts of the creation? But he also does nothing with the heavenly bodies. Better: the third day has already received its word, in the naming of the primary distinction formed on that day (earth/seas); the plants are just part of the furniture.

Fourth Day, 1:14-19

The earth is no longer “without form,” but has been shaped by the distinctions introduced in the first three days. Now it is time to correct the condition of “emptiness,” filling the house constructed in the first three days.

Command and Execution.—The first day produced light; now the heavenly bodies are formed to occupy this light.

Note the chiasmic structure, which highlights the purposes of the heavenly bodies.

14 Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven <i>to divide the day from the night</i> ,	<i>and to divide the light from the darkness.</i>
and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:	18 And to rule over the day and over the night,
15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven <i>to give light upon the earth.</i>	17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven <i>to give light upon the earth</i> ,
and it was so.	16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: [he made] the stars also.

The correspondence is direct in the first and third members, and the fourth is the standard summary/exposition. But the second bears further study. “To rule over the day and over the night” (language also used in v.16) is a summary of indicating “signs, and seasons, and days, and years.”

Three of these clearly refer to chronological indications, while the fourth is more open-ended:

- “for days and years” are grouped together under a single “for.” These are the regular cycles defined by the sun.
- The word translated “seasons” *mo(adim* is used later in the Torah for the “appointed feasts” of the Lord (e.g., Lev 23:2, 4, 37, 44). These have a significance beyond the cyclic counting of days, months, and years. They order the regular interaction of God with his people in the cultus.
- “Signs” *otot* is the most interesting. It denotes a special manifestation by God. When he wants to get the attention of the whole earth, the heavens become his billboard. Consider
 - The word is used (Num 14:22; Neh 9:10; Ps 78:43; 105:27; 135:9) for the miracles in Egypt, which included three days of darkness (Exod 10:21,22).
 - It is also used for the reversal of Hezekiah’s sundial (Isa 38:7,8).
 - A heavenly sign led the Magi to the infant Jesus (Matt 2:2,9), apparently in accordance with Balaam’s prophecy (Num 24:17).
 - Joel 2:30,31 anticipates cosmic “wonders” in the day of the Lord, which Peter paraphrases (Acts 2:19) as “signs.”
 - In Luke 21:25-27, the Lord Jesus promises, “25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; 26 Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”
 - Jer 10:2 makes it clear that heavenly signs are not intended for God’s people, but for the heathen. We have the more sure word of prophecy, and are not to be dismayed at heavenly signs, nor to go astray after astrologers (Isa 44:25).

Thus the very first act of filling is to provide a means of revelation, of communicating with his creation. Before he creates people, he creates the most general means of communicating with them. God is not a god who hides himself, but one who makes himself known.

Note that the distinction between the greater and the lesser light is only made in the execution, not in the command. When God is communing with himself, they are all equally small in comparison with him, but when the narrator is explaining to us as people what God did, he makes the distinction. (Cassuto)

Word.—As in the previous series, there is no naming or blessing here. Here the point may be that in their use as “seasons and signs,” they will be given various specific meanings. Or there may be a reluctance to name the sun and moon, since these were very common deities (cf. Beth-Shemesh, Jericho). (He does not hesitate to name “Sea,” which was a common Canaanite deity as well, but this he does in the plural.)

Another idea: The Words of the last three days are all revelatory. On the fifth and sixth, they consist of prepositional statements to the created beings themselves, but on the fourth, the heavenly bodies *are* the revelation, being designated as “signs.”

Fifth Day, 1:20-23

Command and Execution.—The second day formed the firmament dividing the waters; now God forms the ocean creatures to fill the waters, and birds to fill the firmament. This time the relation between command and execution is alternation, not chiasm.

The command is literally, “Let the waters swarm with swarming things having life, and let fowl fly.” Life went from nothing to an abundance, all at once.

“Having life” = *nefeš xayah*, lit. “living soul” or “living being.” Used indiscriminately of fish (here), animals (v.24), and man (2:7). But clearly distinguishes animals from plants.

These appear “after their kind.” We are not told what a “kind” is.

