



Creation in Genesis 1-3

Introduction

The initial chapters of Genesis are widely studied and subject to significant debate.

Contentious issues arise from the concise nature of the biblical narrative.

The text lacks intricate details and leaves gaps for interpretation and speculation.



Framework theory

Traditionally, the first chapter of the book of Genesis was interpreted as a historical narrative that describes the consecutive acts of creation. However, recently different hypotheses were suggested and got popularity. One of such interpretations is the so-called Framework theory.



Framework theory

- Dr. Arie Noordzij of the University of Utrecht is credited as the first proponent of the Framework theory in 1924.
- Nicolaas Ridderbos popularized Noordzij's view in the late 1950s.
- The Framework theory suggests that the first two chapters of Genesis are not a literal historical account but a theological framework for understanding God's relationship with the world.



Framework theory

- The theory gained popularity among Protestants with the contributions of scholars like Meredith Kline, Henry Blocher, Bruce Waltke, and John Walton.
- While adherents of this theory have varying perspectives on specific details, they generally agree that Genesis 1-2 should not be interpreted literally and instead present a "framework" for the description of Creation.



Key Principles of the Framework Theory

- The Genesis creation account is not a literal historical account, but rather a theological framework for understanding the relationship between God and the world.
- The author of Genesis 1 was not trying to provide a scientific explanation for how the world was created, but rather was trying to convey the truth that God is the creator of the world and that he is sovereign over it.
- The Genesis creation account uses the language and concepts of its day to convey these truths.
- The presentation of the creation acts in Genesis 1 is arranged topically but not chronologically.

Interpretation of day 1 and 4

- Kline's interpretation states that on the first day of creation, God created daylight and established the cycle of day and night.
- The term "day" holds lasting significance and meaning in the creation account, according to Kline.
- Kline argues that the text does not indicate any difference between the light during the first three days and the natural light that appeared after the creation of the sun on the fourth day.



Meredith Kline

Interpretation of day 1 and 4

- The possibility exists that the light on the first three days of creation was not from the sun, leading to questions about the use of the term "day," typically associated with the sun.
- Kline proposes an alternative explanation, suggesting a repetition of events in the narrative of Genesis.
- According to Kline, Moses, the author of Genesis, revisits the events of the first day to provide further details when describing the creation of the luminaries on the fourth day.



Meredith Kline

Interpretation of day 1 and 4

- The focus on the fourth day returns to the creation of light and explains the solar mechanism behind it.
- Kline suggests that light and luminaries were created together on the first day, but Moses separated the account into two different days for the sake of the theological framework.



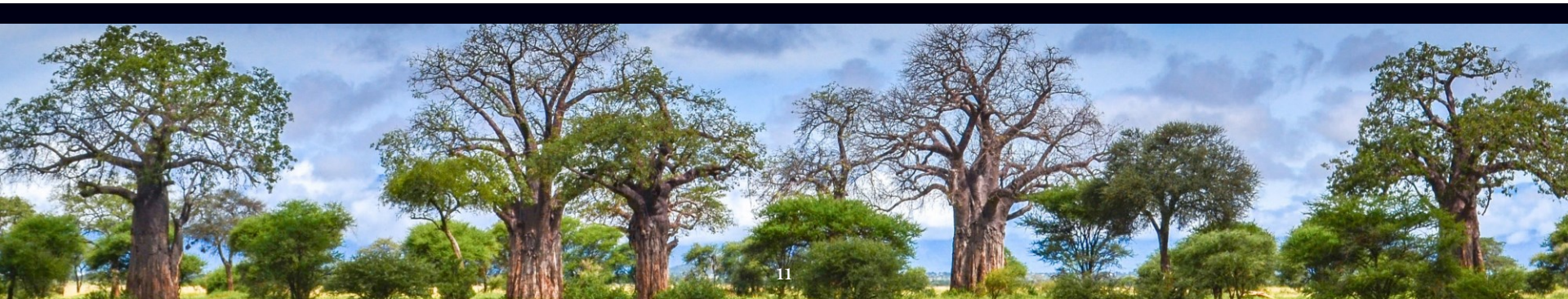
Meredith Kline



CREATION KINGDOMS		CREATURE KINGS	
Day 1.	Light	Day 4.	Luminaries
Day 2.	Sky Seas	Day 5.	Sea Creatures Winged Creatures
Day 3.	Dry land Vegetation	Day 6.	Land Animals Man
THE CREATOR KING Day 7. Sabbath			

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“This deliberate two-triad structure, or literary framework, suggests that the several creative works of God have been arranged by Moses, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in their particular order for theological and literary, rather than sequential, reasons. For this reason, we believe the days of the creation week are a figurative framework providing the narrative structure for God's historical creative works.” M. Kline



Poetic Language?

