

# Science and Faith

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## The “Image of God”: Its Scriptural Setting

Ray Williams

# The Image of God

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## Presentation Outline (Genesis 1 Summarized)

**Fundamental Doctrine**

**Creation of the Universe**

**An Evolutionary Process**

**The Transformed Earth**

**The Creation-Day View**

**The Framework View**

**Literary Structure of Genesis 1**

**A Creative-Episode Perspective**

**Analysis of the Refrain**

**The Image of God**

# The Image of God

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## Fundamental Doctrine

*The most important theological doctrine of the Christian faith is the belief in the “Inerrancy of Scripture.”*

*Unless the “Infallibility of Scripture” is truly acknowledged, the Christian Faith lacks a reliable foundation.*

*And, without trust in the “Written Word”, theological truth-claims are just empty assertions.*

*However, in no way is the “Inerrancy of Interpretation” implied, Interpretation of Scripture will always be subject to human fallibility.*

# Creation of the Universe (Genesis 1:1)

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

**At the beginning of creation, God created the fundamental parameters of nature; including, gravity, the atomic binding forces and the dynamic relationships of space-time and energy-matter.**

**By the year 2013, man-made space satellites, have mapped the precise signature of the big-bang generated Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation pattern, and data analysis show that the creation event occurred 13.82 billion years ago.**

**More than 4 billion years ago, our solar system formed in the Milky Way galaxy; including, first the Sun, later the Earth and the other planets, then the Moon, plus a great number of orbiting asteroids.**



# The Earth's Initial Condition (Genesis 1:2)

*And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.*

**As the early Earth cooled from its molten state, its outer surface solidified into a thick crust and its dense primordial cloud cover began to dissipate.**

**As the density of the cloud cover decreased, diffused sunlight was able to penetrate to the surface of the Earth. “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3)**

**The Earth continued to undergo extensive geological and atmospheric changes until eventually its surface became completely covered with water.**

**About 3.9 billion years ago, as the Earth's physical transformation progressed, God created organic life; at first, simple in form, but exquisite in design.**

# The Earth's Initial Condition (Genesis 1:2)

*And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.*

**Radiant energy from the Sun caused an evaporation-type water cycle to begin between the water in the oceans below and the water in the clouds above.**

**“Let the expanse separate the waters” (Genesis 1:6)**

**The Earth's molten and fluid interior mantle, acted on the outer crust to create emerging land masses, which then formed into slowly migrating plates.**

**“Let the dry land appear” (Genesis 1:9)**

**The Earth's atmosphere gradually became oxygen-rich and transparent, which enabled all forms of life, energized by the Sun, to flourish.**