- It is not as narrow as a species, since we know from experience that “species” are not in fact fixed (demonstrated by the circumpolar terns).
- On the other hand, it rules out the notion that all life stems from a single original cell.
- Reproduction “after their kind” receives striking confirmation from computer simulations of evolution. Given a set of building blocks, evolutionary mechanisms can find the best arrangement of them, or rearrange them if the environment changes, and do so surprisingly rapidly (on the order of 100 generations). However, they have not been able to generate new building blocks and thus create new classes of systems. This experimental distinction between micro-evolution (demonstrated) and macro-evolution (not demonstrated, in spite of efforts) reflects the structure of creation in Gen 1: divine creation of broad “kinds,” with subsequent differentiation and specialization within those kinds using evolutionary principles.

As on the fourth day, the execution but not the command distinguishes small from great, a distinction that is only meaningful from the human perspective, not the divine. “Moving creature” usually denotes swarming things, little things, but they are all little in the eyes of God. In the execution, he adds a reference to the sea monsters *tanniyn* (E.t. “whales”). These featured prominently in the Canaanite mythology; Moses wants us to understand that they, too, are only the creatures of God. This is the only specific kind mentioned in Gen 1.

Fulfillment.—Lacking! Why? (LXX supplies the phrase, probably harmonistically.) The Jewish sage Nahmanides (1190-1270) interprets “and it was so” in a literal sense, “and it was firm, persistent” and notes that the great sea monsters did not persist. However, in light of the new heavens and the new earth, many aspects of this first creation will not persist. The motive is not clear.

Word.—This is the first of the divine blessings, and focuses on reproductive capability. The ability to procreate is a reflection of God’s creative power, and is viewed as a blessing. The same central concept of blessing is reflected with man (v.28), Noah (9:1,7), Ishmael (17:20), Jacob (35:11; 48:4), Israel (Lev 26:9).

Note also that this Word is the first instance of God’s prepositional revelation, continued to man on the Sixth Day, and in contrast with the revelation in nature on the fourth.

Sixth Day, 1:24-31

Again, we have a double day, closing out a panel of the creation account. First God creates the land animals, then humans.

Land Animals

Command and Execution.—We have a general description (“living creature,” *nefeš xayah*), followed by three specific categories:

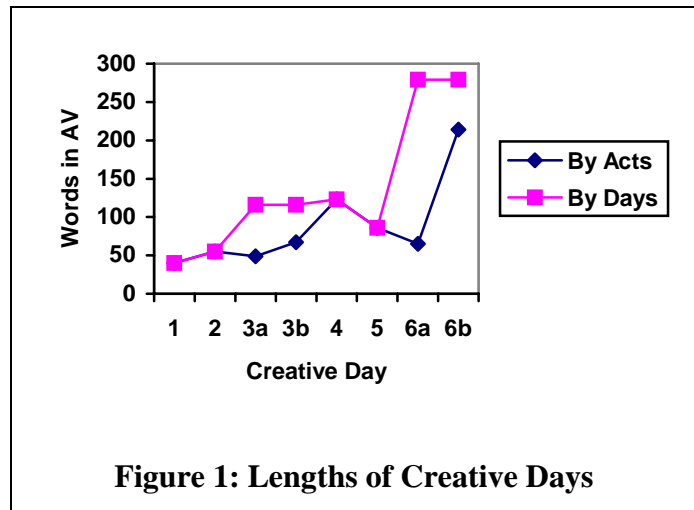
- cattle: domesticated animals, including sheep and goats as well as what we call “cows.”
- creeping thing: reptiles, insects.
- beast of the earth: wild animals, including carnivores.

Word.—The land animals have no blessing of their own, but the blessing to man includes the gift of food to the animals (v.30).

Humans

This section is marked as the climax of the creation in two ways.

1. All the accustomed paragraphs are here, but their order varies greatly from that of the other days.
2. The section is longer than any of the others (214 words in AV; the next longest is day 4 at 123 words, and the others are in the range of 50-60).



Command

Twofold: to create, and to give dominion. Actually, only the first corresponds to the content of the commands in the previous days, which all focus on creation. The second is novel, an anticipation of the coming divine word of blessing.

Command to Create

First, the creation is to be “in our image, after our likeness.” Birds, fish, and animals reproduce “after their kind,” but man is “after God’s likeness.” This phrase has been the source of incredible debate, largely over how the two terms differ from one another. See Cline, *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968) 53-103, for the definitive study. Before considering these terms, consider the plural “let us ... our ... our.”

Plural.—Here only in this chapter, God speaks in the plural. There are various explanations.

