

# The “Functional World View” of Genesis One

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The “Functional World View,” sometimes called “the Cosmological Temple View,” seems to give the best explanation of the Genesis Days. It is the relatively recent interpretation provided by John H. Walton, Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College. He demonstrates the Genesis One account as concerning the ancient cosmology that Moses would have understood i.e. the very limited world as Moses knew it and so not including the vast amount of knowledge of the universe available today. So while the Genesis creation account was written for us, it was not written to us, but to the Israelites as they prepared to enter the Promised Land and to live by God’s laws, which included the keeping of the Sabbath and the various festivals.

A key factor in understanding Genesis One is that of recognizing that ancient peoples tended to view existence and creation in functional or role oriented terms rather than in material terms. So an Israelite would not recognize a temple as existing when only the building had been erected, neither when all the utensils are in place, but only once the priesthood had been inaugurated and they were then working in the offering of sacrifices i.e. it has become a fully operational system – only then would it be considered as having come into existence. This contrasts to some degree with our modern day tendency to view creation in strictly material terms, i.e. in terms of physical properties and processes.

Walton describes how the first day establishes the function of **time**; the second day the function of **climate**; the third day the function of **food production**. These are all in preparation for the inhabiting of the sky, the sea and the land on the remaining three days when:

- The fourth day sees the light bearing functionaries used for establishing “**days, years and seasons**” for Israel’s festivals.
- The fifth day sees the functions of **swimming, flight, and reproduction** of birds and sea creatures come into effect.
- The sixth day sees the land animals and humans being given their roles in living on the land and reproducing according to their own kind. The latter part of the sixth day concerns humans as being created in the image of God and therefore are given the role of ruling God’s creation.

Although other passages of Scripture show that God certainly created the material world and entire universe, Genesis One is not that story. Nevertheless, this is currently the only view that is not concordist i.e. it does not attempt to force modern scientific knowledge into the events.

## Detailed Explanation

### *THIS VIEW DEMONSTRATES:*

- That Genesis One and Two, written by Moses c.1445-1495 B.C.E., are a single creation account with 1:1-2:4a being the first pericope (passage) and 2:4b-25 being the second which narrows the focus to the Garden of Eden.
- That Moses presents the first pericope as a historical, **literal prose narrative of a storyline** set within a **framework** of a seven-day week. This is called a *discourse-oriented literary approach*.
- That Moses presents the second pericope as a historical, **literal prose narrative** as an expansion of the statements concerning the latter half of Day Six..
- That the account does not give any basis for belief in either a recent earth of between 6,000 and 10,000 years old or an ancient earth of 4.5 billion years old i.e. it is not *concordist* so that there is no attempt to match either modern scientific understanding to the biblical account or the reverse.
- That no extraordinary revelations concerning scientific understanding of the material origins of the world were given to Moses or the nation of Israel, so that only “old-world science” of the time i.e. an ancient cosmology was known.
- That Israel differed from its neighbouring nations concerning: the nature of God, the role of humanity, ethics, and the worship of God

- That Moses had a similar **cosmology** to that of the surrounding nations as demonstrated by the biblical vocabulary. However, although the earth/land may have been seen as **flat** and the sky as a **canopy**, the Israelites would have known otherwise and have been using metaphorical language as done today (the sun rises), and not literally so. (Please see Byl's and Kaiser's comments below.)
- That the cultural context is **functional** according to **ancient Near Eastern literature**.
- That the Hebrew mindset concerned itself with **functions** rather than with material substance, therefore the Genesis cosmology was role or **function oriented**.
- That the nature of the governing verb (Heb. *bara* "create") is functional; rather than meaning 'to create materially.' In all 48 occurrences of *bara* in the Hebrew Scriptures, most concern function and the rest are ambiguous.
- That the failure of Genesis One to mention materials is taken to mean that everything was "**functionally created**" rather than meaning that everything was materially created *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) as has been generally interpreted, and therefore the material creation of the sun, moon, stars and Planet Earth occurred before the Genesis 1:1 ff story **began**.
- That, **Genesis 1:1 is a summarizing introduction** to the seven "days" which concern the bringing of the world into an ordered state i.e. appointing everything to its functions, rather than to a material creation of the known universe of today as having been created *ex nihilo* i.e. out of nothing.
- That the phrase "heavens and earth" in Genesis 1:1 and 2:4 is a **merism** indicating a totality i.e. the entire limited cosmos as Moses would have known it, and with all later references to "heaven" as meaning *the sky* and all references to "the earth" as meaning *the land (ground)*, but as a totality of ancient cosmology.
- That "the heavens and earth" of Genesis 1:1 is proven to concern **only mankind** by reference to 2 Peter 3:5-13 which speaks of 3 "heavens and earth." The first was prior to the Noachic flood, then the current "heavens and earth," and later "the heavens and the earth" that we are awaiting" in the Millennium. Finally, Revelation 21:1 speaks of a 4<sup>th</sup> "heavens and earth" to begin after the Millennium. From these details it is evident that the "the heavens and the earth" of Genesis 1:2 and 2:1 concern only mankind, rather than the entire universe as we understand it today.
- That the events of the six days are the functional creating of "the heavens and the earth" i.e. the arranging and appointing of the component parts. These "heavens and earth" are stated to be completed in 2:1.
- That, in the context of the meaning of *bara*, the Hebrew word *asa* concerns 'making' in the sense of 'putting in order,' '**arranging**,' or appointing. This is as a result of what God "**said**" for each of the six days.
- That **Genesis 1:2** begins the story in describing the non-functional earth i.e. as unproductive, uninhabited and with darkness over the **deep waters**.
- That **Days 1 to 3** in Genesis 1:3-13 concern God's work in the *arranging* of 1) **time**, 2) **climate**, 3) **food production** in their functions toward the final ordered system i.e., to bring the land/sky into a condition whereby it is no longer **unproductive**, but has now been made ready for its inhabitants.
- That **Days 4 to 6** in Genesis 1:14-31 concern God's work of the *appointing* of 4) Light bearers for knowing the time for festivals 5) birds, sea creatures as the inhabitants of sky and sea, 6) land animals, and mankind to their functions as the inhabitants of the land, and so making a completed ordered system i.e., a fully functional world.
- That *bara* occurs just 4 times in the first pericope of Genesis 1:1-2:4a and is used with reference to God's functional creating of completely unique things:

1:14ff – Day 4 – appointing the stars, sun, moon and earth to their functions.