# **The Transformed Earth (Genesis 2:1)**

*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, all the host of them.*

**The Earth was filled with:**

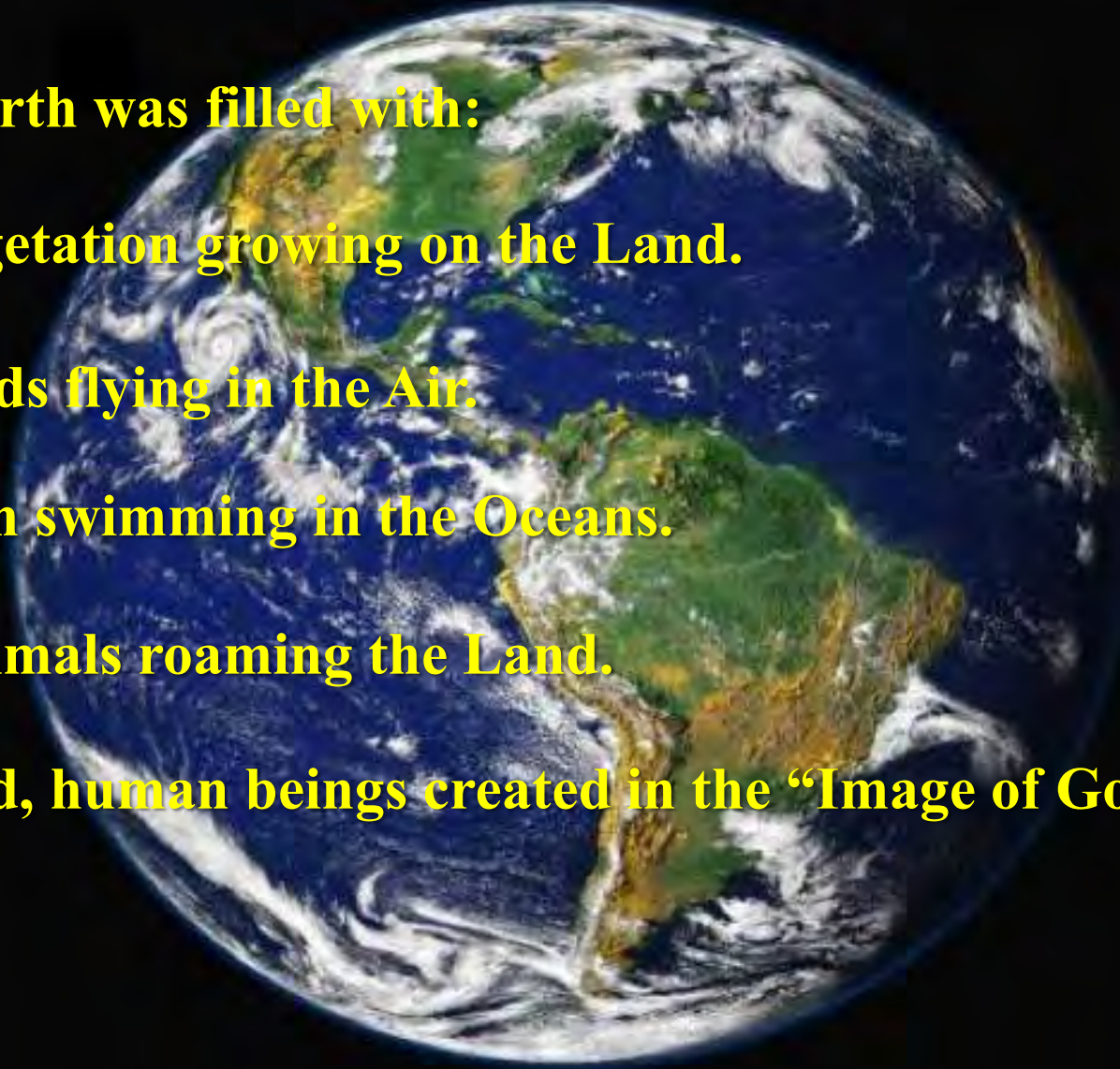
**Vegetation growing on the Land.**

**Birds flying in the Air.**

**Fish swimming in the Oceans.**

**Animals roaming the Land.**

**And, human beings created in the “Image of God”.**





# Science and Faith

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**How should the Biblical creation account be interpreted?**

**The Creation of the Universe, in Genesis 1:1, does not seem to present a widespread problem of interpretation.**

**But, the Transformation of the Earth, in the rest of Genesis 1, has, historically, presented a scientific & theological challenge.**

**It's instructive to critically review two popular interpretations.**



# The Creation-Day View

**Day One - Separation of Day from Night**

*And there was evening and there was morning, one day.*

**Day Two - Water Cycle Established**

*And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.*

**Day Three - Appearance of Dry Land  
- Sprouting of Vegetation**

*And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.*

**Day Four - Sun and Moon as Signs**

*And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.*

**Day Five - Creation of Fish and Birds**

*And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.*

**Day Six - Creation of Land Animals  
- Creation of Mankind**

*And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

## Comments:

There are two variations of this view, many believe the days are 24-hour periods;  
But others interpret the days, as long periods of time.

