

A close-up photograph of a dandelion seed head, showing the intricate structure of the seeds and their fine, white, feathery pappus. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting. The text is overlaid on the image.

He Spoke and It Was

Creation in Genesis:
Making Sense of the Text

Gerald A. Klingbeil, D.Litt., Associate Editor *Adventist World/Adventist Review*
Research Professor of Old Testament and ANE Studies, Andrews University

בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים

ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς

“In the beginning God created...”

“Mu ntangiriro Imana yaremye...”

“Im Anfang schuf Gott...”

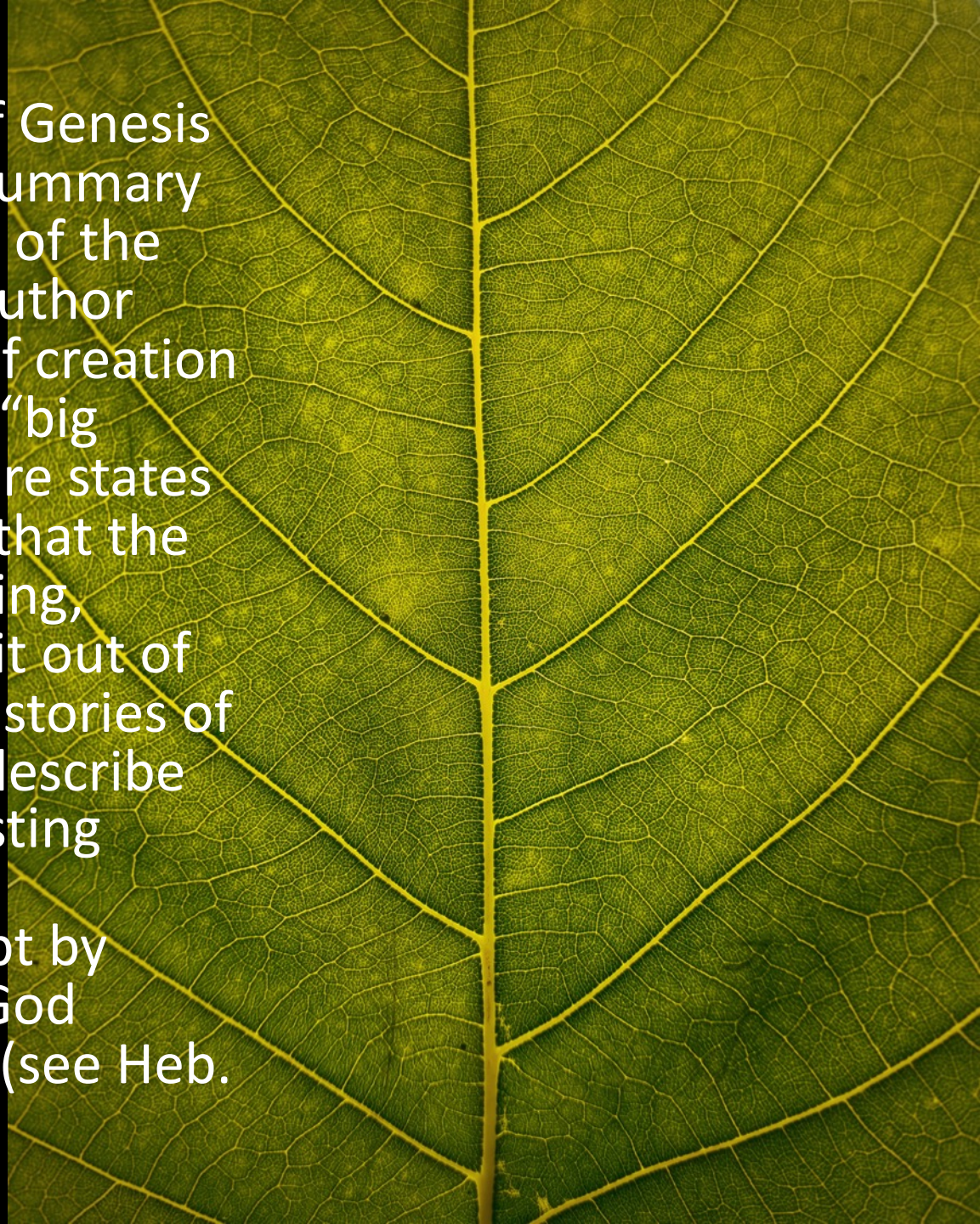
Meet Moses—not JEDP



