

The Primeval History

Lesson 1

A Perfect World

Lesson Guide



thirdmill

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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Preparation

- Read Genesis 1:1–2:3.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:28)

God wanted the people of Israel to follow the leadership of Moses.

Moses not only shows us how things were in the beginning, but also how life should be now, and how our world will certainly be at the end of our age.

II. Overview (2:44)

A. Inspiration (3:13)

1. Reliability (3:37)

This part of the Bible is completely reliable because it is divinely inspired.

Moses intended his original readers to receive this portion of Genesis as historically true.

2. Design (4:35)

God inspired Moses to select and arrange the content of these chapters according to a particular design.

B. Background (5:32)**1. Availability (5:58)**

Many nations in the Near East had already written many myths and epics about primeval history.

Moses was educated in the royal courts of Egypt. His writings indicate that he knew the literature of the ancient world.

2. Interaction (7:10)

Moses wrote his history of the early times to counter falsehood with truth.

His writings purposefully resembled other ancient Near-Eastern writings to communicate God's truth in ways that Israel could understand.

The Atrahasis Epic follows a basic threefold structure.

Comparing Genesis with Atrahasis strongly supports the idea that Moses formed his record with an intentional overarching structure.

C. Purpose (10:35)

Moses wanted:

- To teach Israel the truth about the past.
- To convince Israel of the historical truths of their faith.

III. Literary Structure (15:13)

This passage has three major steps.

A. Dark Chaotic World (17:28)

The world is “formless and empty.”

Scholars believe that it meant that the world was uninhabitable, hostile toward human life, much like a desert or wilderness is inhospitable to human life.

The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

B. Ideal World (19:40)

Moses wrote to influence Israel to conform themselves to God’s will. Other primeval accounts shared this same purpose.

The cultures around Israel wrote their primeval accounts to justify their current religious and social programs.

Their myths called the people to conform to the creation ordinances of the gods, the structures they had set for the universe.

Moses focused on the ways Yahweh had created and ordered the world.

Moses' policies and goals for Israel were true to God's design for the universe.

Israel was moving toward God's ideal by going to Canaan.

When God entered Sabbath rest, the tension between the chaos and God's hovering Spirit had been resolved.

C. Six Days of Ordering (20:52)

God's word brought order to the world.

The days of God's ordering creation fall into two sets of three:

- Days 1-3: God dealt with the formlessness of the earth by creating domains.
- Days 4-6: God dealt with the emptiness of the earth by placing inhabitants in these domains.

God was wonderfully pleased with what he had done.

IV. Original Meaning (26:05)**A. Dark Chaotic World (27:05)**

The most important feature of the first two verses of Genesis is the dramatic tension introduced in verse 2.

In Deuteronomy 32:10-12 Moses used the terminology of Genesis 1:2 to connect:

- Israel's exodus
- Creation account

Moses applied the term "barren" to Egypt.

Moses used the term "hover" for God's presence with Israel.

Deuteronomy 32:10-12 was Moses' commentary on his own work in Genesis 1:2.

Moses presented God's work at creation as a prototype, a pattern, or a paradigm, which explained what God was doing for Israel in his day.

Israel's deliverance from Egypt was nothing less than a re-creation.

B. Ideal World (31:47)

The term "Sabbath" connects the creation story to Israel's exodus.

Full worship of God in Sabbath observance was more complex than anything the Israelites observed in the wilderness.

The full observance of Sabbath, the worship of God, would take place only after Israel had entered the land of rest.

Leaving Egypt and entering the land of promise was lining up with God's perfect plan for creation.

C. Six Days of Ordering (36:36)

1. Deliverance from Egypt (37:14)

God displayed the same power in:

- Delivering Israel from Egypt
- Ordering creation in Genesis chapter 1

Any Israelite who believed that life was good in Egypt had to reckon with Moses' creation account.

The six days of creation corresponded to deliverance from Egypt.

2. Possession of Canaan (40:31)

The Israelites would fulfill this ideal position in the creation:

- Under Moses' leadership
- In the Promised Land

Canaan would be like the wonderful world God ordered in the beginning.

God was taking Israel from the chaos of Egypt to Sabbath rest in Canaan:

V. Modern Application (43:32)

The New Testament looks at Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a prototype of salvation in Christ.

Christ brought salvation and judgment to the world in three stages.

- Inauguration of the kingdom
- Continuation of the kingdom
- Consummation of the kingdom

Christ accomplished much for the salvation of his people when he first came to earth (the inauguration of his kingdom).

Now, God's saving grace spreads over the world through the preaching of the gospel (the continuation of the kingdom).