# The Creation-Day View

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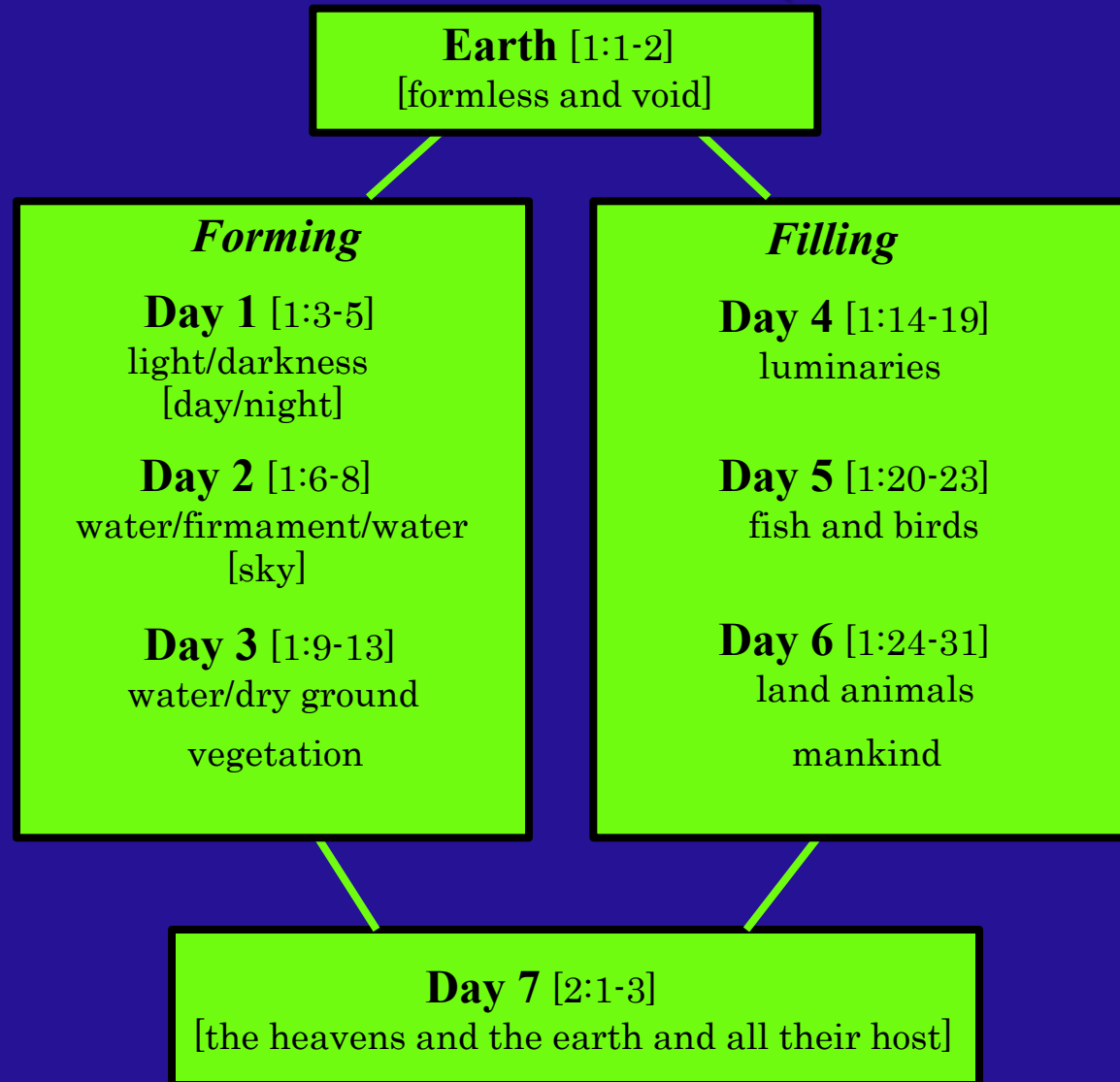
## Comments:

Actually, the Earth's transformation did not occur in six discrete segments.

And the days, referenced in the refrain, really designate the workdays of man.

But, the “sequence of days” does establish a relationship with God's creative work.

# The Framework View (Two Triads)



## Comments:

Interesting theme but the living pattern of man is completely ignored.  
The scheme also disregards the sequential nature of the narrative.