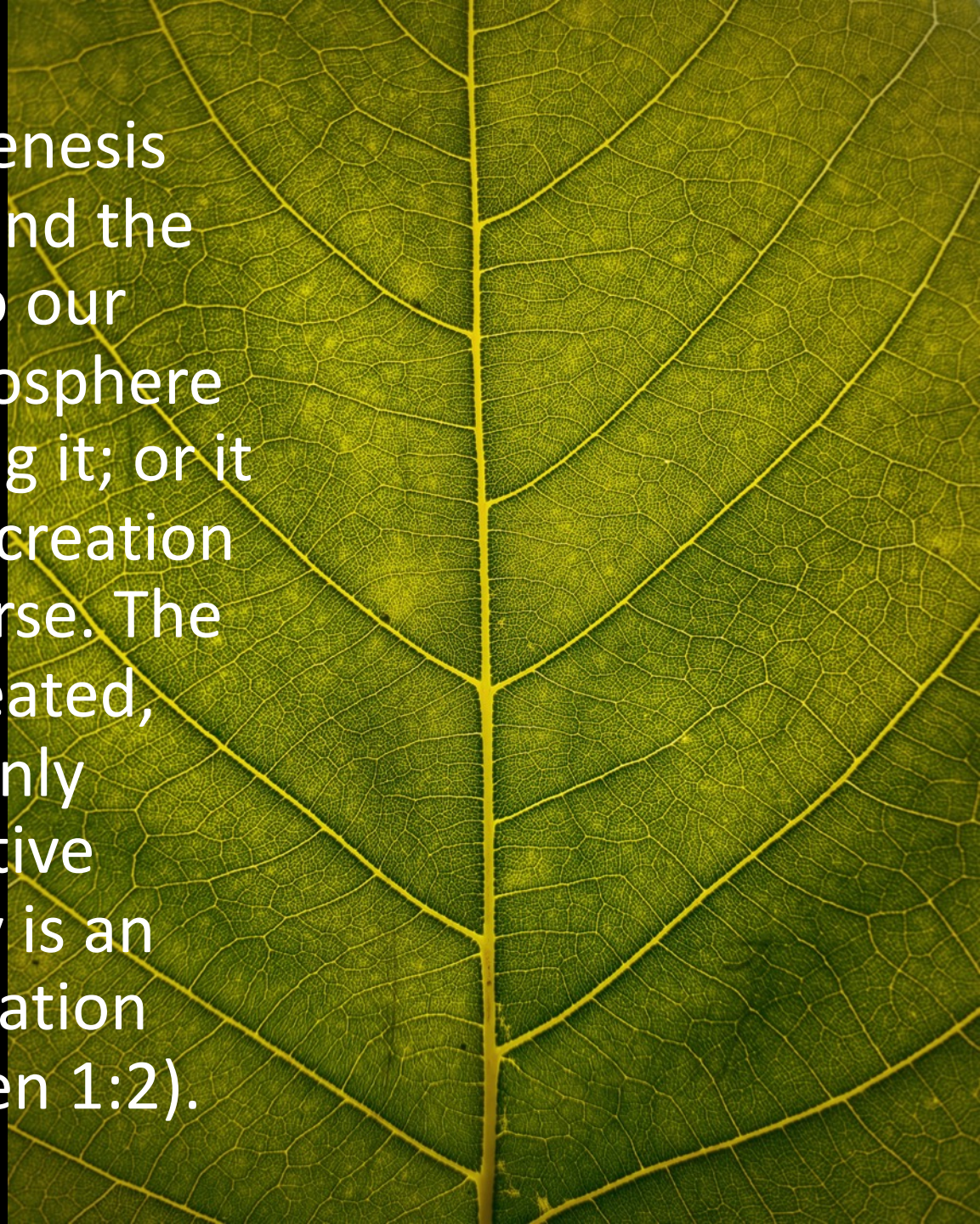


Foundations: Historical Criticism

The first two verses of Genesis function as a title or summary statement for the rest of the chapter. The biblical author introduces the story of creation with a bang—not the “big bang” though. Scripture states right from the outset that the universe has a beginning, because God created it out of nothing. The creation stories of ANE cultures usually describe the gods using preexisting material. Genesis 1:1 challenges this concept by simply implying that God created from nothing (see Heb. 11:3).



John 1:1 echoes Genesis 1:1. “The heaven and the earth” can point to our planet and its atmosphere heaven surrounding it; or it could point to the