- According to Kline, the writing style of Genesis 1 exhibits a semi-poetic nature, suggesting the presence of figurative language and the absence of strict literalism.

Meredith Kline, "Because It Had Not Rained," *Westminster Theological Journal* 20 (1958): 156.



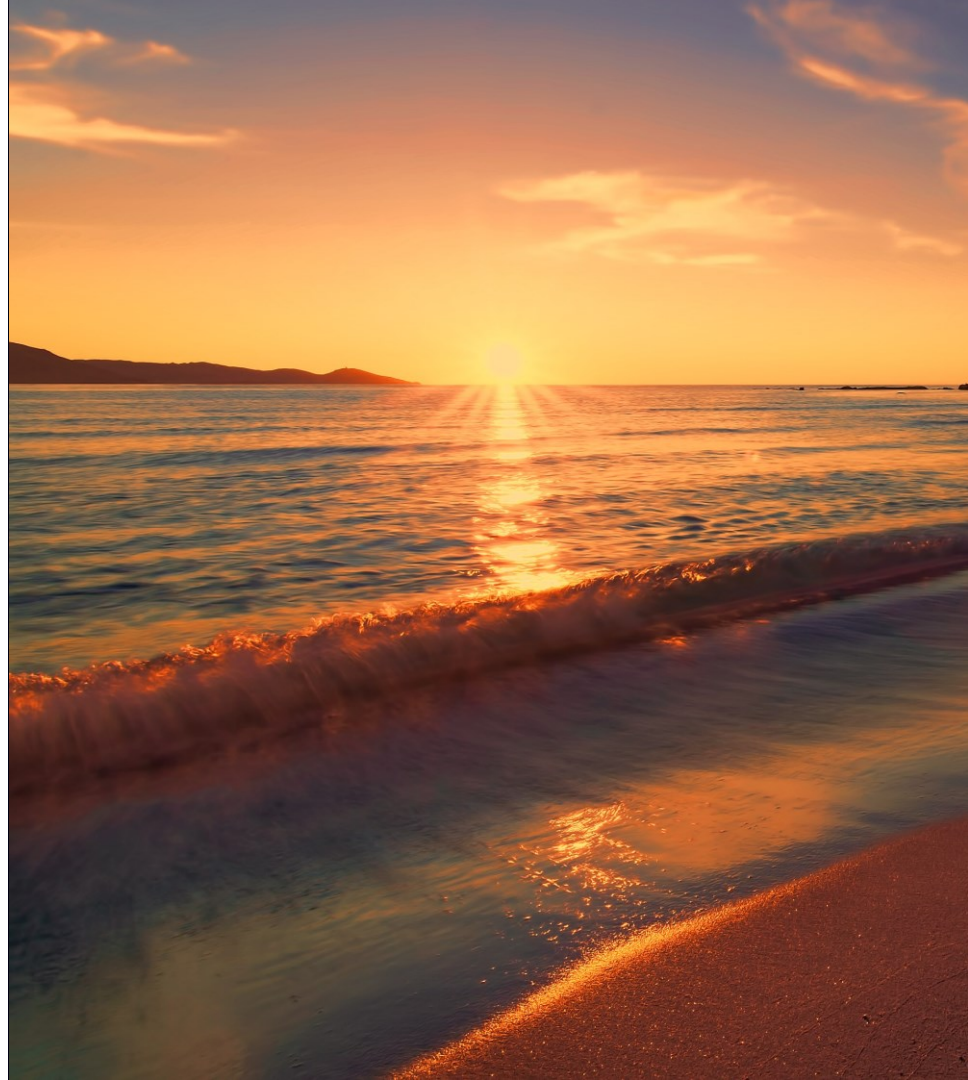
Sequence of creation of man and animals

And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

(Genesis 1:25–26 ESV)