1:21ff – Day 5 – appointing the sea creatures and birds to their functions.

1:27ff – Day 6 – appointing land animals and mankind to their functions.

- That the six “days” are the **literal 24-hour days** of an Israelite’s workweek as an arrangement further refining the **rhythm of human activities — a pattern for Israelites** to follow as their workweek. Unlike days, months and years which are regulated by physical systems, the concept of a 7-day week comes only from divine revelation (although it is divided by 4 phases of a month).
- That the “days” are sequentially **chronological**, so that there are actually **6** of God’s “days” toward making the environment productive and inhabited – all following one after the other.
- That each “day” of creation carries with it references to the arrangements/appointments described in the earlier “days.” When God saw that it was good, he was **viewing the accumulated appointments**.
- That of the seven “days,” three do not concern things which are material at all (Days 1, 3 and 7). Although Days 2, 4, 5 and 6 have material components the passages explicitly deal with them in their various roles i.e. functionally.
- That the “**evening and morning**” refrain simply marks the end points of the night-time, thereby focussing our attention on the workday.
- The fact that this refrain is missing from **Day Seven** means that God entered His cosmic temple (above the sky) and remains there until the creation of New Heavens and Earth or permanently.
- That Genesis One uses the literary technique of a **framework of 2 themes – becoming productive and becoming inhabited**, and **3 topics so that combined** as Days 1&4; 2&5 or 3&6 they are approximately parallel i.e.:
  - The period of light as a *time* marker and the luminaries functioning as the other *time* markers.
  - Sky and waters giving the water-cycle for the climate and then being filled with birds and sea creatures.
  - Land being for food production and then becoming inhabited by the food eaters, namely the land animals and man.

Yet the parallels partially break down when examined so that they do not form only 3 “days.” However, this framework may act simply as a **memory aid**, but not detracting from the actual chronological sequence of God’s “days” of creation.

- That the *toledot* in Genesis 2:4 acts as a hinge with 2:4a looking back to 1:1 and with 2:4b introducing the events of 2:5 to 4:26.
- That the Hebrew stylistic literary technique of **synoptic/resumption-expansion** is used in **Genesis 2:5-25**. This means that basic statements from chapter one are sometimes repeated and more detail is added.
- That **Genesis 2:4-25** is the *second pericope* of the **same single creation account**. It is an expansion of the details of the second part of Day Six. This pericope no longer uses the terms *bara* and *asa*, but shows that the man and the later animals were “formed” from materials, and Eve was “fashioned” from Adam’s side.
 

Here the events in the Garden of Eden take longer than 24 hours and demonstrate the **natural means** used by God in His material creation work prior to Genesis 1:1.
- That one must take into account the many **other creation accounts** or statements in the rest of the Scriptures and their genre e.g. in the reflections on creation found in Job, Psalms, and Isaiah there is **no reference to any “days” of creation**. The only Scriptures containing such a reference are Proverbs 8:27-31 which speaks of ‘days’ as part of a **metaphorical, poetic meditation** and contemplates creation over many days. Also Exodus 20:11; 31:17 which is commented on in STUDY 5.

### Moses Presented the Same Cosmology as that which Was Held by the World of the Time

The “Making the World Functional” **View** does not describe the Genesis One cosmology in modern scientific terms or use it to address modern scientific concerns. This is because the biblical record does not

indicate that God gave the Israelites any ‘scientific’ information beyond that of the neighbouring nations. In *The Lost World of Genesis One* John Walton explains that:

Our first proposition is that Genesis 1 is ancient cosmology. That is, it does not attempt to describe cosmology in modern terms or address modern questions. The Israelites received no revelation to update or modify their “scientific” understanding of the cosmos.

However, we do not subscribe to everything expressed by John Walton concerning the Israelites when he says that:

They did not know that the stars were suns; they did not know that the earth was spherical and moving through space; they did not know that the sun was much further away than the moon, or even further than the birds flying in the air. They believed that the sky was material (not vaporous) solid enough to support the residence of deity as well as to hold back waters. In these ways, and many others, they thought about the cosmos the same way that anyone in the ancient world thought, and not at all like anyone thinks today. And God did not think it important to revise their thinking, p. 16.

#### *THE ANCIENTS DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE EARTH WAS FLAT*

In his bylogos blog of February 19, 2010, Professor emeritus John Byl, Ph.D. (astronomy) and elder in the Canadian Reformed Church makes the following observations about the ancient understanding of the universe:

1. Ancient man was a much keener observer of the night sky than modern desk-bound scholars. They were well aware that the stellar sky rotates daily. **Hence it cannot be a solid hemisphere held up by pillars fixed on the earth.** Further, they were well aware of months and seasons. Hence the sun and moon were not fixed in a stellar shell. They were also well aware that the sun and moon were much more distant than flying birds.
2. A second difficulty is that **ancient cosmology as such does not really go back earlier than about 550 BC**, with the advent of Greek science. Before that cosmology was intertwined with mythology, making it very difficult to determine what the ancients actually believed about the nature of the physical universe. Noel K. Weeks (Cosmology in Historical Context,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 68.2 (Fall 2006): 283-293) elaborates on this in his detailed critique of Seely.
3. A further difficulty, noted also by Weeks, is that there is no uniform pre-modern belief regarding cosmology/mythology. Sumerian, Egyptian, Canaanite and Babylonian mythologies had significant differences. Much of the evidence for Mesopotamian belief in a flat earth floating on a sea is **based on one ancient drawing:**  
 This is the oldest known world map--the *Imago Mundi* of 6th century BC Babylonia. It shows Babylon on the Euphrates, surrounded by a circular landmass including Assyria and Armenia, surrounded by a "bitter river" (Oceanus).  
 Note, first, that the map dates much later than the time of Moses (ca 1500 BC). Also, at first sight, it looks similar to medieval world maps, which depicted the land mass of Europe-Asia-Africa surrounded by an ocean. However, the latter is known to be **just a 2-d depiction of a spherical earth.** Finally, a closer look shows that the Babylonian map has islands beyond the surrounding ocean. So it is not a complete world map. In sum, there is **no definite evidence that ancient people uniformly believed in a flat earth.**
4. **Genesis itself says nothing about a flat earth.** Seely’s case rests primarily on one word: the *raqia* (*firmament* or *expanse* [ESV]) of Gen.1:7, created to separate the waters beneath from the waters above. This is generally thought to refer to the atmosphere and sky or space. Seely, however, claims that *raqia* refers to the common pre-modern conception of the sky as a solid dome. Yet **the Genesis *raqia* is clearly not solid.** Note first that in Gen.1:8 the *raqia* is called *heaven* (*shamayim*). But **birds fly in *shamayim*** (Deut.4:17), so that it can’t be solid. Also, the sun, moon, and stars are placed in the *raqia* (Gen.1:14-18). The sun and moon clearly move at different rates than the stars, of which the Israelites would have been well aware (else there would be no months, seasons or years). Hence the *raqia* can’t be solid.

Another interesting line of thought is pursued by Peter Leithart (*A House for My Name* 2000), who sees many similarities between Genesis 1 and the building of the temple. God's universe is described as His three-storied house. Also G.K. Beale (*The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism* 2008) contends that Genesis is **expressing its theological conceptions** of the universe, understood to be a huge temple for God (p.163). Hence the architectural depictions of the temple-house are to be **understood figuratively.** He argues that Israel's temple is a small model of the cosmos, which is a huge temple. Beale specifically (pp.196-201) rebuts Seely’s notion of a solid *raqia* (emphasis ours).

### A METAPHORICAL PICTURE

The fact that the Scriptures use a considerable amount of **metaphorical language** for many reasons indicates that Israelite understanding in Moses' time may not have been as primitive as P. Seely and J. Walton propose. In countering the literal 'triple-decked' concept of the universe, Professor of Old Testament, Walter Kaiser Jr. states:

To begin with, nowhere does the Hebrew text state or imply that the *raqia'* (often translated "firmament" but better translated as expanse) is solid or firm. It is simply an "extended surface" or "expanse." The idea of "firmness" or "solidity" came more from the Latin Vulgate translation of "firmamentum"... The "expanse" of the heavens did not imply or call for a sort of astrodome-like structure.

The first place where the concept of "windows" appeared is in the flood story. Thereafter, other things come through those "windows," including "barley" (2 Kings 7:1, 2), "trouble" and "anguish" (Is 24:18), and "blessing" (Mal 3:10).

Neither is the case for a flat earth all that convincing—at least no more convincing than when modern newscasters claim that their news bureau has gone to the "four corners of the earth" to gather their news... These are legitimate literary conventions to designate in most cases the four points of the compass. Other passages speak just as openly of the "circle of the earth" (e.g. Is. 40:22).

The subterranean features, including the pillars that allegedly support the earth, sheol and the "waters under the earth," on close examination also fail to uphold the "triple-decked" or "three storied" concept of the universe". The "waters under the earth" easily qualify as the waters below the shoreline where the fish dwell... Some passages, it is true, do refer to the "foundations" of the earth as resting on "pillars," but both terms are used metaphorically as we continue to do to this day. And what shall we say about Job 26:7 that has the earth resting on nothing?

The so called primitive view of cosmology in the bible turns out to be a contrived view that cannot bear up under examination. *The Old Testament Documents—Are They Reliable*, pp.76, 77.

Certainly the Greeks knew that the earth **was spherical** from ancient times and it is very likely that the Egyptians, whose knowledge of astronomy and mathematics was very good, would also have known this fact. If that was the case, then Moses, having been educated in all the wisdom of Egypt, may also have been aware of such a fact. Furthermore, the Israelites in Moses' time may have realized that the earth is a sphere because its circular shadow appears on the moon during lunar eclipses (Job 26:10; Isa. 40:22).

Nevertheless, what is expressed by Moses in Genesis One still concerns an ancient cosmology—one that is very limited compared to modern knowledge and understanding and does not include any understanding of the galaxies. In fact, biblically it primarily concerns only man and his earthly environment.

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNIVERSE CHANGES RELATIVELY QUICKLY

Over the centuries scientific understanding has steadily changed and will continue to change. In fact, man's understanding of the size of the universe has changed from time to time, including such changes in relatively recent times. For instance, until certain discoveries in the 1920's it was widely believed that the Milky Way galaxy was the entire universe. Nowadays it is known that the universe contains at least some 200 billion galaxies. So if God were to have given Moses a full scientific explanation of the universe it would have had to be considerably in advance of even modern-day understanding. Yet such an understanding would have been incomprehensible to the ancient Israelites as well as to people of only several centuries ago. For the above reasons this proposed view does not bring modern scientific understanding into its explanation of Genesis or indeed into any of the Hebrew Scriptures as do the Young Earth Creationism (Y.E.C) and Day/Age views which are '*concordist*' inasmuch as the former attempts to change modern science to match the Y.E.C understanding of the Genesis description, and the latter—the Day/Age view attempts to harmonize the Genesis record to match much of modern science.