creation of the larger universe. The fact is that God created, using a verb that only applies to His creative activity. The Trinity is an integral part of creation (see John 1:1-3; Gen 1:2).






Day	Form	Fill	Day
1	Light (1:3-5)	Lights (1:14-19)	4
2	Firmament (1:6-8) Sky Seas	Inhabitants (1:20-23) Birds Fish	5
3	Dry land (1:9-10) Vegetation (1:11-13)	Land animals (1:24-25) Human beings (1:26-31)	6
Creation and Sanctification of the Sabbath (2:2-3)			



Forming



Filling



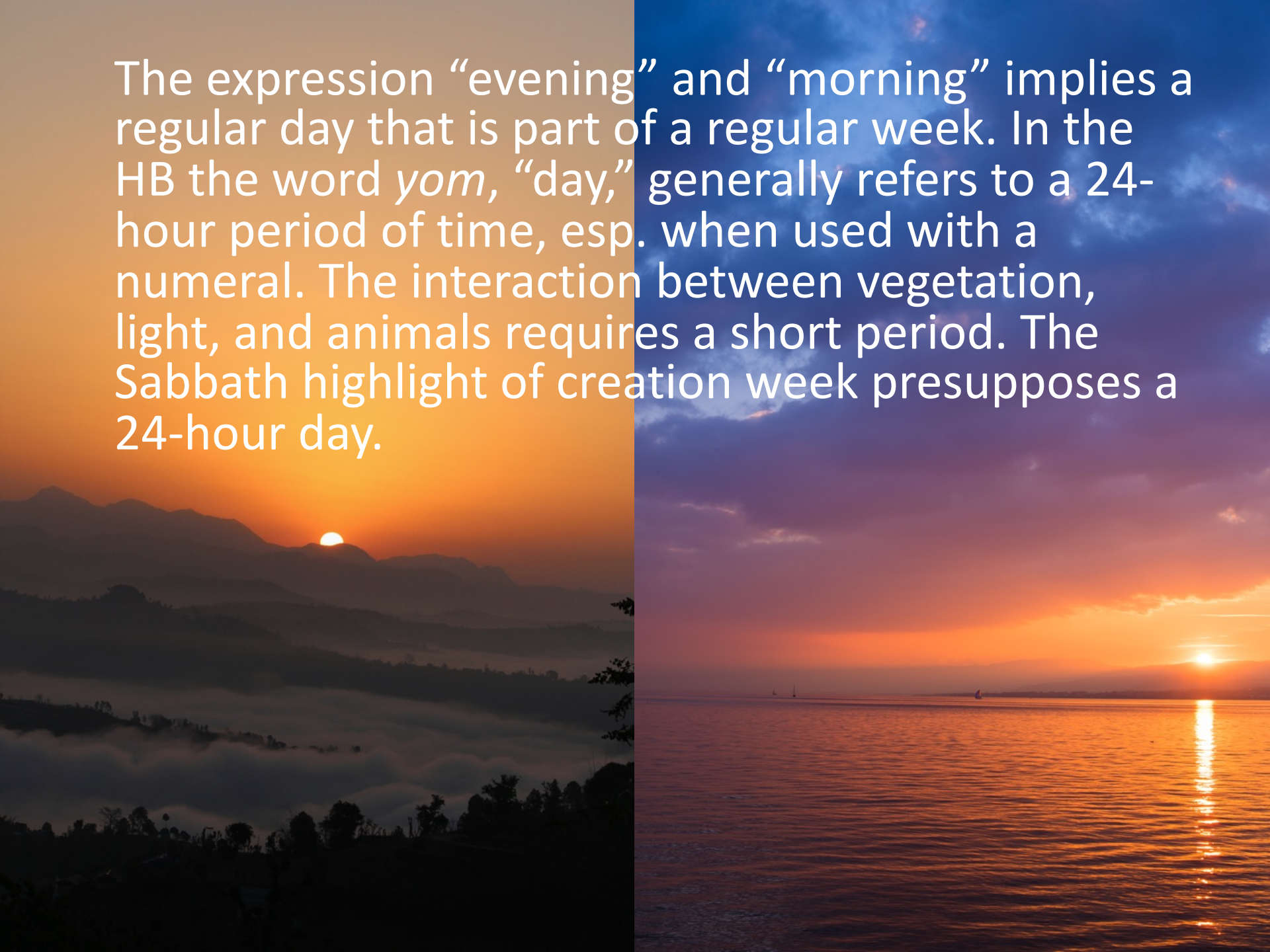
Each creation day follows the same pattern: (1) God speaks; (2) It happens; (3) God evaluates and sees that it was good (or “very good,” Gen. 1:31); (4) time summary statement involving evening and morning.



