

Genesis 1:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

Analysis

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were... 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

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. How can we apply the principles from this passage to contemporary challenges in family, work, or church?

3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים קְרַב
called And God the light Day and the darkness called Night H1961
H7121 H430 H216 H3117 H2822 H7121 H3915

עַתָּה בְּרוּכָה וְאַתָּה בְּרוּכָה
And the evening and the morning Day were the first
H1961 H1242 H3117 H259

Additional Cross-References

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

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

Psalms 104:20 (Darkness): Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 (Light): Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Genesis 8:22 (Parallel theme): While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

Psalms 19:2 (Parallel theme): Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

Jeremiah 33:20 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season;