

The background of the slide is a misty, purple-tinged landscape. In the foreground, there are several bare, dark trees. In the middle ground, there are some dark, rectangular buildings. In the background, a city skyline is visible, including a prominent church spire. The overall atmosphere is hazy and ethereal.

Introduction:

The Extraordinary Message of Genesis 1

(with a free tutorial on  
How to Read the Bible)

# With thanks to...

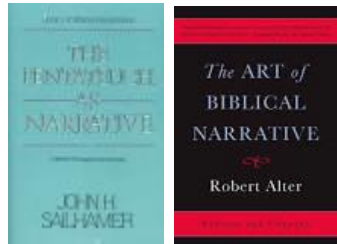


Tim Mackie, Bible Project, free online seminary classrooms, podcasts



Michael Heiser, nakedbiblepodcast

John Sailhammer, The Pentatuch as Narrative



Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative

J. Richard Middleton, The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis One



S. Joshua Swamidass, The Genealogical Adam and Eve: The Surprising Science of Universal Ancestry



John Walton, The Lost World of Genesis One  
The Lost World of Adam and Eve  
The Lost World of the Flood

# What is the Bible?

‘The Bible is ancient Mediterranean Literature’

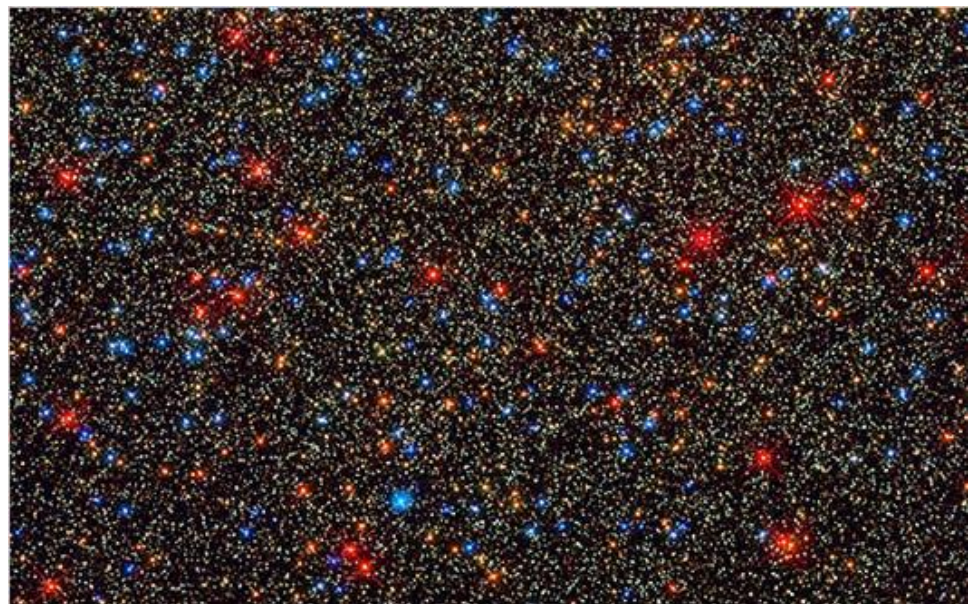
(Michael Heiser)

The Bible is a divinely-inspired text





Van Gogh's The Night Sky



NASA Hubble Telescope

John Walton, The Lost World of Genesis One

# What does it mean that the Bible is literature?

‘it is literature. The biblical books are not hastily written documents or mere historical records. These books are carefully constructed works of literature... as one studies and attempts to understand the meaning of its author, one must pay close attention to its literary dimensions. A sensitivity to the author’s literary skill and techniques goes a long way in helping elucidate his purpose in writing the book’

‘the biblical text gives an account of those historical events... In the case of the Bible, the text is a true and accurate representation, but though true and accurate, the text is still a representation’.

John Sailhammer, ‘The Pentatuch as Narrative’





# What does 'divinely inspired' mean?

The Bible is a product of **divine human partnership**

The **human Incarnation**, Jesus (the Living Word) was both fully human and fully divine

the **literary incarnation**, Bible (the written Word) was both fully human and fully divine

The **process of inspiration** was **work**:

it was expensive, time-consuming, and required editing and collation

(It was not the product of a one-off event in a paranormal or trance-like state)

The literature of the Bible is highly sophisticated, considered, thoughtful

Written by **devout believers (prophets)** inspired by the Holy Spirit







# What was the worldview of the biblical authors?

**They were pre-scientific**

cosmology, intellect, reproduction

**Everything was spiritual**

no separation between natural and supernatural

**Existence was related to purpose or a function**

non-order, chaos or dis-order was non-existence

# Existence is related to function

‘In this book I propose that people in the ancient world believed that something existed not by virtue of its material property, but by virtue of its having a **function in an organised system**. Here I do not refer 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 has its sphere of existence, particularly in the way that functions for humankind and human society....

Our ontology focuses on what **we believe to be most significant**. In the ancient world, what was most crucial and significant to their understanding of existence was the way that the parts of the cosmos functioned, not their material status.’

John Walton, the Lost World of Genesis One





# Why did the biblical authors write the Bible?

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own **interpretation of things**. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were **carried along by the Holy Spirit**.

**Inspired interpretation of events**, Peter writes in 2 Peter 1.20

Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was **said in all the Scriptures concerning himself**.... He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: **Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms**."

