

Commentary Highlights

Genesis 1:1-2:3

NAC	New American Commentary
PTW	Preaching the Word
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
GIG	Gleanings in Genesis
CAL	Genesis: Calvin's Commentary
SOG	The Story of God Bible Commentary
BKW	Genesis by Bruce K Waltke
KUR	Genesis by Abraham Kuruvilla
REC	Reformed Expository Commentary

****The views presented in these commentary excerpts may not reflect the general understanding of these passages as expressed by Faith Bible Church, but are presented to help us better understand the Scriptures and how various scholars have interpreted them****

(PTW) – It was customary in Hebrew to name the book by it's opening word, which here is the Hebrew word בְּרֵאשִׁית (*bereshith*) which is translated “in the beginning.” When the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek the equivalent title was translated *Genesis*, which was held in the Latin translation and subsequent translations.

Genesis 1:1

(NAC) – The phrase “in the beginning” anticipates that there will be an end, and just as God is the one in control of the beginning so too, He will be in control at the end. (Isa 46:10 “*God declares the end from the beginning.*”)

(NAC) – In 1:1-2:3 the name for God is Elohim, 2:4 transitions to Yahweh. The plural nature of Elohim is to emphasize the majesty and greatness of the one true God. With the help of the NT believers are then able to see the inner workings of the Trinity at play in the creation account. The emphasis of chapter one is the “otherness” of God, not his relational nature which is why Elohim was preferred. It also stresses the “oneness” of God as opposed to the many other gods in paganism that were told to have created the universe.

(NAC) – The term “create” always has God as its subject, allowing us to see the focus is on God creating.

(BST) – The Hebrew verb for created (*bara*) always has God as it's subject. It does not have to refer to creation from nothing, but in Genesis it is clear that God's creation comes from nothing more than his declaration of it's being. In the OT *bara* can also refer to God's act of salvation

(PTW) – While *bara* does not have to mean “created out of nothing” the NT assures us that in this context of Genesis it does, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by

the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible” (Hebrews 11:3).

(BST) – Atkinson see’s the word for “heavens” here to refer to the unseen aspect of reality including the spiritual world in which angels reside. Thusly, in verse one the author is explaining that God has created everything seen and unseen.

(PTW) – The phrase “heavens and earth” is a merism to suggest that from the heavens to the earth and everything in between, God created it all.

Genesis 1:2

(NAC) – 3 days are given to make the world habitable, and 3 days are given to fill the world with living creation

(NAC) – the term “formless” refers to something that is unproductive, a place that is “uninhabitable” and futile. The only other time this word is used in the Torah is (Dt 32:10) where it refers to a desert. “Although the earth, as it stood, could not support terrestrial life, it was no threat to God, whose Spirit exercised dominion over it.” It is a formless chaos. Darkness and the deep are often portrayed as evil forces, but here God is exercising control over them

(GIG) – A.W. Pink see’s the formless and void form of the world to point to Satan’s fall. In his estimation, “void” can also mean “ruin” in Hebrew and darkness signifies Satan’s opposition to the light of God.

(CAL) – Moses uses the term “deep and waters, since in that mass of matter nothing was solid or stable, nothing distinct.”

(BST) – God is the type of god who takes the formless and void and creates new life. Ultimately this can point to our salvation, where God saved us from the chaos and emptiness of sin.

(NAC) – the term translated Spirit (ruah) can be used to describe literal wind or the divine spirit. Its actions over the waters can be seen in the Noachic flood account (8:1a) and the parting of the Red Sea (Ex 14:21). Often the pagan Gods are in conflict with the world, but in the Genesis account God seems to be in total control of every aspect of creation.

(BST) – The spirit and the word work together to create life on earth. “This chapter thus brings together the creative, intimate, animating, Spirit of God, and the creative, penetrating, commanding Word of God...In us, as in creation the work of the Spirit through the Word brings life where there is no life.”

Genesis 1:3

(PTW) – God’s only tool in the creation of the universe was His word.

(NAC) – “The six days of creation are told from the perspective of one who is standing on the earth’s surface observing the universe with the naked eye.” Each day is sectioned off by the phrase “there was evening and there was morning...” “There is a correspondence between the first group of three and the second group so as to form three coordinated pairs. Days one and four regard light and the light bearers; days two and five speak of the skies and waters that are filled with fowl and fish; and the third couple, days three and six, concern the productivity of the land that sprouts its flora for the sustenance of the created beast and human.” Days 1-4 create a space for life and Days 5-6 fill it with life.