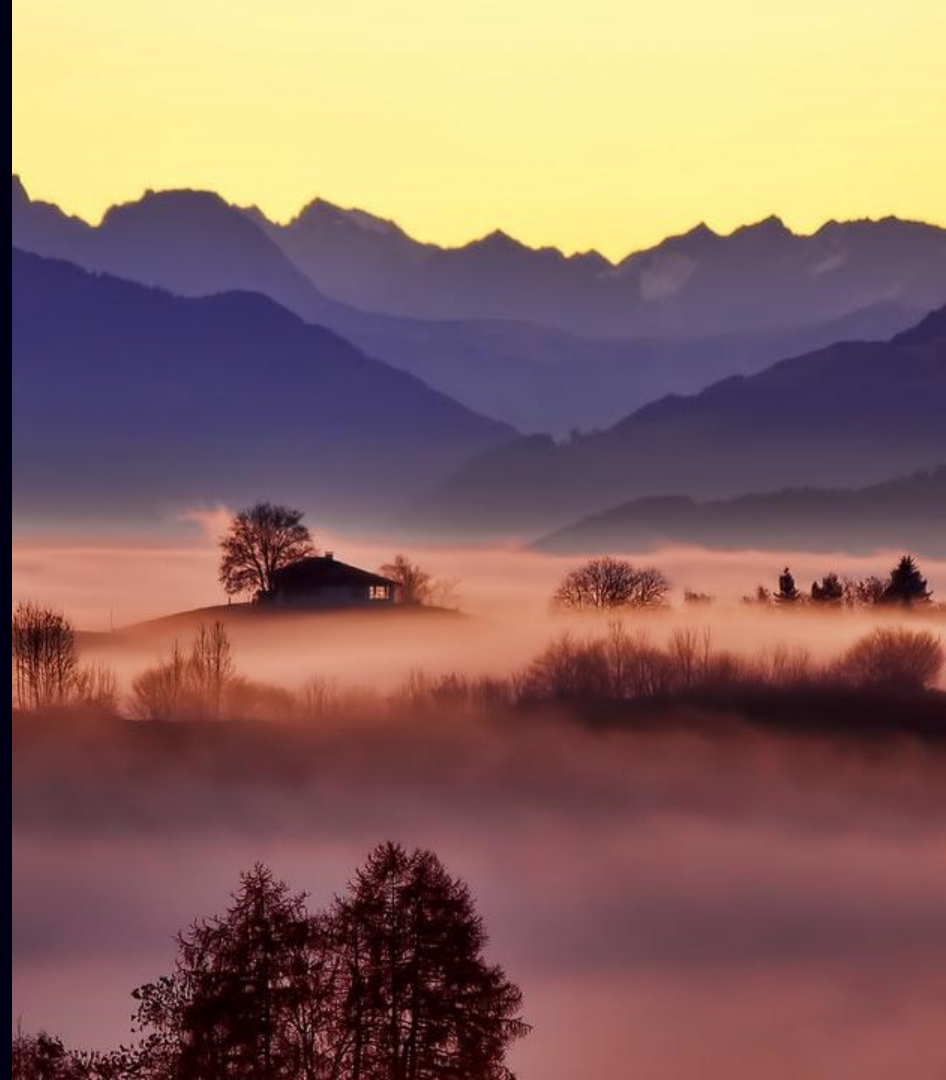
Sequence of creation of man and animals

- However, according to Genesis 2, the sequence is different:
 - God created Adam (v. 7)
 - God created animals (v. 19)
 - God created a woman (v. 21-22)



Framework theory

The adherents of the Framework theory see here one more argument in its favor: the events of the Creation week are not described chronologically but topically, therefore there is no problem if we have difference in two accounts.



Nature of the seventh day

- Many proponents argue that the seventh day is distinct from the other days of the week and possesses a different nature.
- For example, the seventh day lacks the typical evening-morning formula, implying that it is not finite but eternal.
- Lee Irons supports this notion by referencing the author of Hebrews, who equates the seventh day of creation with God's everlasting rest.

Nature of the seventh day

- For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest,’” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.
 - For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.”
 - And again in this passage he said, “They shall not enter my rest.”
(Hebrews 4:3–5 ESV)
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Nature of the seventh day



- The Epistle to Hebrews interprets Psalm 95:11 in light of Genesis 2:2, emphasizing that God's rest has been ongoing since the conclusion of the sixth day.
- It is important for the covenant community to actively pursue and enter into that rest through faith, according to Hebrews.
- In summary, according to the Framework theory, God's rest commenced after the week of Creation and endures for eternity.