**Pointing to Jesus**, Luke quotes Jesus 24. 27, 44

from infancy you have known the **Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus**. <sup>16</sup> **All Scripture is God-breathed** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God<sup>[a]</sup> may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**Wisdom literature**, Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3.14

# How did the Hebrew Bible come together?

## Events

Oral traditions

Early written traditions

Collections of traditions

Proto-editions of biblical books

TaNaKh editions of biblical books

Torah (instruction: law, first five books)

Neviim (prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Minor)

Ketuvim (writings: all the rest including the Psalms)

By Jesus' time 24 Hebrew scrolls (and Greek translations across the Roman empire) in local synagogue, memorised. The unity was mental – in the memory of the community. (Tim Mackie)

# How do we read the Hebrew Bible?

We understand it is an ancient Mediterranean literary text

With a vast and complex history of production

Written by authors with a thoroughly immersive spiritual worldview

From a pre-scientific age

In their ancient language to an ancient audience

Using a highly sophisticated literary style, mainly narrative and poetry

Where the meaning is communicated through the literary re-presentations of historical events

Using particular literary techniques, such as repetition

Which points to Jesus

And provides wisdom for his followers



‘We need to be respectful travellers; we need to listen to the biblical authors on their own terms’

Tim Mackie



# How to read the Bible: Genesis 1 as a free tutorial

1) pay attention to literary units

‘created the skies and the land; the skies and the land, created’ 1.1; 2.1-3

2) pay attention to repetition, including alterations

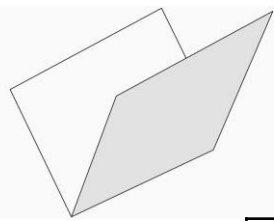
‘evening and morning’, ‘good’

3) pay attention to where the verbal waves climax and break

Humanity ‘in the image of God’ is a poem; day 7 has no end

4) read and re-read the Hebrew Bible

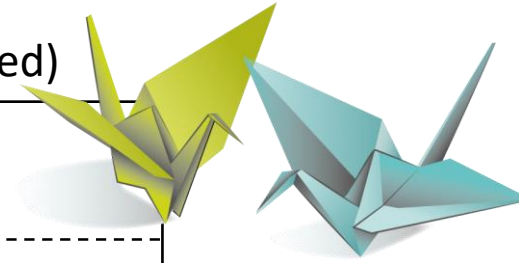
use of sevens in Genesis 1 and beyond



## Genesis 1: 'literary origami'

Separating (unordered)

Filling (uninhabited)



|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Day 1                      | Day 4                      |
| light dark                 | sun, moon, stars           |
| good, evening and morning  | hosts to rule              |
|                            | good, evening and morning  |
| Day 2                      | Day 5                      |
| waters above below         | birds, fish                |
| evening and morning        | good, evening and morning  |
| Day 3                      | Day 6                      |
| waters dry land food       | animals, humans            |
| good                       |                            |
| good                       | humans to rule             |
| bonus, evening and morning | very good,                 |
|                            | bonus, evening and morning |
| Day 7 – no end             |                            |



# The creation of humanity in Genesis One: a poem

So God created humanity in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

# Use of sevens in Genesis One

first sentence 7 words; second 14 words; last 21 words in ancient Hebrew

5 lots of 7 'Elohim' God

3 lots of 7 'land'; and 3 lots of 7 'skies and dome'

'light'; 'day' 7 times day 1; 'light' 7 times day 4

'living creature' 7 times days 5-6

'God saw that it was good' 7 times

God speaks 10 times: 7 to creation 'let there be';

3 towards humanity 'let us make', be fruitful and multiply', 'behold I have given to you'

7 paragraphs marked by morning and evening

Moses' Tabernacle



Solomon's Temple



# Use of sevens in tabernacle and temple narratives

7 speeches of tabernacle instructions from Yahweh to Moses finishing with a Sabbath in Exodus

7 acts of obedience to the divine command, finishing in divine rest

7 annual feasts if you include weekly Sabbath; and 7 year feast, 7x7 Jubilee year

7 petitions of Solomon upon the completing of the temple in Jerusalem followed by two lots of seven day dedications followed by a seven day feast

‘To suppose that all these appearances of the number seven are mere coincidence is not possible. This numerical symmetry, as it were, the golden thread that binds together all the part of the section’

Umberto Cassuto, ‘from Adam to Noah’ and ‘commentary on Genesis’



# The significance of seven

‘In the traditional view that Genesis 1 is an account of material origins, day seven is mystifying. It appears to be nothing more than afterthought with the theological concerns about Israelites observing the Sabbath...

In contrast, a reader from the ancient world would know immediately what was going on and recognise the role of day seven. Without hesitation the ancient reader would know that this is a temple text and that day seven is the most important of the seven days. .. it is the true climax without which nothing else would make any sense or have any meaning’.

John Walton, The Lost World of Genesis One

# What are striking contrasts with other creation narratives from the ANE?

The Babylonian, Egyptian and Canaanite neighbours believed either the gods were in everything (pantheism), or ruling over every aspect of life (polytheism).

According to the Babylonians, through violent subjection of chaos the cosmos was created.

Their Babylonian neighbours believed that humans were created to be slaves to the gods – feeding them through sacrifices, because the gods couldn't be bothered to work themselves.  
Only the king was made in the image of a god.

The ancient world and our current hyper-materialistic atheistic worldview share the same underlying beliefs: humans are insignificant and the whole thing is on the brink of chaos and destruction.

# Conclusion: the extraordinary message of Genesis One

The one uncreated supreme Elohim, with royal ease, overcomes non-order and creates the whole cosmos as his temple where He takes up residence to rest and to rule

He is a beautiful, ordered and prolific mind; and His beautiful, ordered and prolific nature marks the entire cosmos

The uncreated Elohim delegates authority to spiritual beings (elohim) to rule over the unseen realm

The Creator makes humanity in His own image as his living, breathing statues (idols) of Himself in his cosmic temple, to rest with Him, re-present His likeness and rule over the seen, created realm on His behalf

All humans are significant; all humans are a royal priesthood