# Genesis 1 Interpretations

**Actually, there are a number of concordist and non-concordist interpretations.**

**Concordist Views - (Attempt to be consistent with modern science)**

**Creation-Day View (Young Earth)**

**Day-Age View (Old Earth)**

**Gap Theory**

**Analogical-Day View**

**Appearance of Age**

**Non-Concordist Views - (Non-literal or no attempt to convey scientific truth)**

**Framework View**

**Proclamation Day View**

**Functional or Temple Inauguration View**

**Ancient Near Eastern Cosmology**

**Each view has attractive features but overall, each one is significantly deficient.  
The literary structure of Genesis 1 is the determining factor that enables the  
creation narrative to be correctly interpreted.**

# The Literary Structure of Genesis 1

**Beginning with Genesis 1:3, the creation narrative is organized into eight episodes that collectively, describe the transformation of the Earth and its filling with life.**

**These eight episodes represent the principal aspects of a very long, God-ordained evolutionary creation process.**

**Each of the episodes is presented according to the following four-part format:**

- |                                  |                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Command or Edict              | (And God said)                      |
| 2. Confirmation that it happened | (And it came to be so)              |
| 3. Explanation given             | (More detail in explanatory verses) |
| 4. God's assessment              | (And God saw that it was good)      |

**Based on this structure, a new and better interpretation of Genesis 1 is called for; one that incorporates a Creative-Episode perspective.**

# A Creative-Episode Perspective

## Episode 1

Separation of Day from Night

← Day one

## Episode 2

Separation of the Waters

← Day Two

## Episode 3

Appearance of Dry Land

## Episode 4

Sprouting of Vegetation

← Day Three

## Episode 5

Sun and Moon as Signs

← Day Four

## Episode 6

Creation of Fish and Birds

← Day Five

## Episode 7

Creation of Land Animals

## Episode 8

Creation of Mankind

← Day Six

### Comments:

The eight episodes (of the making & filling of the Earth), are the principal aspects of a creative process that extended over a period of 4.6 billion years.



# A Creative-Episode Perspective

## Episode 1

Separation of Day from Night

← Day one

## Episode 2

Separation of the Waters

← Day Two

## Episode 3

Appearance of Dry Land

## Episode 4

Sprouting of Vegetation

← Day Three

## Episode 5

Sun and Moon as Signs

← Day Four

## Episode 6

Creation of Fish and Birds

← Day Five

## Episode 7

Creation of Land Animals

## Episode 8

Creation of Mankind

← Day Six

### Comments:

The listed creative activities, did not occur in strict chronological order. They were constituent parts of a complex and overlapping evolutionary creation process.

# A Creative-Episode Perspective

## Episode 1

Separation of Day from Night

← Day one

## Episode 2

Separation of the Waters

← Day Two

## Episode 3

Appearance of Dry Land

## Episode 4

Sprouting of Vegetation

← Day Three

## Episode 5

Sun and Moon as Signs

← Day Four

## Episode 6

Creation of Fish and Birds

← Day Five

## Episode 7

Creation of Land Animals

## Episode 8

Creation of Mankind

← Day Six

## Comments:

The six days, sequentially inserted into the narrative, specify the workdays of man; and this understanding becomes clear, when the context of the refrain is analyzed.

## Analysis of the Refrain

*And there was evening and there was morning, one day.*

The verse syntax includes the use of two verbs, which means that the evening and morning terms are successive events that mark the beginning and ending of the nighttime period of an ordinary earth day.

Thus, the context of the refrain is man-centered and instead of implying days of creation, the refrain denotes the nighttime rest periods of man's workweek.

Insertion of the six-day refrain into the creation narrative, reveals God's genius; because, it illustrates that man's biological clock and his specified living pattern are designed to be in conformity with the Earth's 24-hour rotational period.

Thus, the refrain accomplishes two purposes:

- (1) Specification of the living pattern for mankind, and
- (2) To establish a relationship of man's living pattern with God's creation.