Salvation will come in its fullness when Christ returns in glory (the consummation of the kingdom).

A. Inauguration (46:56)

John 1:4-5:

“In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”

John continued to draw upon the themes of Genesis 1, especially the theme of the *light* which God brought to the dark chaotic world on the first day.

John pointed to the incarnation of Christ as the light shining into the darkness of the world caused by sin.

Followers of Christ find in Genesis 1 a portrait, an anticipation, of what God did in the first coming of Christ, the inauguration of the kingdom.

Christ's appearance on earth was the beginning of God's final re-ordering of the world.

We are right to place our faith in him and in him alone.

B. Continuation (51:52)

The NT considers the continuation of the kingdom, the period between the first and second comings of Christ, to be a re-creation as well.

2 Cor. 5:17:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

This portion of the passage may actually be translated “There is a new creation.” When people come to Christ in saving faith, they become part of a new realm, a new world, a new creation.

Paul also described the process of an individual's salvation in another way that drew upon Moses' creation account.

Col. 3:9-10:

“You have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

C. Consummation (54:46)

They also applied Creation themes to the final stage of Christ's work—the consummation of the kingdom.

The writer of Hebrews saw God's Sabbath day as an ideal prototype of the ultimate redemption we will experience when Christ returns.

One of the most magnificent passages that identifies Christ's second coming in terms of Moses' creation account is Rev. 21:1.

The entire universe will be re-created into new heavens and a new earth, and God and his people will enjoy that new world together.

Christians often disconnect their eternal hope from the creation.

In the inauguration, continuation and consummation of the kingdom, God sets the world on a path to its ideal end, a wonderful new creation for his people.

VI. Conclusion (59:09)

Review Questions

1. In what two ways is Genesis 1:1-2:3 inspired? Explain.

2. Explain the background of the chapters in terms of availability and interaction.

3. Why did Moses write these chapters?

4. Summarize the basic overview of Genesis 1:1-2:3?

5. What is the literary structure of the Dark Chaotic World in Genesis 1:1-2?

6. What is the literary structure of the Ideal World in Genesis 2:1-3?

7. What is the literary structure of the Six Days of Ordering in Genesis 1:3-31?

8. How do these literary structures help us understand Moses' purpose for writing?

9. What is the original meaning of the Dark Chaotic World?

10. What is the original meaning of the Ideal World?

13. Explain how the NT writers related the creation story to the continuation of the kingdom.

14. Explain how the NT writers related the creation story to the consummation of the kingdom.

Application Questions

1. In contrast to the other creation stories in Moses' day God's spoken word alone brought order and restrained the chaos. How does the way in which God created cause you to worship him?
2. Moses' primeval history was intended to validate Israel's exodus and conquest by showing that they were in accordance with the order God had established in the early history of the world. In what way does an understanding of the creation story help you understand your life within history?
3. The Israelites failed to recognize God's blessings in the Promised Land instead they thought Egypt was pretty good. In what ways are we tempted to not recognize the blessings of Christ's inauguration and possibly settle for "pretty good"?
4. When Paul spoke in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that believers are a new creation he indicated that believers become a part of a new realm, a new world. How does it make you feel that you are not only a new creation but part of a newly created realm?
5. Dr. Pratt mentioned that Christians often disconnect their eternal hope from the creation. In other words we assume we will spend eternity in the spiritual world of heaven. However, the NT teaches that our eternal destiny will be in the new heavens and new earth. How does the NT teaching of a re-created universe affect your view of the world today?
6. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?

Glossary

Atrahasis Epic – An ancient Babylonian story of the Flood that includes the creation, corruption, flood, and a new order

consummation – Third and final stage of inaugurated eschatology when Christ will return and fulfill God's ultimate purpose for all of history

continuation – Second or middle stage of inaugurated eschatology; the period of the kingdom of God after Christ's first advent but before the final victory

creation ordinances – Moral requirements/commands established by God's first acts of creation

Enuma Elish – An ancient Babylonian creation story

Gilgamesh Epic – An ancient Mesopotamian poem containing a flood story that is strikingly similar to the biblical story of the Flood

inauguration – First stage in inaugurated eschatology; refers to Christ's first coming and the ministries of his apostles and prophets

inspiration – Theological term that refers to the way the Holy Spirit moved human beings to write God's revelation as Scripture and superintended their work in a way that made their writings infallible

prototype – The original form of something that serves as an example for other similar things

Sabbath – Day of rest commanded by God in the Old Testament; *Shabbat* in Hebrew

tohu – Hebrew word (transliteration) meaning formless, empty or barren