- It is usually explained (along with *elohim*) as the so-called “royal we,” and Ringgren (TDNT I 270) claims without documentation that in Akkadian “occasionally the plural is used when referring to one god.” However, there are no clear examples of this usage with verbs or pronouns.

- Some refer it to the heavenly court, but then the angels would be involved in the creative act, and man would be in their image as well as God's. Yet angels have not yet been mentioned in the Bible, and the next verse represents man as being only God's image.
- Perhaps the best explanation is that the plural refers to the dualism already mentioned in the chapter between God (1:1) and the Spirit of God (1:2).

Image.—The phrase is probably to be understood in the sense “as our image” rather than “in our image.” Cf. 1 Cor 11:7, where man is said, not to be in the image of God, but to be God's “image and glory.” *b-* can take this meaning (*beth essentiae*, as in Exod 6:3 “as God Almighty”), and it yields a very nice picture in the context of ANE culture.

- The primary function of a cultic image is to be the dwelling-place of the deity whose image it was. The exact shape doesn't matter. The critical aspect is that the image contains the spirit.
- ANE'n kings were considered “images” of the deity in this sense; indwelt by the spirit of the god, ruling as his lieutenant.
- Later, a king would erect an image of himself in the midst of his domain to assert his authority over it. Perhaps the image was thought to contain his spirit, thus representing him. Cf. our Lord's explanation of the implications of Caesar's image on Roman coins (Matt 22:15-21).

Having created the world, God resolves to place man in it as his representative, as the emblem of his dominion over it. Note that this implies the essential goodness of man's physical body. It is the entire man, not just his spirit, that is placed in the creation as God's image. *Trace “image” vocabulary through Genesis.*

- *Gen 5:3, note the reversal in order and prepositions. Man is first of all created as God's image; the likeness is secondary. However, Adam's son is first of all like him, then said to carry on the image-bearing role that he has. All men, not just Adam, bear the image of God.*
- *Gen 9:6 motivates the judgment against murder by man's role as the image of God.*

Application: It is a powerful incentive to godly conduct to keep in mind that we are God's representatives over his creation.

Likeness.—An image can be representative without being representational. E.g., Akkadian stelae are called by the cognate to Heb *tselem*, *tsalmu*. However, man is not only God's image, he is created according to God's likeness, and is thus representational, not just representative. But we are not told the specific nature of this likeness.

- It is tempting to ask whether perhaps all men are the image, but only godly ones bear the likeness. In general, references to this passage later in the Bible use “image,” not “likeness”: cf. 9:6. But James 3:9 quotes *kata homoiwsis*, the LXX reflex of “after our likeness,” in a context that appears to refer indiscriminately to all men.
- There may be a clue in the use of the plural “our.” It is only used in this chapter in v.26, in reference to the image and likeness. So it is reasonable that the plural would emphasize some duality in man. And in fact, the Dominion Command switches from singular “man” to plural “them,” suggesting that the one “man” who bears the likeness of God consists of a “them.”
- What is this dualism?

- Recall that Execution paragraphs regularly repeat the details of the Command paragraphs. The Execution begins with man as the “image” of God, then continues with “male/female,” in just the right place to explain the meaning of “likeness.”
- At first this seems unsatisfying, since many animals reproduce sexually and so would be “according to the likeness of God” as well. But only man’s sexuality is brought out in this chapter, and in Gen 2, we learn that it is part of a “one-flesh” relationship that is unique. Jewish farmers certainly bred their cattle to enhance their stock, and they are never prohibited from mating a prime ram with different ewes. Being “many” (as in animal sexuality) is not enough to bear the likeness of God. It is the unique state of being one and many at the same time that captures the divine likeness.

Application: This is a new confirmation of the importance of the marriage bond, which we have seen emphasized throughout Scripture. Breaking this bond or living in fornication and never submitting to full union is rejecting the likeness of God that we are intended to display, like a statue that keeps chopping off its own head so that no one can see the likeness of the king it represents.

Command to Have Dominion

Second, Man is to have dominion. Strictly speaking, this is not part of the creative act, but an anticipation of the Divine Word of blessing. That is, 26a (the command to create) is amplified in 27 (the Execution), while 26b (the command to have dominion) is amplified in 28 (the Word of Blessing).

Notice the ascending scale: fish, birds, cattle, culminating in “all the earth.” Then, unexpectedly, he mentions the creeping things, as if to say, “yes, even the worms and spiders are to fall under man’s dominion. The dominion is the consequence of being the image of God. We represent his sovereign rule, and are his lieutenants.