NOTE: Our view does not accommodate *theistic evolution*. So we agree when Walton states that:

It would not be surprising that the narratives in the *text* of Genesis do not directly address the question of theistic evolution because there was no belief in anything like that in the ancient world for the author of Genesis to anticipate or refute. In contrast, however, the *theology* of the Bible leaves no room for such a belief...theistic evolution is an oxymoron that satisfies no one. *The NIV Application Commentary – Genesis*, p.156

## Ancient Cosmology Is Role or Function Oriented

According to *The Lost World of Genesis One* the ancient cosmology of the pagan nations showed little interest in the material properties of the world but rather they believed:

That something existed...by virtue of its having a function in an ordered system. Here I refer not to an ordered system in scientific terms, but **an ordered system in human terms**, that is in relation to society and culture. In this sort of functional ontology, the sun does not exist by virtue of its material properties, or even by its function as a burning ball of gas. Rather it exists by virtue of the role that it has in its sphere of existence, particularly in the way it functions for humankind and human society, p. 26.

So the cosmology in Genesis would also have been function or role oriented rather than being concerned over material origins. Genesis One, therefore, does not give an account of the original creation of matter **or of the fashioning of any material thing**. This understanding comes from a better understanding of the usage of the Hebrew words *bara* and *asa*. Therefore, this view presupposes the creation of the material universe as being earlier than Genesis 1:1 and means that Genesis 1:1 is not about the material creation of the universe.

#### THE MEANING OF THE HEBREW TERMS 'BARA' AND 'ASA'

The usual translation or interpretation of these words is such that *bara* means 'create' (materially) and *asa* means 'make' (materially). However, in its 48 occurrences in the Hebrew Scriptures **BARA** בָּרָא always means 'create' functionally or is ambiguous and so indicating that functionality predominates as the meaning. In Genesis One this is what happens in the six days - everything is assigned its role to play. Only when we get to Genesis 2 do we find materials involved e.g. the dust for making Adam. However, the word *bara* is not used here, but rather that Adam was **formed** from that material and Eve from him.

According to *The New International Theological Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* Volume 1 Number 1343 "The root br', Genesis 1, or creation by the word cannot explicitly communicate a doctrine of *creation ex nihilo*." Even in English the word 'create' can also refer to **functional creation**. Examples would be to 'create a committee' or 'create havoc.' Similarly, the creative activity in Genesis One can be seen to be functional by the facts that:

- By usage in the Hebrew Scriptures the objects of *bara* are **functional** in a large percentage of its contexts and makes it far more likely that the Genesis account is describing functional creation i.e. to 'create the role of' something.
- There is no mention of materials in the Genesis One account. This has generally and mistakenly been assumed to imply material creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*).

The Hebrew word **ASA** can mean 'make' in a sense different to making something material e.g. 'make a name' for oneself, or 'make an agreement.' This word also has other meanings than 'to make.' According to *The New International Theological Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* "the semantic range is enormous" and includes "prepare, set up, complete, commit, to be done, ready, appointed." (Volume 3. Number 6913). Additionally, according to context, it can carry the meanings of 'to modify', and 'to put in order (**arrange**),' 'to make functionally, or to appoint.' This is because the Hebrew mindset looked at things from a functional, rather than, material viewpoint *asa*. Especially is this the case when *asa* is used in contexts where *bara* appears.

## Genesis 1:1 Is an Introductory Summarizing Statement

Based on the biblical usage of *bara* Genesis 1:1 does not concern the creation of the material universe, nor is it part of Day One, but is **an independent clause** operating as **a summarizing introduction** to the period of all six "days" which concern the bringing of the world, as Adam and Moses would have known it, into an ordered state because: "In the beginning (Heb. *beresit*) God **created the functioning of** (Heb. *bara*) the sky and the land." That Genesis 1:1 is a statement **of introduction** is seen from the facts that:

- In Hebrew usage the word "beginning" does not speak of a point in time before the 6 "days" but of **a period of time**. So, as with the other 11 *toledots* introducing their sections, the clause in Genesis 1:1 acts as the first introduction and so completes the biblical literary pattern of 12.
- The phrase "*then God said*" begins each of the 6 "days" (starting at verse 3 and not verse 1), and so indicating that verse one is likely to be a summarizing statement for all 6 "days."
- The Genesis 2:1 statement: "Thus the heavens and earth (sky and land) were completed," is a concluding statement about the work of the 6 "days," and so showing that this was the subject of verse one, but not the creation of galaxies, which were unknown to man at the time.

## Reasons Genesis 1:1 Does Not Concern *Creatio Ex Nihilo*

1. The phrase “heavens and earth” is defined by the apostle Peter as “the world of mankind,” therefore it does not concern the original creating of the galaxies of the universe or even the solar system, which were already created before the Genesis story begins.
2. Genesis 2:1 concludes the description of the 6 days saying: “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their host (inhabitants).” Therefore the phrase “heavens and the earth” of Gen. 1:1 must apply to the 6 days, which do not concern any creating out of nothing.
3. As with the 11 *toledots* in Genesis, which act as **hinges** connecting back to the previous passage and as introductory summaries to what is coming next, so too Gen. 2:4 makes a twelfth because it is virtually equivalent to a *toledot* and serves as an introductory summary to the 6 days. It therefore does not look back and so does not concern any *ex nihilo* creation of materials, but only what occurs in the 6 days.
4. By biblical usage the Hebrew word *bara* means “functionally create,” and does not concern materials at all, and so Genesis 1:1 actually means “In the beginning God functionally created the world of mankind.”