## Analysis of the Refrain

*And there was evening and there was morning, one day.*

**This relationship is formalized in one of the explanatory verses of the fourth commandment, which also provides the basis for a Sabbath day observance.**

*“For[in]six days the Lord made heaven and earth the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day” Exodus 20:11a (ESV)*

**Since the verse reference is to the Earth’s transformation, and not Genesis 1:1, the phrase “heaven and earth” should be understood to mean “sky and land.”**

**Secondly, the preposition “in” is placed in brackets because an equivalent word does not appear in the Hebrew text. Its insertion is a misleading translation.**

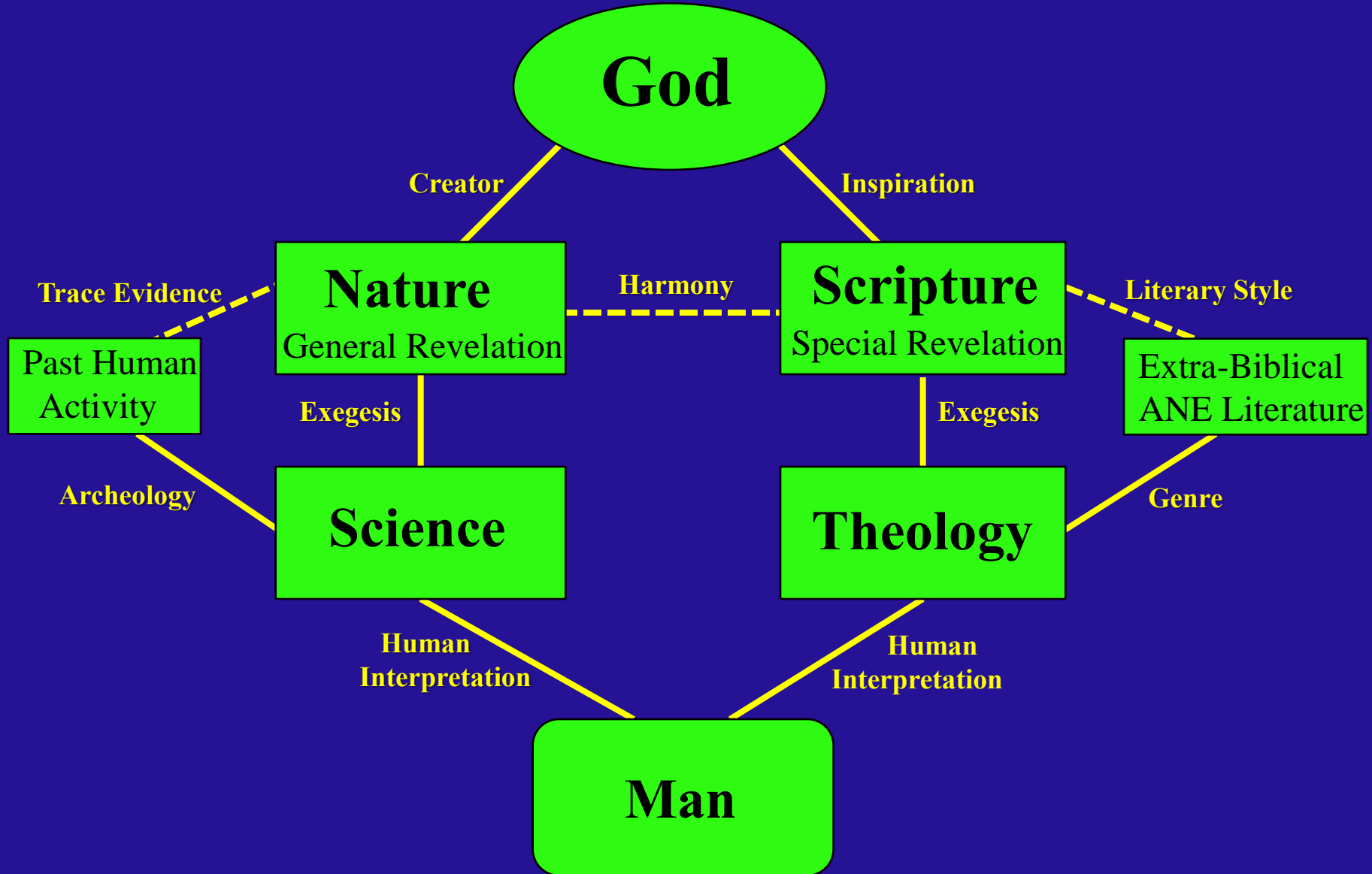
**Theologian C. John Collins, explains that Exodus 20:11 and 39:17 refer to the creation account but are intended to emphasize the relationship between God’s workweek and the living pattern of man, which includes the observance of a Sabbath day of rest.**