Our salvation enhances and extends this imagery.

- All mankind, even unsaved, are the image of God, his statue in the town square, his designated governor.
- Believers are the body of Christ, his very self. In this capacity, we will have dominion over the new heavens and the new earth; cf. 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 20:6 (the Millennium); Rev 22:5 (NHNE).

Execution

This paragraph amplifies 26a, the command to create, and makes two points:

1. The image is God’s alone, thus excluding the heavenly council from the plural in the previous verse.
2. Corresponding to the “likeness” we have the explicit mention of male and female together. Cf. 5:1,2, “called *their* name ‘Adam’.” (But Paul in 1 Cor 11:7 distinguishes between the male as the immediate image, and the female as the mediated image.)

Word

This Word is distinctive. First, it is the only Word anticipated in the Command paragraph. Second, it is by far the longest divine word (123 words in AV; the next longest is Day 5, at 23 words!). The figure shows the lengths of the variable paragraphs over the eight creation segments. While Day 4 (heavenly bodies) has the longest Command and Execution sections (about 2x the others), the divine word for Day 6b is about 6x that for the other days, and clearly emphasizes the importance of

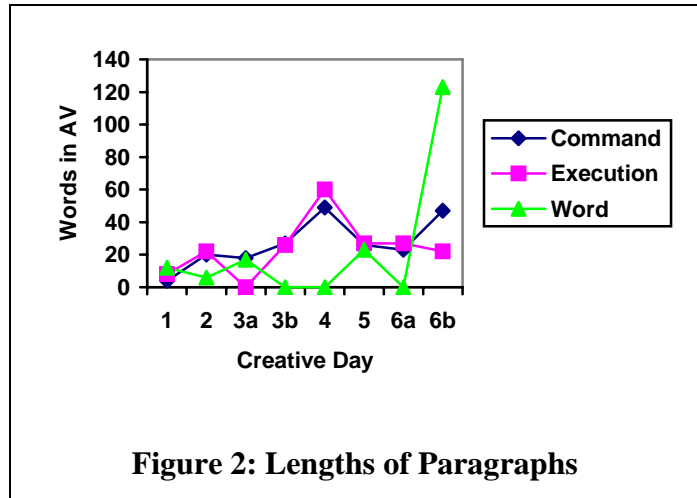


Figure 2: Lengths of Paragraphs

- man over the rest of creation;
- the blessing over the other aspects of man's creation.

Application: We are a blessed race. God's fundamental purpose toward us is one of blessing, not cursing; the curse comes upon us because of our sin.

It is structured as three statements about what God has said. The first, "God blessed them," is a summary of the other two, and shows that both of these following statements are to be understood as the blessing on Man. These following statements differ in whether God is specifically addressing them, or addressing them and the beasts together.

God said unto them

The word specifically to Man has two parts.

1. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth" is parallel to the blessing on birds and fish in 1:22.
 - There is no separate blessing for the land animals to "be fruitful and multiply." Apparently their increase is to be regulated by Man as part of his dominion over the earth.
 - Contrast this promise with the widespread fertility cults of the ANE. Other gods had to be petitioned for fruitfulness. Israel's God grants it freely at the outset.
2. "Subdue ... have dominion ..." is peculiar to man, because of the command that he is to have dominion over the earth.
 - "Subdue the earth" is the clause regularly used to describe Israel's conquest of Canaan (Num 32:22, 29; Josh 18:1; 1 Chr 22:18). The same verb is used later, with people as object, to describe the subjugation of Israel to her enemies at the end of the monarchy. Thus it is the first step leading to "have dominion." What sort of opposition was there in the prelapsarian earth, requiring to be subdued? Morris suggests that the reference is to the task of science. The world is full of autonomous mechanisms that man must first understand before he can rule. Thus our first task is to experiment, study, research the underlying mechanisms so that we can rule over them. Prov 25:2, "[It is] the glory of God

to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings [is] to search out a matter.” Note the reference to kings in particular, relevant to having dominion.

- If “subdue” refers to science, then “have dominion” refers to engineering, using the insights thus gained to be in control of the earth. The two together form the “cultural mandate.” The particular aspect of dominion is the living creatures: fish and birds from Day 5, and land animals of all sorts from Day 6a.