Nature of the seventh day

“Accused of breaking the sabbath law because he has healed the paralytic, Jesus pleads that he is working as his Father is still working (Jn. 5:17), following the principle 'Whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise' (Jn. 5:19). Jesus' reasoning is sound only if the Father acts *during his sabbath*; only on that condition has the Son the right to act similarly on the sabbath. Jesus stresses, 'My Father worketh *even until now*' (RV); God's sabbath, which marks the end of creation but does not tie God's hands, is therefore co-extensive with history. Our Lord himself did not see the seventh day of Genesis as a literal day.”

Henri Blocher, *In the beginning: the opening chapters of Genesis* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., U.S.A.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 57.



Henri Blocher

Framework Theory

The Framework theory can be appealing to certain readers seeking reconciliation between the biblical account of Creation and scientific perspectives on the origin of life.

It is important to note that not all proponents of the theory use it for this purpose.



Framework theory

- Some adherents, like M. Kline, believe that the Genesis account depicts historical events and attribute the authorship of Genesis to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- However, there is a cautionary aspect to consider, as this approach may potentially lead to acceptance of macroevolution over time.
- It is crucial to recognize the diversity of views within the Framework theory and the potential implications they may have in relation to broader theological and scientific discussions.



Meredith Kline

Framework Theory

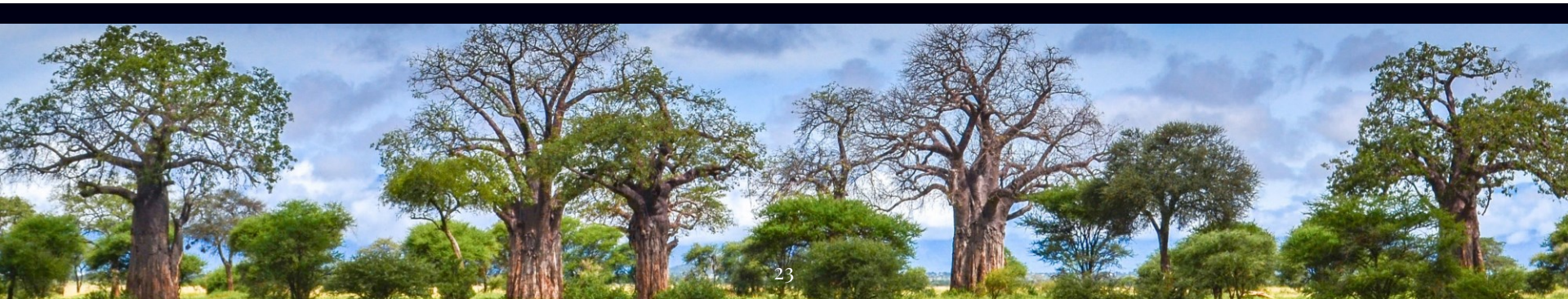
John Walton explaining the account of Genesis 1 suggests a house/home metaphor. He says that there is a difference between two terms: “house” and “home.” When we speak about a house we might be interested about many different details of how the house is built (material of roof, walls, plumbing, etc.) but when we speak about home we also speak about a specific house but we mean something else—a place when we feel comfortable, where our family lives. According to him, the Genesis account is a story of a home, not of a house. Although the metaphor is valid, Walton does far-going conclusions based on it.



John Walton

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Many have believed in the past that the seven days related to the age of the earth because they read the chapter as a house story. The age of the earth pertains to that which is material. If this is a home story, however, it has nothing to do with the age of the physical cosmos. A period of seven days does not pertain to how long it took to build the house; it pertains to the process by which the house became a home.