# A Creative-Episode Perspective

## Genesis 1 Summary:

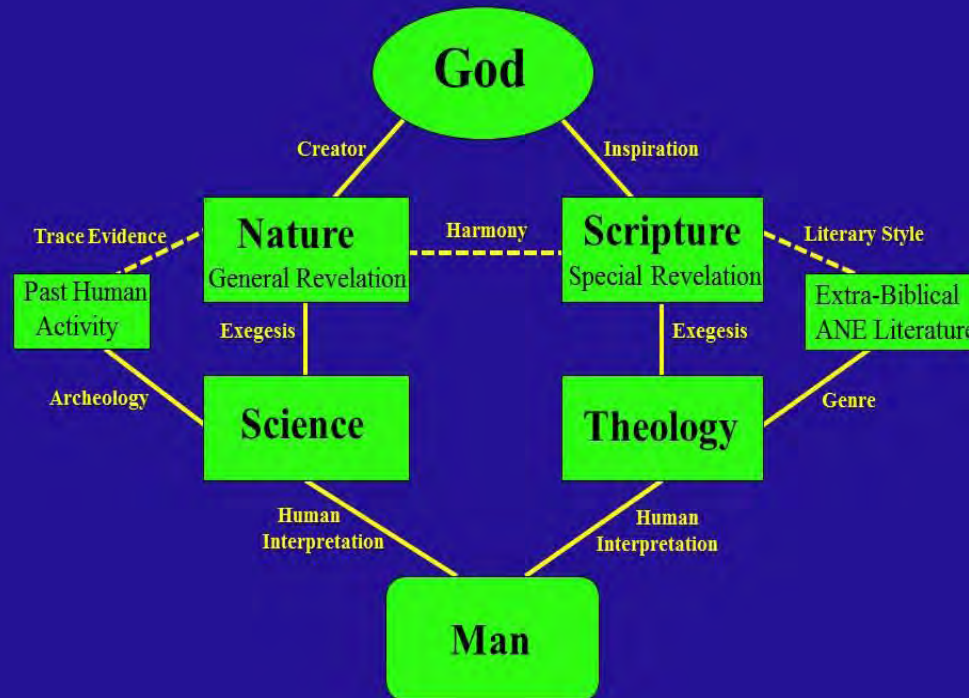
1. Genesis 1:1 declares that God is the creator of the entire universe.
2. The transformation of the Earth is illustrated by a series of eight episodes that are presented in the form of Royal-Decrees.
3. The six-day refrain verses denote the nighttime periods of ordinary days, and they are intended to specify the living pattern for mankind.
4. The Genesis 1 narrative does not provide a time duration, short or long, for any part of the creation process.
5. God's resting on the seventh day provides the symbolic basis for man's Sabbath day of rest.
6. The Creative-Episode Perspective recognizes that the Genesis 1 narrative describes the “what” of creation and not “how” it was accomplished.