So what light did God create on Day 1? Two possibilities: (1) the sun, even though the time-signaling function is only introduced in vv. 14-19; (2) the light refers to light emanating from God Himself.

Option 1 seems to be preferable as day divisions exist already; also the light was created—and God is eternal.

The expression “evening” and “morning” implies a regular day that is part of a regular week. In the HB the word *yom*, “day,” generally refers to a 24-hour period of time, esp. when used with a numeral. The interaction between vegetation, light, and animals requires a short period. The Sabbath highlight of creation week presupposes a 24-hour day.



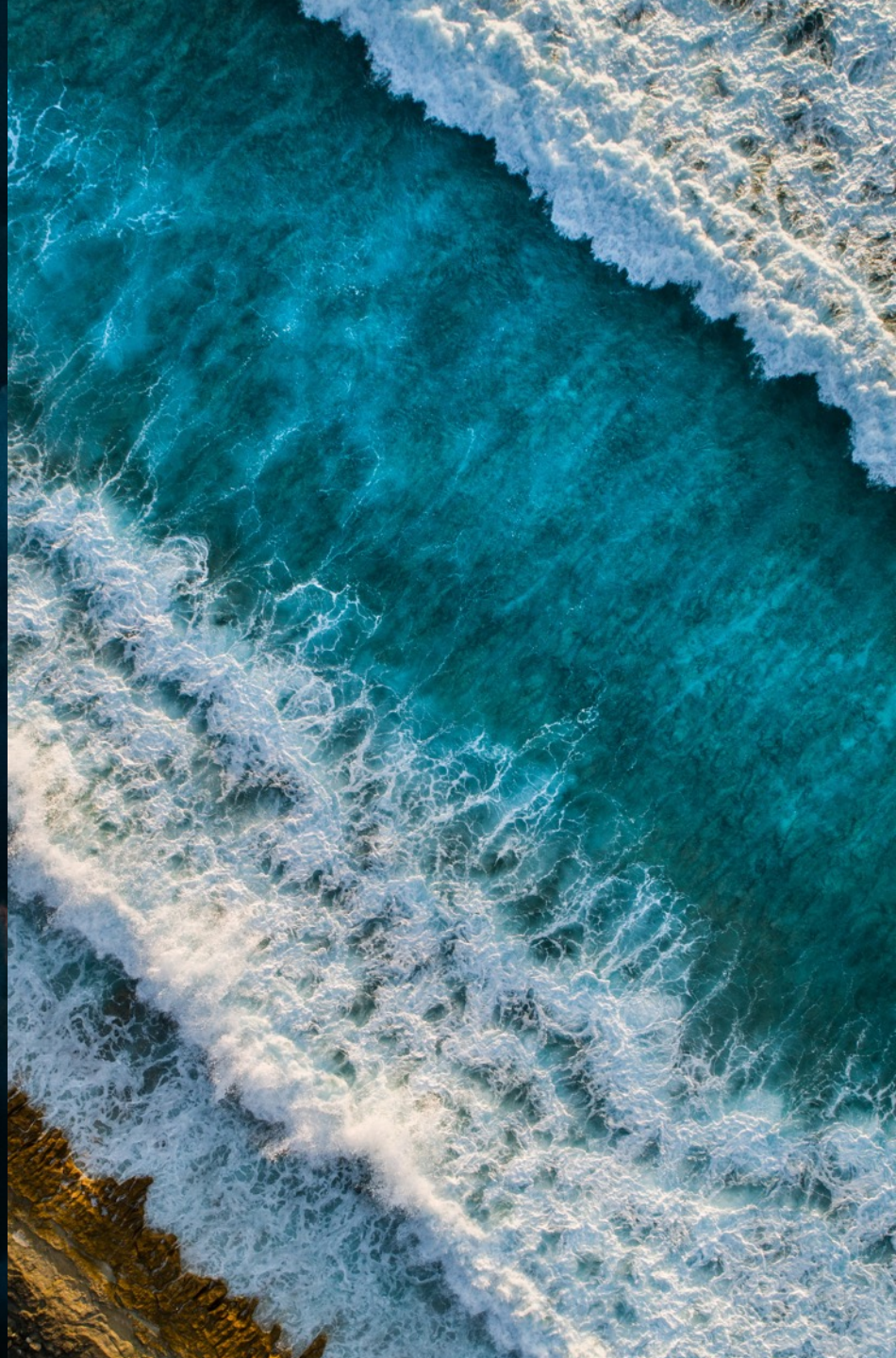


**GOOD
NEWS
IS COMING**

God sees each creation day activity and then declares it *good* (1:4, 10, 18, 21, 25) or even *very good* at the end of the sixth day (1:31). The Hebrew notion of “good” does not have a purely functional dimension (“it works”) but is more comprehensive. Good refers also to aesthetic beauty, especially when associated with seeing (cf. Gen. 6:2; 24:16; Dan. 1:4; 1 Kin. 1:6; 1 Sam. 16:36), as well as to ethical choices (1 Sam. 18:5). There is no space for sin and evil in a good creation!