## Reasons that the “Days” Mean 24-Hour Days

- It is faulty semantics to read the “days” as of unspecified length or of 1,000 or 7,000 years or anything other than connected to the 24-hour cycle of days. Whenever, in the Bible, “day” has the meaning of unspecified length, it has a qualifying genitive, such as “day of Yahweh” or “day of wrath.” Yet no such qualifier exists here in Genesis 1. Even the Genesis 2:4 statement of “in **the day that Yahweh God made the earth and the heavens**” simply means “**when Yahweh God made...**” as in many translations.
- Moses’ use of the Hebrew word יום (*yom*) is accompanied each time by a **number some** 119 times. On each occasion literal days are meant. This is true also, for the 357 times in the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. So whenever *yom* is used **with a numerical adjective, it refers to a literal day.**
- Of the 2,304 occurrences of the word *yom* in the Hebrew Scriptures the overwhelming majority mean a 24-hour day or the hours of daylight. The temporal significance of the word *yom* is seen in the fact that on Day One the literal time of **daylight** is called “*day*.” Although the semantic field for the word *yom* allows for ‘a long period of time,’ yet in the specific context of Genesis One such a definition is excluded.
- Genesis 1:5 gives us God’s definition of the word “light” when it says “*God called the light Day.*” This definition of “light” as being of around 12 hours shows that all the time-periods in Genesis One are within the normal time-scales by which humans operate.

These key facts reduce the semantic field for the use of ‘yom’ in Genesis One to only literal 24-hour days. In his book *Exegetical Fallacies* D. A. Carson speaks of the fallacy of: *Unwarranted adoption of an expanded semantic field.* Yet, this is what Day/Age proponents have done. So the exegetical evidence suggests that the word “day” in Genesis One refers to a literal twenty-four hour day. In fact, Genesis One uses “day,” “night,” “morning,” “evening,” “years,” and “seasons,” so that for consistency all these different terms could not possibly be used to express ‘ages.’

## The Two Themes Combined With Three Topics Form a Memory Aid

### **Topic 1—TIME:**

(Day 1): Here the word “light” refers to **the period of light** which is *separated* from the period of darkness, thereby providing the basis for **time**.

(Day 4): The sun and the moon are appointed as functionaries for time markers for festivals. They are not physically created on Day 4, but are appointed “to govern” the day and the night as well as festivals.

### **Topic 2—CLIMATE:**

(Day 2): The *separating* of the waters gives the water cycle as providing the basis for **weather** and controlling precipitation.

(Day 5): The Great sea monsters, gliding creatures and birds are appointed as functionaries for themselves within this new environment of sea and sky.

NOTE: In verse 21 the word *bara* is used once again but with reference to the sea creatures and the birds.

**Topic 3—FOOD PRODUCTION:**

(Day 3): The *separating* of the sea from the dry land so that vegetation now grows providing the basis for **food**.

(Day 6): The three types of land animals and mankind are appointed as functionaries for themselves to utilize the food grown.

*THE PARALLELS*

**Theme 1: Functions**

**Theme 2: Functionaries and their Functions**

**Topic 1: TIME**

Day 1 and **parallel to** →  
“...and there was **light** (the period of light =day)...

God *separated light from darkness.*”

Day 4

“God made (appointed) the two great **lights**...to **rule** the day and night; the stars also.

God placed them in the expanse...to *separate the light from the darkness.*”

**Topic 2: CLIMATE**

Day 2 and **parallel to** →  
“God made (appointed) the expanse [**sky**] and separated the waters

Day 5

“God **created**...every living **creature** with the **waters**... which waters swarmed and every **bird**.”

**Topic 3: FOOD PRODUCTION**

Day 3 and **parallel to** →  
“...let the dry **land** appear” (separated from the sea).  
...let the earth sprout...seed-bearing plants/fruit trees”

Day 6

“God made (appointed) the **beasts** of the earth...  
God created the functioning of **man**.”

However, this framework acts only as a **memory aid** because these parallels are not exact, and there are other factors showing that the “days” run chronologically.

But concerning land and mountain building, the understanding of plate tectonics was obviously not known to the ancient Israelites. It is also interesting that it is dry ground that appears. If this were a material structural function that was being described then the land would be wet for far more than 24 hours. However, this describes societal functioning.

## Reasons for Chronological Sequence of the “Days” In Genesis One

- 1) The natural reading of Genesis One is of 6 “days” running chronologically.
- 2) In contrast to Genesis Two, Chapter One makes extensive use of **chronological markers** indicating the logic of the “days” as being sequential:
  - The “days” are numbered as indicating sequence.
  - The “evening/morning” refrain is for six consecutive “days” and not for 3 (as in the Framework Theory).
  - The phrases “God said,” “God saw,” “God blessed,” “God called” indicate sequence.
  - Transitional terms such as “then” and “now” indicate chronology.
- 3) There is a **logical dependency** of each event upon the previous one. This implies a chronological sequence e.g. the growing of vegetation is obviously dependent on sufficient daylight reaching the ground, and that the dry land had appeared. The existence of many of the land animals is dependent on the growth of vegetation and on making the sun and moon effective for the regulating of their body clocks.
- 4) The **work-rest pattern** is that of work first then rest during the “night” then work the next day etc and finally ceasing from work at the end of Day 6. This does not fit with the Framework concept that amounts to only 3 days.

- 5) The *wayyiqtol* verb (improperly called ‘the *waw-consecutive* with imperfect’) concerns the use of the Hebrew word for “and” followed by the past tense verb. When this occurs it **indicates a sequence of events**, although not always. The first of these occurs in verse 3 followed by a *wayyiqtol* at the beginning of each of the other “days.”

The combination of these 5 factors gives strong evidence for the “days” as running consecutively.

### Literal Functioning in a Framework

Because Moses presents Genesis One as a historical, **literal prose narrative of a storyline** set within a **framework** of a seven-day week, and because the Israelites understood *bara* to mean creation in functional terms, then that is the most literal explanation of Genesis One. This means that the Young Earth Creation view is not actually a literal interpretation because of its misunderstanding of the meaning of *bara*. The fact is that in Genesis One “no materials for the creative act are ever mentioned” This has led most commentators to propose that the material creation was made out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). However, it seems never to have occurred to most of the commentators that Genesis One is not about the material creation. Viewed this way the detail of a lack of materials helps toward the conclusion that the account is actually not about the material creation at all but about the roles or functions of the component parts of the ancient world. Furthermore, although Genesis One is to be taken literally it is also characterized by literary artistry as recognized in the Framework View and as demonstrated above.

