

Genesis 1:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the n... This verse is part of the creation account that establishes God's sovereign power and purposeful design. The structured pattern of the seven days reveals divine order, intentionality, and progressive development from formless void to a world prepared for human habitation.

The recurring phrases "And God said," "and it was so," "And God saw that it was good" create a liturgical rhythm emphasizing:

1. creation by divine decree
2. immediate fulfillment of God's word,
3. divine evaluation of creation's goodness.

This pattern refutes both polytheistic chaos-and-conflict creation myths and modern materialistic chance-based origins.

Each stage builds toward the climax of human creation in God's image. The theological themes include divine transcendence and immanence, purposeful design, creation's inherent goodness, and humanity's unique role as God's image-bearers and stewards. The creation account provides the foundation for understanding work and rest (Sabbath), male and female relationships (marriage), human dominion (stewardship), and moral accountability to the Creator. These

opening chapters establish the worldview framework for all subsequent biblical revelation.

Historical Context

Genesis 1 stands in stark contrast to ancient Near Eastern creation accounts like the Babylonian Enuma Elish, Egyptian creation myths, and Ugaritic texts. While these portrayed creation resulting from conflicts between deities or sexual generation of gods, Genesis presents a sovereign monotheistic God who creates effortlessly by divine decree. This would have been revolutionary to ancient readers accustomed to polytheistic cosmogonies.

The Hebrew text's literary structure (seven days, recurring formulas) suggests careful composition as theological proclamation rather than primitive mythology. Archaeological discoveries of creation tablets from Mesopotamia (2000-1500 BCE) reveal that Genesis addresses similar questions but provides radically different answers about the nature of God, humanity, and the cosmos. The absence of theogony (origin of gods) and theomachy (conflict between gods) distinguishes Genesis from its ancient Near Eastern context.

For Israelites emerging from Egyptian bondage or later facing Babylonian captivity, this truth that Yahweh created everything would have been profoundly liberating and countercultural. The gods of Egypt and Babylon were mere creations, not creators. Genesis 1 establishes that Israel's God alone is supreme, rendering pagan deities powerless and their worship futile.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. How does this passage challenge modern cultural assumptions about identity, purpose, or morality?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

בָּמָא	וְרָא	אֶת	הַגָּדָל	בָּמָא	וְרָא	אֶת	הַגָּדָל
made	And God	H853	two	light	great	H853	light
H6213	H430		H8147	H3974	H1419		H3974
לְמַמְשָׁךְ	לְתַתְ	בְּקָטָן	בָּמָא	וְרָא	וְאֶת	הַיּוֹם	לְמַמְשָׁךְ
great	to rule		the day	H853	light	and the lesser	to rule
H1419	H4475		H3117		H3974	H6996	H4475
בְּלִילָה	בְּכֹכְבִּים:	וְאֶת	הַכּוֹכָבִים:				
the night	he made the stars	H853	H3556				
H3915							

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 4:19 (References God): And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

Psalms 8:3 (Parallel theme): When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

Isaiah 40:26 (Creation): Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

Psalms 148:5 (Creation): Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.

Psalms 74:16 (Light): The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun.

Psalms 148:3 (Light): Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

Job 38:7 (References God): When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Isaiah 13:10 (Light): For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

Isaiah 45:7 (Creation): I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

Psalms 19:6 (Parallel theme): His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.