(NAC) – God separated the darkness from the light, but since there was no created source of light, yet its implied source is God himself. Psalm 104:2 declares that God has clothed himself in light.

(CAL) – In reference to the creation of light with no sun, John Calvin states the following: “To nothing are we more prone than to tie down the power of God to those instruments that he uses. The sun and moon supply us with light. And according to our thinking we say that they give light, so that if they were taken away from the world, it would be impossible for any light to remain. But the Lord, by the very order of creation, bears witness that he holds in his hand the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon.”

(PTW) – “For the first three days light shone from a source other than the sun. Thus, we observe that the Bible begins with light but no sun and ends the same way – “And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:5).”

Genesis 1:4

(NAC) – God’s separation of the light from the darkness is the first of three separations that prepare the earth to host life. Light is “good” because it accomplishes its intended purpose of dispelling the darkness.

Genesis 1:5

(NAC) – The naming process by God displays his authority over creation. The same authority would later be given to Adam.

(CAL) – “God himself took the space of six days for the purpose of accommodating this works to the capacity of men. God distributed the creation of the world into successive portions, that he might fix our attention and compel us, as if he had laid his hand upon us, to pause and reflect.”

(PTW) – “There are at least six views of the six days, namely: 1) the twenty-four-hour solar day view (creation took place in 144 hours); 2) the punctuated activity view (the twenty-four-hour days of creation activity were separated by indefinite periods); 3) the gap view (there is a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, wherein a primeval rebellion took place, and

the creation week is a remaking of the earth after the rebellion); 4) the day-age view (which understands the days as corresponding to geological ages); 5) the framework view (the days are a literary structuring device to convey the truth of creation, and not consecutive days); 6) the analogical day view (the days are God's workdays).

Genesis 1:6-7

(NAC) – God's separation of the waters is the second of three separations that prepare the earth to host life. "In the Old Testament elsewhere there is evidence that the Hebrews understood that clouds produced rain and thus, from a phenomenological perspective, "water" can be described as belonging to the upper atmosphere."

(CAL) – In the sixth day, God is creating an empty space between the waters below and the waters above where life can exist. For Calvin, it is not a far jump to assume that the heavens are made of waters and are only held back by the gracious providing hands of God.

Genesis 1:8

(NAC) – The heavens referred to in 1:8 point to the observable skies in our atmosphere. The fact that Yahweh is the God over the skies could be a way to distinguish between the ancient near eastern Sumerian religion that had a god for the atmosphere and a god for the sky.

Genesis 1:9-10

(NAC) – God's separation of the land from the waters is the third of three separations that prepare the earth to host life. From the seasonal rains that give life to crops to the waves of the ocean, each body of water is said to be under the control of God.

Genesis 1:11-13

(NAC) – This is the first time in the creation account that a second act of creation occurs in the same day. Whereas pagan religions believed the earth sprouted vegetation because of the promiscuity of their gods, Genesis tells us that the earth produces vegetation through the divine command. Vegetation is established to reproduce according to its kind, indicating that God has set boundaries for reproduction.

Genesis 1:14-15

(NAC) – The fourth day begins God's filling of the earth with movement and life. From a human perspective, Genesis 1:14 shows God specifically placing each star into the expanse known as the heavens.

Genesis 1:16-19

(NAC) – The sun and moon are referred to as the "greater and lesser lights" so as to differentiate them from the pagan notion that the sun and moon were gods. The lights placed in the sky now fill a once empty "heaven." "While the darkness lingers as a daily reminder of how the earth once was before God's light-giving word, the stars of the night's skies attest to the beauty and magnanimity of God as Creator.

(PTW) – “Notice that the sun and moon are identified as “two great lights.” Moses consciously avoids using their names because they are gods in the Egyptian pantheon. Moses is saying that the sun, moon, and stars are not gods, but God’s creation.”

(CAL) – In describing creation, Moses is not seeking scientific precision, but “describes in popular style what all ordinary men without training and education perceive with their ordinary senses...He is not explaining the heavens to us but is describing what is before our eyes. Let the astronomers possess their own deeper knowledge. Meanwhile, those who see the nightly splendor of the moon are possessed by perverse ingratitude if they do not recognize the goodness of God.”