### On Day Four – “And God Made the Two Great Lights”

In verse 3 God, on Day 1, says “*Let there be [the period of] light, and there was light. And God separated the light from the darkness.*” Similarly, in verses 14-18, God assigns specific **functions** to the already created

lights so that they become **governing signs** for days, months, years and seasons. There is a fourfold presentation of these functions in a chiasm:

- A to separate (verse 14a)
- B to be signs (verse 14b)
- C to give light on the earth (verse 15)
- D to govern (verse 16)
- C1 to give light on the earth (verse 17)
- B1 to govern (verse 18a)
- A1 to separate (verse 18b)

Here the chiasm emphasizes the sun, moon and stars as now beginning to function as governors of the rhythm of life. Therefore, this is the appointment to their functions of these lights. So nothing here requires or indicates that the actual making of the sun, the moon “...and the stars” took place within the fourth creative “day.” Furthermore, C. John Collins notes that:

The verb *made* in Genesis 1:16 does not specifically mean “create”; it can refer to that, but it can also refer to “working on something that is already there”, or even “**appointed.**” Verse 14 focuses on the **function of the lights** rather than on their origin: the verb *let there be* is completed with the purpose clause “to separate.” Hence, the account of the day’s work focuses on these lights serving a function that God appointed for the wellbeing of man...Likewise, the verbs in Genesis 1:3, “let there be...and there was,” do not of themselves imply creation... We can take these verses as describing God calling for the “dawn” of the first day and appointing the heavenly lights to their function in service of mankind on the fourth day *GENESIS 1- 4, p.57*

However, one of the theological points of this passage is that, because pagans worshipped the sun and moon as named gods, the usual Hebrew names [*Shemesh* and *Yarih*, respectively] are not given them here. They are simply described as greater and lesser lights.

### On Days Five and Six

These two days simply demonstrate God’s appointment to the roles the sea creatures, flying creatures and land creatures are to play—namely to “teem with swarms” to “fly” and to be “fruitful and multiply. To speak of “the land bringing forth” the land animals does not mean that they are physically created then, nor does it mean

that they are physically “made” but simply appointed or “brought forth” to their functions. Mankind is also now described as appointed to their functions/roles as “male and female” (27), rather than physically created (such physical creation is described in 2:7, 22).

## On Day Seven – God Enters His Cosmic Temple

The role of Day Seven is mystifying when one assumes that Genesis One concerns material origins. However, to an ancient Israelite the seventh day would be the most important of the days of the week because on that day God had reached the point of having taken His creation from a state of being non-functional to a state of full functionality, so that it is now an ordered societal system. Then God enters His temple to take control of the running of this ordered system. So the term ‘rest’ in most translations really gives the wrong impression of the purpose of Day Seven. Indeed, because all is now productive and inhabited, God ceases from His activity of bringing everything into order and moves on to new and different activity in His temple—His resting place:

- ❖ “Let us go to his **dwelling place!**  
Let us worship before his *footstool!*  
Ascend, O LORD, to your **resting place**,  
you and the *ark* of your strength!  
... Certainly the LORD has chosen *Zion*;  
he decided to make it his home.  
He said, “This will be my **resting place** forever;  
I will live here, for I have chosen it” (*Ps. 132:7, 8, 13, 14*).

The tabernacle was God’s ancient dwelling place with the Ark of the Covenant as His footstool. So the seventh day is when God, having brought everything to order, now enters His throne room to begin ruling over His ordered world. This is similar to the pattern of the ancient pagan peoples who viewed temples as the homes of the gods. The association of cosmos and temple is seen clearly in the following passages:

- ❖ “Thus says Yahweh: “**Heaven is my throne**, and the **earth is the footstool** for my feet. Where *is* this house that you would build for me? And **where is this resting place for me?** <sup>2</sup>And my hand has made all these *things*, and all these *came to be*,” declares Yahweh, “but I look to this *one* to *the* humble and *the* contrite of spirit and *the one* frightened at my word...” (*Isa. 66:1, 2 LEB*).
- ❖ “In the year of the death of Uzziah the king, I saw the Lord sitting on a high and raised throne, and the hem of his robe *was* filling the temple. <sup>2</sup>Seraphs *were* standing above him. *Each had six wings*: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup>And the one called to the other and said, “Holy, holy, holy *is* Yahweh of hosts! *The whole earth is full of his glory*” (*Isa. 6:1-3 LEB*).
- ❖ “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the **highest heaven cannot contain you**; how much less **this house** that I have built! (*1 Kings 8:27*).

These texts emphasize the premise of Genesis One: that it should be understood as an account of functional origins of the cosmos as a figurative temple and with the work on each of the 6 “days” as being part of the inauguration of this temple cosmos (cp. 1Kings 6:37, 65). Apart from the inauguration of the original temple taking 7 days (1Kings 8:2) Ezekiel prophesies that the future temple will also take 7 days for its inauguration (Ezek 43:25, 26). This understanding is enhanced by the fact that both the tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple were designed with the imagery of the cosmos.

### FURTHER UNDERSTANDING OF DAY SEVEN

Although there is no “refrain of: “and there was morning and there was evening” linked with the seventh day, this does not mean that it was not a literal 24 –hour day as are the earlier 6 days. However, as the day when God completes His functional cosmic temple work in a week of **literal 24-hour days**, **He** ceases work at this time, and so: “God **blessed** the seventh day and **made it holy** because on it he ceased all the work that he had been doing in creation” (Gen. 2:3)

Although God does not need to rest He certainly is delighted with the completion of His project, and so is described as having: “...ceased from labour, and was **refreshed** (Lit. caught His breath).” (**Ex. 31:17**). Nevertheless, God keeps working as Jesus said on the occasion when:

- ❖ “The Jews were persecuting him because he was doing these things **on a Sabbath**. But he answered them ‘My Father is working **until now**, and I myself am working’” (*John 5:16, 17*).