God said

This general provision of food concerns both man and the animals. Why is it included under the blessing to man?

- By appointing plants as food for the animals, God protects man from predation by the animals. Compare Isa 11:6-9.
- Also, it contrasts God’s care for his Man with the relation between the other ANE’n deities and their creatures. Other men had to feed their gods; Israel’s God feeds his creatures.

Fulfillment

In the other days, the fulfillment follows the command or execution. Here it also follows the word of blessing, thus assuring us that this blessing is guaranteed by God.

Approval

Placed after the other paragraphs:

- Similar to the first half of the third day; another mark of correspondence between the third and sixth day.
- Covers not only the work of the sixth day, but of all six days.

Day

This day announcement is set apart from the others in Hebrew. The others all enumerate the day without use of the article, e.g., “and it was evening, and it was morning, first day.” Here the article is included, “*the* sixth day,” as are all references to the seventh day in 2:1-3. These two days are thus singled out. The whole thrust of creation is aimed at the creation of man and the subsequent day of rest. Everything else is preparatory to that.

Seventh Day, 2:1-3

Does not follow the standard pattern of the other days.

These verses close off the first chapter.

- It began, “God created the heavens and the earth.”
- 2:1 reminds us again of “the heavens and the earth,” while the last clause of 2:3 reminds us that “God created.”

The dominant theme of vv.2-3 verses is the Seventh Day. We have three successive clauses, each of seven words, each mentioning the seventh day, conveying three summary ideas:

1. 2a, The work was complete. By the seventh day God had completed his work (see Cassuto for the appropriateness of the pluperfect). There is a peculiar virtue in bring to completion what one has begun. Compare
 - the Savior's plowing principle in Luke 9:62,
 - his parables in Luke 14:25-33,
 - and his own triumphant cry in John 19:30,
 - as well as Hebrews' description of him as "the author and finisher of our faith," Heb 12:2.

Application: Diligence in completing what one has begun is a divine virtue. God takes pleasure in the completion of his work, and marks it with a special day. We should value the completion of the work that God brings to our hands. Eccl 9:10.

2. God did not work on the seventh day itself. *Sabbat* means primarily "abstain from work," not "rest," which would be expressed by *nwx* or *np\$* (Nifal). See Exod 23:12; 31:17. God did "rest" on the seventh day, Exod 20:11, but Gen 2:1-3 says only that he abstained from work. The emphasis in Gen 1 (of which this is structurally a part) is on the transcendence of God and his distinction from his creatures, not on anthropomorphic comparisons such as the need for rest.
3. God blessed and hallowed the seventh day.
 - "Hallowed," set apart, made holy: This is expected. He marked the day as special. Later, in connection with his particular covenant with Israel, he required Israel to "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," Exod 20:8, but here before he has chosen out one nation he has already marked the day as separate. He does not here name it the "Sabbath," perhaps to avoid confusion with the use of the term in Babylonian religion, where it marked festivals coordinated with the moon. The seventh-day rest is uncorrelated with either the sun or the moon, just an arbitrary institution of God.
 - It is rare for him to "bless" an inanimate object such as a day. Blessings are usually reserved for living creatures. *Two possible meanings.*
 - *Sometimes God speaks of blessing the things that he gives to his people, by way of blessing them:*
 - Exod 23:25, *God blesses the people's bread and water.*
 - Deut 7:13; 28:4,5, *fruitfulness*
 - In this sense, God might be blessing the Seventh Day because he intends it as a gift by which he will bless his people. He does bless us through the day of rest, but linguistically, this construction is marked with possessive pronouns on the things being blessed—"bless your bread and your water."*
 - Better parallels are Jer 20:14 (Jeremiah curses the day of his birth because of his present unhappy circumstances) and Job 3:3,8. One curses a day because of the evil that it brings forth. Conversely, one would bless a day if its outcome were blessed. Jeremiah and Job can only (bless or) curse a day retrospectively, after

they see what it brings forth, but God, knowing his own providential intentions for the world that he has created, blesses the day that marks its completion.

Note that in the end, this interpretation blends with the other. He blesses the day because it launches a history replete with God's goodness and bountiful care for his people.

Application: We should be optimistic about the course of the world—not indeed about the present phase of its experience, but about God's sovereignty over it and the blessed end to which he will bring it.

What is the relevance of the seventh day for us?