# The Interpretation of God's Revelation





# The Interpretation of God's Revelation



**Two sources of revealed truth - God's general revelation and His special revelation.**

**If both are interpreted correctly - their messages will harmonize with each other.**

**But,**

**If scientists study only nature - they cannot discern the whole truth of God. And,**

**If Christians ignore scientific evidence - their view of creation can be flawed.**

**The Image of God**

**presented in the**

**Eighth Creative Episode**

# The Image of God

## The Eighth Creative Episode

**Genesis 1:26** - *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 1:27** - *So God created man in his own image, in the **image of God** he created him **male and female** he created them.*

**Genesis 1:28** - *And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and **subdue** it and have **dominion** over the ... fish, birds and every living thing that moves on the earth.*

**There are only two other explicit references to God’s image in the OT.**

**Genesis 5:1** - *This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the **likeness** of God.*

**Genesis 9:6** - *Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in **his own image**.*

**Some commentators have noted, that the scarcity of biblical references contributes to a wide a diversity of opinion over what it means to be made in God’s image.**

# The Image of God

**Because of the immutability, immensity and infinity of God, it is unreasonable to expect that these lofty characteristics would be imparted, even partially, with the objects of God's creation.**

**Therefore, to understand what it means to be created in the image of God, attention must be directed toward the literary style of Genesis 1 and the context of the Genesis 1:26-28 verses, instead of engaging in philosophical or theological speculation.**

**The royal-metaphor style of writing was common in ancient Near East literature telling stories of creation and the role that various gods played in how the ancients thought the world was created.**

**Although the biblical writers were inspired by God, their divine direction was accomplished in a manner that not only retained their personal style of writing, but also, what they wrote, reflected the literary style common at the time.**

**Genesis 1:26, indeed the whole creation narrative, should be seen in this light.**



# The Image of God

**Other OT verses, use the Hebrew words selem (image) and demut (likeness), to convey either a sculptural image or an abstract likeness; however, such a word study is inconclusive, to determine the meaning of imago Dei in Genesis 1.**

**Also, the meaning of the “image of God” should not be sought in terms of a metaphysical analogy between the human soul and the being of God. Instead, the context of Genesis 1:26 points to “rule” as the purpose of God’s declaration.**

**Additionally, the author provides the proper interpretive approach, by his use of the royal-metaphor style of writing to describe God’s creative activities.**

**The author uses eight “And God said” episodes to describe the transformation of the Earth and its filling with life. These episodes are presented as a series of “Let there be” royal decrees that are pronounced by a Ruler-King.**

# The Image of God

The concept of “rule” is emphasized again, in that, the creation of mankind in God’s image, refers to God’s delegation of power to humanity to have dominion over the rest of creation.

Robert Davidson, in his book, *Genesis 1-11*, adopts this interpretation when he writes, that “image” and “likeness” are defined by what follows in Genesis 1:26, and; that is, “to rule.”

Genesis 1:27, further emphasizes the concept of dominion by declaring that humans were biologically created as male and female, blessed with fertility and commissioned by God to reproduce and fill the Earth and subdue it.

# The Image of God

**J. Richard Middleton, gives an excellent definition of the “image” in his book, *“The Liberating Image -The imago Dei in Genesis 1”***

*“The image of God is seen as the royal function or office of human beings as God’s representatives and agents in the world, given authorized power to share in God’s rule over the earth’s resources and creatures.”*

**Therefore, the “image of God” is a mandate-given responsibility, rather than a physical or spiritual characteristic, imparted to the nature of humankind.**

**Since God’s image has been given to all mankind, such a responsibility is quite distinct from the goal of born-again Christians, to become more and more conformed to the image of Christ.**