Adam and Eve

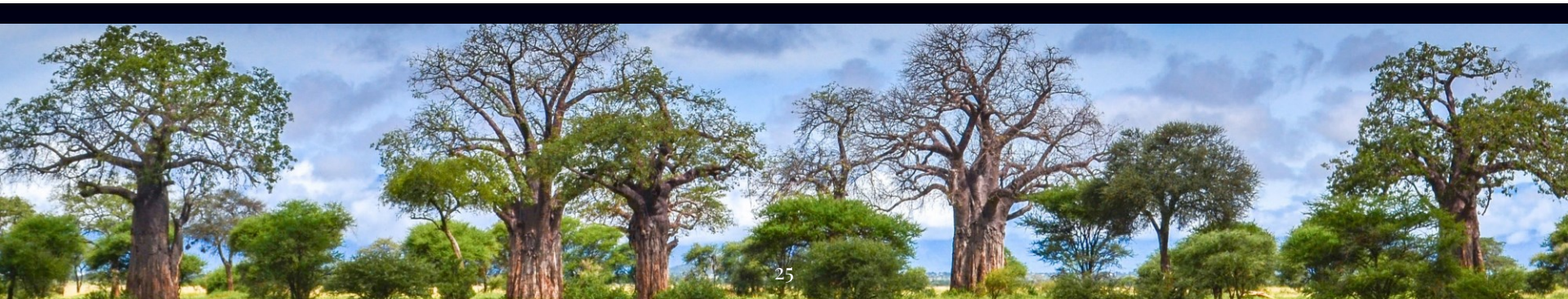
Walton assumes that Adam and Eve were not the only people created by God. Since the word “Adam” in the first chapters of the book of Genesis is used differently (sometimes as a proper name but sometimes as a generic noun, meaning “a man”) he makes the following conclusion:



John Walton

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Taking our lead from Genesis 2:5, where the context indicates a generic sense, we would understand Genesis 1:26 as generic: “God said, ‘Let us make generic humanity (the human species) in our image.’” Note that this coincides with previous creative acts of living beings. God created animals, birds and fish en masse. For humans, this particularly makes sense since the verse proceeds to talk about them in the plural (“they may rule”), indicating that a corporate focus is intended.



Death before Fall

Also, Walton suggests that the first world created by God was not perfect and death might exist there. Therefore, for Walton, there is no contradiction between the modern science and the biblical account.

The interpretation of Genesis 1-2 by Walton is an example of how the Framework theory can be a slippery road that leads to the recognition of the theistic evolution.



John Walton



Kevin Smith

Criticism of the Framework theory

Framework Theory

Not all postulates of the Framework theory are wrong. For example, we can agree that the author of the book of Genesis used the language and knowledge of his time to explain the process of creation and of course not everything could be explained using the knowledge of the world that existed at that time.



Chronological sequence

The Ancient Hebrew language has a quite complicated tense system. There are two specific forms that can convey the past tense: *qatal* and *wayyiqtol*. The first two verses of Genesis 1 employ the *qatal* tense for the main verbs while in the rest of the chapter the *wayyiqtol* form is used (with some minor exceptions). The *wayyiqtol* form of the verbs is usually used to convey a chronological sequence of the events. The following conclusion can be drawn from here: the first two verses describe the events that took place before the week of Creation but the events of the week of Creation are described in chronological order.

Also, the numbering of days is a factor that implies that the author intended the narrative of Creation to be understood as a sequence of the chronological events.

Style of Genesis 1-2



The adherents of the Framework theory assume that the style of Genesis narration is semi-poetic, however, this argument is also not valid. In fact, there are many debates among the scholars regarding the nature of Hebrew poetry especially, about its distinctive characteristics. However, in spite of all the debates it is considered that parallelism is the most common feature of the ancient Hebrew poetry. This feature is missing in Genesis 1-2. The only poetic passage is the song of Adam when he saw Eve (Gen 2:23). Furthermore, even if we assume that Genesis 1-2 uses an elevated style it does not mean that the narrated events must not be presented in the chronological order.

Nature of Sabbath

Many scholars agree that the Sabbath argument is not valid. For example, Millard Erickson notes, "The pictorial-day theory [or framework theory] also has difficulties with the fourth commandment: God's enjoining rest on the seventh day because he rested on the seventh day seems to presuppose some sort of chronological sequence."

Furthermore, the argument based on Jn 5:17-19 used by Blocher does not prove that God rests until now; on the contrary, according to this passage, God continues to create.



Millard Erickson

Inconsistencies

- Some of the “inconsistencies” in Genesis account of creation can be easily reconciled. For example, the sequence of events in Gen 2 does not necessarily contradict the account of Gen 1.



Finally, it is worthy to mention the evaluation of the Framework theory by Wayne Grudem, “while the ‘framework’ view does not deny the truthfulness of Scripture, it adopts an interpretation of Scripture which, upon closer inspection, seems very unlikely.”

Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 408.