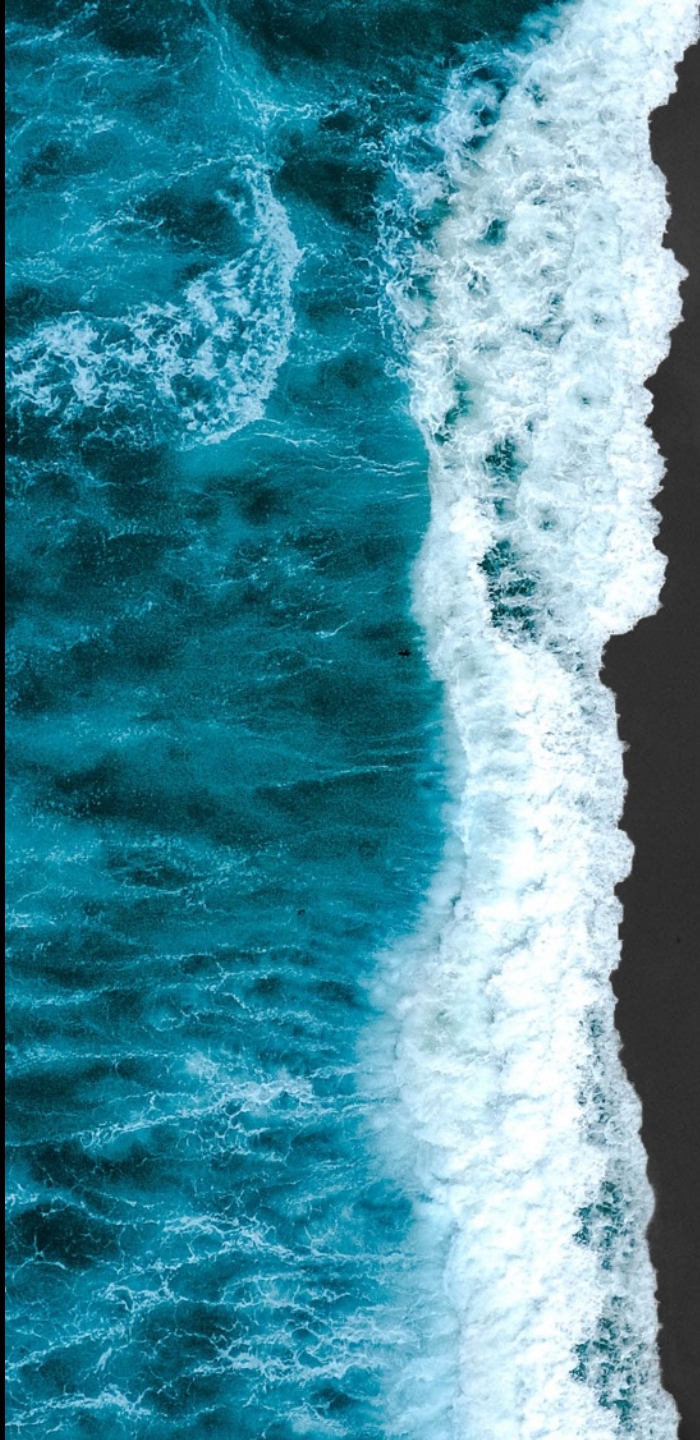
Day 2



Scripture and Science

Relationship has been discussed for centuries, esp. following Enlightenment. Christian engagement with science can be described using three models: (1) Science and religion should be considered as **separate entities**; (2) Science and religion are **parallel but separate**: both help us discover truth but they should not cross-pollinate (theistic evolution); (3) Science and religion should **interact**, while **giving God's revelation priority**. Christians are not hostile to science but recognize God as the Creator of natural laws and seek to understand creation based on this premise.

Day 3





Day 4

Day 5

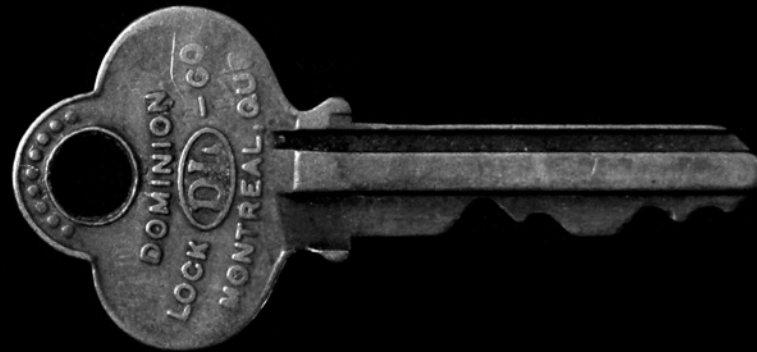




Day 6



Day 6



“Have dominion” (1:28)



Day 7: Sabbath rest



Genesis 2 offers a closer focus on humans and their garden home. God is portrayed in more intimate terms (His personal name; the detailed description of the creation of humanity). God forms Adam (who is taken from *'adamah*, "earth") like a potter forms a clay vessel; He breathes in spirit.



Choices...



**The entrance
of death**



The Proto-Gospel—the plan in miniature



Beginnings

1. Theology (who and how is God?)
2. Anthropology (who are we? What makes us human?)
3. Sociology (family, marriage, and larger community)
4. Cosmology (origins of the cosmos)
5. Soteriology (plan of salvation in light of creation and fall)
6. Ecology (creation care)



WHAT
DO YOU
MEAN
?

Applications

- Beyond the walls of our churches, what significance does the biblical concept of creation have in my life?
- What does it mean for my classroom? I am teaching maths or literature—not religion or Bible?
- How can I communicate the foundational nature of biblical creation to my students who live increasingly in a digital and virtual reality?