So Jesus is saying that God did not cease work in absolute terms on the seventh day. Rather he declared that for God the seventh day was not a cessation from all activity but of a change from bringing the systems of sky, sea, land, and life into full functionality. He stated that His Father keeps working “**until now**.” So God has ceased from *creating the* functions of everything but not from maintaining the universe and doing good toward His creatures with acts of mercy etc.

## The Text and Basic Commentary

### THE FIRST PERICOPE - 1:1 TO 2:3

This passage concerns the creation of the working systems by separating, naming, and creating the roles of the component parts.

#### THE INTRODUCTION TO ALL SIX DAYS

*Gen. 1:1*

“In the beginning [an initial period of time] God **created the functioning of** (Heb. *bara*) the sky and the land [a merism i.e. a totality of a functioning societal system i.e. all that is described for the 6 Days]”

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#### THE NON-FUNCTIONAL EARTH

*Gen. 1:2*

“Now the land was unproductive (Heb. *tohu*) and uninhabited (Heb. *bohu*), and darkness was over the surface of the watery deep, but the extended power of God was circling over the surface of the water.”

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### Day 1. Separation of light and darkness for day/night to function

#### THE TIME-CYCLE

*Gen. 1:3-5*

“God said, ‘Let there be [the period (by metonymy) of] **light** [= day and so not particles of light].’ And there was [the period of] light! God saw that the [the period of] light was good, so God **separated** the [the period of] light from the [the period of] darkness. God **named** the [the period of] light “day” and the [the period of] darkness “night” [the basis for time]. There was evening [the transition into the period of darkness], and there was morning [the transition into the period of daylight], marking the **first day**” After the darkness in verse 2 there is “evening” and then God calls forth “light.” This explains why evening is always stated first.

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### Day 2. Establishing “sky” by separation of upper and lower waters

#### THE WATER-CYCLE & CLIMATE

*Gen. 1:6-8*

“God said, ‘Let there be an **expanse** (Heb. *raqia*) in the midst of the waters and let it **separate** water from water [the water cycle].’ So God **appointed** (Heb. *asa*) the **expanse** and **separated** the water below the **expanse** from the water above it [providing the space for the later air-breathing biological entities to live]. It was so. God **called** the **expanse** “sky.” (Heb. *samayim*) There was evening, and there was morning, a **second day**”

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### Day 3. Separation of land from sea

#### THE LAND FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

*Gen. 1:9-10*

“God said, ‘Let the water below the sky be **gathered to one place** and let dry ground appear.’ It was so. God **called** the dry place “**land**” (Heb. *eretz*) and the gathered waters he **called** “seas.” God saw that it was good”

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*Gen. 1:11-13*

#### FOOD PRODUCTION

“God said, “Let the land **produce vegetation**: plants **yielding** seeds according to their kinds, and trees **bearing** fruit with seed in it according to their kinds.” It was so. The land **produced** vegetation—plants yielding seeds according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. God saw that it was good.<sup>13</sup> There was evening, and there was morning, a **third day**”

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### SUMMARY OF DAYS 1, 2, AND 3

On these three “days” nothing material is created. Even the vegetation is simply being produced through growth from its existing seed. Rather there is separation of already existing material creations and an arranging of them for certain purposes. So God’s activity here is such that the basis for necessary roles and functions is created:

- First Day: The time-cycle of 24 hours.  
 Second Day: The water-cycle providing the climate.  
 Third Day: The land for food production and its production.

### Day 4. The role of the sun, moon and stars

#### THE TIME MARKERS

*Gen. 1:14-18*

“God said, ‘Let there be **lights** (Heb. *me.orot*) **in the expanse** (Heb. *raqia*) of the sky (Heb. *samayim*) to **separate** the day from the night, and let them be for **signs** and the appointed times (Heb. *mo.adim* - festivals) and the **days and years** [for Israelites to calculate the timing for their ‘seasons’ and festival celebrations associated with the sowing and reaping of crops], and let them **serve** as lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the land.’ It was so. God appointed (Heb. *asa*) [to their roles]—two great lights the greater light to **rule over** the day and the lesser light to rule over the night, also the stars. God set the lights in [phenomenologically as an Israelite would see them] the expanse of the sky to shine on the land, to **preside over** the day and the night, and to **separate** the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good. There was evening, and there was morning, a **fourth day**.”

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### Day 5. The role of the creatures in the waters and the sky

#### SEA CREATURES AND BIRDS SWARMING, FLYING, MULTIPLYING

*Gen. 1:20-23*

“God said, “Let the water **swarm** with swarms of living creatures and let birds **fly** above the land across the firmament of the sky.” God **created the functioning of** (Heb. *bara*) **the great sea creatures** and every living and moving thing with which the water swarmed, according to their kinds, and every winged **bird** according to its kind. God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and **multiply** and **fill** the water in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the land.” There was evening, and there was morning, a **fifth day**.””

The functions or roles given to these creatures being to multiply, swarm and fill the seas in the case of the sea creatures, and to multiply and fly in the case of the birds. So Day 5 details the functionaries as they carry out their own functions.

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### Day 6. The role of the creatures on the land

#### LAND ANIMALS TO REPRODUCE ACCORDING TO THEIR KINDS

*Gen. 1:24-25*

“God said, “Let the land **produce** living creatures according to their kinds: cattle, creeping things, and wild **animals**, each according to its kind.” It was so. God **appointed** (Heb. *asa*) [to their roles] the wild animals according to their kinds, the cattle according to their kinds, and all the creatures that creep along the ground according to their kinds. God saw that it was good.””

Just as with the third day statement concerning the producing of vegetation from the land does not mean some spontaneous generation from the ground in modern-day evolutionary terms, so, too, the land does not literally generate these animals, but is simply the place where they are produced **through normal reproduction**. The image is of a land bursting into fullness and not of a land acting as a causal force. Also the Hebrew word (מין, min) for “kind” indicates that God was concerned with separating time, space, and species; in other words he is arranging His already materially created world.