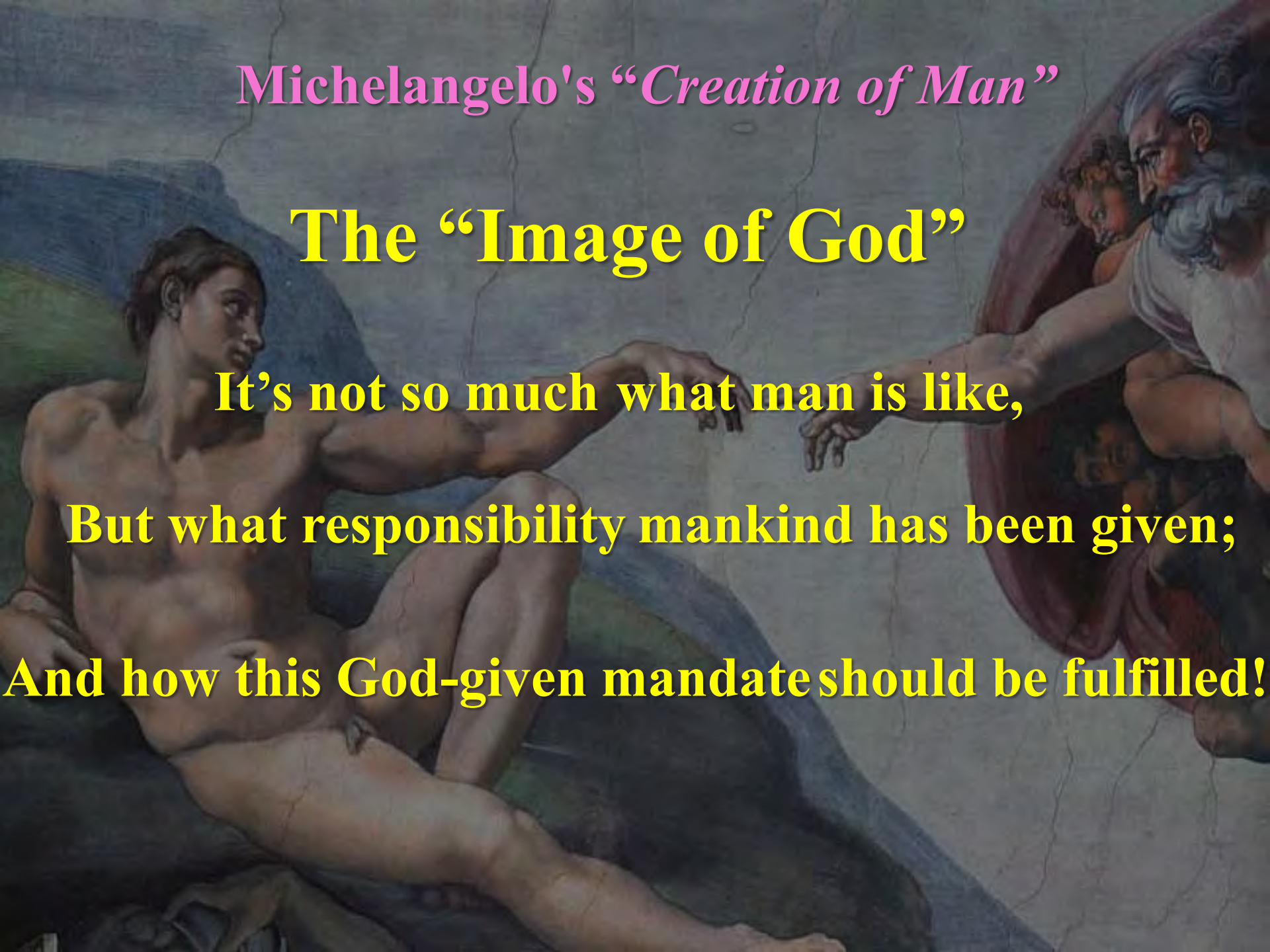
# Michelangelo's "*Creation of Man*"

## The "Image of God"

It's not so much what man is like,

But what responsibility mankind has been given;

And how this God-given mandateshould be fulfilled!





# Genesis 1

the appointment of food.

IN the beginning God created  
the heaven and the earth.  
And the earth was

the morning—the fifth day,  
the land produce living creatures  
that move along the

creepeth upon the  
So God created man  
image in the

in his own image,  
he created him

it was very good.  
sixth day



A scenic landscape featuring a river in the foreground, a dense forest of green trees and yellow flowering shrubs in the middle ground, and a range of rugged mountains with snow-capped peaks in the background under a clear blue sky.

**It was God who Created the World**

**And, on Earth,  
man is his representative**

**That's the literal message  
of Genesis 1**