- It was established as a sacred day for Israel, as a sign of God's covenant with that nation (Exod 31:13). In the covenant context, the "rest" aspect is emphasized (unlike Gen 2). Paul includes the Sabbath as one of the Jewish customs that cannot be enforced on gentile Christians, but remains a matter of individual conscience (Col 2:16; cf. Rom 14:5). How about the question of Sunday as the Christian's Sabbath? The Sabbath day is the only one of the ten commandments not repeated in the NT. Yet our Savior taught that it was "made for man," Mark 2:27, and Genesis shows that it antedates the foundation of Israel. We may take it as an indication that we need periodic rest, and enjoy it as a blessing from God, a time for family and spiritual focus. If you do not keep the Sabbath, the church should not discipline you, but you are giving up a wonderful blessing that the Lord has for you.
- Deut 12:9,10 and many other passages, Israel in the land at peace with their enemies round about. Existed only sporadically, only 143 yrs of Israel's 457 year monarchy. David in Psa 95:11 claims that this was not fully achieved. Even at David's time God was still challenging his people to test the sincerity of their profession.
- Heb 4:9, yet reserved for us (Ps 95:11, denied to Israel in the wilderness because of their sin, and still remains "today"). What is this rest? Several options:
 - A new "Sabbath day," but this is hardly clear from the context.
 - The "faith-rest life," but we are told to "labor" to enter into this, and the comparison with God's Sabbath rest suggests that this is a rest after our labor is over, not in the midst of it.

Heb 4:9 is the single most detailed exposition of the implications of the Sabbath for believers today, so we should take some time to understand it. To make sure we take the context into account, zoom in.

- The book as a whole is addressed to Jewish believers who are tempted to silence their testimony for Christ and sink back into Judaism because of persecution. It is filled with warnings against going back, and comparisons about how Christ is "better than" the OT institutions, and ends with a ringing call to go to Christ "without the camp," 13:10-14.
- 2:17-18 characterizes our Savior as a "merciful and faithful high priest." These two predicates summarize what the author is about to expound.
 - 3:1-4:14 (our context) show him as *faithful*, cf. 3:1-2.
 - 4:15-5:10 show him as *merciful*, cf. 4:15,16.

- The “faithful” section presents Christ’s faithfulness as the example for ours. 4:14 is the summary of two preceding parts:
 - “Seeing we have a great high priest” recalls 3:1-6a on Christ’s faithfulness.
 - “Let us hold fast our profession” recalls 3:6b-4:13, again, the section where the Sabbath reference comes. The warning here is clearly against quitting before reaching the end; cf. 3:6, 14 “unto the end.”
- The exhortation to them in 3:7-4:13 is based on Ps 95. The claim of the people to be God’s sheep in Ps 95:1-7 must be tested by the standard of 7-11. So the claim of the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews to be followers of Christ must be tested by their faithfulness. The writer begins by quoting his text, Ps 95:7-11, in Heb 3:8-11. Then he expounds three phrases from it in 3:12-4:11.
 - 3:12-19 expounds Ps 95:7b-8a (cf. 4:15): God’s promises bring division between those who *believe*, and those who harden their hearts in unbelief. So believers must be sure that they make their calling and election sure.
 - 4:1-5 expounds 95:11 (v.3). The verse in the Psalm is a solemn oath, “they shall not enter into my rest.” Those who turned away in the wilderness did not enjoy the promised rest in Canaan (recall the discussion of Deut 12:9,10). So believers must beware of quitting too soon.
 - 4:6-11 expounds “today, if you will hear,” 95:7b-8 but without the reference to provocation.. The emphasis is that the lessons of the past are still incumbent on us today. Like Israel in the wilderness, we are on our journey to a rest. Like them, we can be turned out of the way by unbelief. Like them, we must labor hard to be sure of reaching that promised rest. Support:
 - *Katapausis* in the LXX is overwhelmingly what God promised Israel in the land. Thus there is a strong presumption in favor of the Millennium.
 - Cf. parallel in Rev 14:13; death as ceasing from labor and entering into rest (but *anapausis* rather than *katapausis*, as here).
 - So: work hard now, having the rest in view. Embrace the ethic of finishing what you start, demonstrated by our creator himself in Gen 2:1-3. And be particularly sure that you apply this ethic to your own Christian walk, encouraged by the rest that God has prepared for you at the end of the road.