Genesis 1:20-21

(NAC) – God’s second filling began with the waters below and the skies above. The Hebrew word for “swarm” gives the notion of movement and abundance in God’s creation. Moses specifically says that God created the “great sea creatures” (Leviathan) as a means of dispelling another ancient near eastern myth of the creation of the earth. “For all its fierce attributes, Leviathan in God’s eyes is only a fish to be hooked or a pet for amusement.”

While later in the OT there would be “clean” and “unclean” animals, at the beginning of creation, every animal was deemed “good.” Again, each animal was separated according to its kind, indicating God had set boundaries for His creation.

Genesis 1:22-23

Genesis 1:24-25

(NAC) – The sixth day of creation corresponds with the third day of creation. Where God created the land on the third day, now on the sixth He fills it. Out of God’s word He created the living creatures on the land, and once again commands them to multiply according to their own kinds.

Genesis 1:26

(NAC) – Humanity is shown to be the crowning glory of creation through: the ascending order of significance in creation, this is the only divine deliberative act, the creative act is describe using personal pronouns, humans are the only created being said to be created in the image of God, the description of man’s creation is longer than other creative acts, the chiasmic structure of this passage points to the emphasis of man being the image of God, man is the only creature created directly from the hand of God.

(NAC) – Regarding the phrase “Let us make,” several options have been given to understand its plurality. First, it’s a Hebrew plural to emphasis the majesty of God. Second, God is self-deliberating. Third, God is addressing the heavenly court of angels. Fourth, this is an intra-Trinitarian dialogue.

(CAL) – John Calvin assumes that the plural “let us make” is a plural to refer to God’s divine consultation with himself. Such a consultation was not done because the task was difficult or because he needed to think through the options, but it was done to slow the reader down to see the deliberate and intentional act God provided in created humankind.

(NAC) – The human race, being made in the image of God, serves as God’s royal representatives on earth.

(BST) – Mankind’s dominion as God’s representatives to steward and facilitate servanthood. Dominion and submission are a way of partnering with God to steward creation.

(SOG) – “It seems reasonable to understand the “image of God” on analogy with the ancient practice of ancient Near Eastern kings setting up images of themselves throughout their realm....Like a statue reflects the presence and power and authority of a king, so human beings reflect the glory of God.”

Genesis 1:27

(NAC) – The first two stanzas in verse twenty seven are constructed in such a way to direct our attention to the fact that man was created in the *imago Dei*. Specifically both male and female (sexual markers) are made in the image of God. “There is no place in God’s good order for unisexuality or for any diminishing or confusion of sexual identity. Human sexuality in Genesis is a blessed function in the creative purposes of God, and it is essential for carrying out God’s mandate for humanity.”

(SOG) – “It is particularly important to note that God created both males and females in his image. HE did not create men in his image and women in the image of men. Both men and women reflect God’s glory. Thus begins an emphasis that will continue in the second creation account on the equality between men and women.”

Genesis 1:28

(BST) - Some OT scholars believe that the *imago Dei* refers to mankind’s special privilege of being invited into a relationship with God. “It is not about some characteristic we possess. It is about our whole existence. True humanness is found in personal communion with God.”

(SOG) – The word “dominion” carries with it connotations of royal duties, implying part of mankind’s duty as the royal ambassador of God on earth is to extend God’s dominion over the entire earth.

Genesis 1:29-30

(NAC) – God provides for mankind all types of plants and trees for food, animals (as food) are not given until after the Fall. The term “every” and “all” highlight God’s generosity in giving the people food.

Genesis 1:31

(NAC) – God waits until after day six to say that His creation was “very good” because now the empty/void earth has been filled.

(CAL) – God’s declaration that His creation was “very good” was done so that we might know that there is perfect symmetry in all of God’s creation and that nothing more needed to be added to it.

Genesis 2:1-3

(CAL) – God did not rest on the seventh day because he was tired or somehow needed to rest, but in his rest, he signifies to us that this day was a day of special use, one of “solemn consecration.” “But in case men should be inattentive to this, every seventh day has been especially selected for the purpose of supplying what was lacking in daily mediation...being released from all other business, they are to more readily apply their minds to the Creator of the world. Lastly, this is a sacred rest that draws men aside from the impediments of the world, that they may be dedicated entirely to God.”

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