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*MANKIND IN THEIR ROLE AS MALE AND FEMALE WERE TO FILL AND SUBDUE THE LAND AND (AS IN GOD’S IMAGE) TO RULE THE LAND*

*Gen. 1:26-28*

“Then God said, “Let us **appoint** (Heb. *asa*) [to their roles] **humankind** in our image, after our likeness, so they may **rule over** the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the land, and over all the

creatures that move on the land.” God created the role of (Heb. *bara*) humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created their role (Heb. *bara*), male and female he created their role (Heb. *bara*). God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and **multiply!** Fill the land and **subdue** it [harness its potential and use its resources for your benefit]. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.””

- Again this is also a very role oriented passage whereby mankind is to multiply, fill the land and subdue it, and to rule over all the other creatures; yet rather than any physical image “the image of God” would be the God-given mental and spiritual capacities that would enable mankind to rule over the created order.

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*Genesis 1:29-31 -*

*UTILISATION OF FOOD*

“Then God said, ‘I now give you every **seed-bearing plant** on the face of the entire land and **every tree that has fruit with seed in it**. They will be yours **for food**. And to all the animals of the land, and to every bird of the air, and to all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every **green plant** for food.’ It was so. God saw all that he had made—and it was very good! There was evening, and there was morning, the **sixth day**”

This does not mean that vegetation and fruit were to be the only food for humans and animals. Please see STUDY 8, AN ANCIENT CREATION.

## Summary of Days Four, Five and Six

**Day 4:** The role of the “lights” for time-keeping and festivals.

**Day 5:** The role of the sea creatures and winged birds to multiply and fill their domains.

**Day 6:**

- a) The role of three types of animals according to their kinds.
- b) The role of mankind as being in God’s image to rule over everything, to multiply, and to fill and subdue the land.
- c) The role of plants and fruit trees now given as food for mankind and the animals.

## Completion of the Project to Form a Fully Functioning System

*Genesis 2:1-3*

<sup>1</sup>“The sky and the land were completed with everything that was in them.” This gives the summary of what was completed by the end of the 6 “days.”

<sup>2</sup>“By the seventh day God finished the work that he had been doing, and he **ceased** on the **seventh day** all the work that he had been doing. <sup>3</sup>God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he ceased all the work that he had been doing in creation.”

*Genesis 2:4 - THE LITERARY HINGE TO THE SECOND PERICOPHE*

<sup>4</sup>This is the account (Heb. *toledot*) of the sky and the land when they were **created** (Heb. *bara*) [in their roles]—when Yahweh God **appointed** (Heb. *asa*) [to their roles] the land and sky.”

## Preparation Completed

1. The total darkness removed and so providing 24 hour time.
2. Water cycle begins and so providing the basis for weather/climate.
3. Dry land appears/vegetation grows and so providing food.
4. Sun/moon appointed to function now as time markers/body-clock regulators.
5. Great sea creatures and other sea creatures, and birds appointed to their various functions.
6. Three types of land animals and mankind appointed to their various functions.

## General Comment

The beginning of material creation was when there was no sea. In regard to the material creation Proverbs 8:23, 24 speak of God's wisdom as: "...from the **beginning**, from the earliest times of the earth. When there were **no depths** I was brought forth..."

So "the **beginning**" of the material creation concerned events at a very early stage of earth's history even before the oceans, whereas the 6 "days" of functional creation begin after the spirit of God (possibly "a supernatural wind") was hovering over the face of the waters."

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### THE SECOND PERICOPÉ – 2:5 TO 2:25

Unlike the usual view that the second pericope is a resumption and expansion of the second part of Day 6, this view presents it as sequential

## Conclusion

The "Making the World Functional" view proposes that the Genesis One account has no interest in and gives no information about the creation of the material world or to be in any way a basis for establishing the ages of either the Earth or of the entire universe. So there is no attempt to make supposed scientific facts fit with the Genesis account as with Young Earth Creationism, and neither is there any attempt to mess with the grammar of the Genesis account to fit with actual scientific facts as with the Day/Age view and several other views presented in STUDY 5.

Furthermore, a review of the information in STUDY 9 shows that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 have, up to now, been wrongly used by some Bible believers to form chronologies and therefore cannot legitimately be used to calculate the time of Adam's creation. The gaps in those genealogies certainly mean that Adam existed some thousands of years earlier than the often presented 6,000 years. Furthermore, the Scriptures make it plain that the earth and the universe are ancient (Please see STUDY 8).

Because of these facts it is clear that without any guidance from the Scriptures regarding the actual age of mankind or the earth or the universe, other than knowing that the earth and the universe are ancient, there is no real reason not to accept at least some of the time-table of creation as is generally accepted in the scientific world. In fact, the modern views of the Genesis Creation Days presented in the previous study are those of sincere, highly qualified Bible-believing scholars who recognize that the Scriptures do not give any ages for the earth or mankind, but leave it open. So each person who rejects this scientific time-table out-of-hand must ask him/herself if they are being fair or are demonstrating the same kind of arrogance or prejudice that atheists display toward believers in the Creator. Even if scientific understanding varies over time, is it really true that most scientists do not really know what they are doing? Is it really true that most scientists have some hidden agenda against the Bible so that they lie about their results in some kind of conspiracy? This writer does not believe either of those ideas to be the case generally. So if one accepts that the scientists are generally good at their work then it is possible that the earth really is 4.5 billion years old and that the universe is some 13.2 billion years old. Furthermore, biblical understanding also changes as knowledge of the ancient languages and biblical background continue to grow which is why this is only a proposed view.

Irrespective of these issues, in contrast to the ancient pagan accounts, the Genesis account is an exalted one and gives Christians a sure foundation of monotheism from which to understand the rest of the Scriptures.

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