

The Untitled, Open-Ended Study Bible

January 25, 2026

Genesis 1:2-23 (NRSVUE)

**See the
instructions on
the back!**

1 When God began to create the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” 7 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8 God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. 16 God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17 God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

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How to Use This Study Bible Sheet

As you reread Genesis 1:1–23, imagine you are editing a study Bible for future readers. Your job is not to defend the text—but to help it be understood.

1. Where Would a Footnote Help?

Footnotes explain what modern readers might miss.

Ask:

- Where does historical or cultural context matter?
- Where might someone today misunderstand the text if they read it literally or quickly?
- Where does the sermon challenge a common assumption?

Examples:

“Chaos” in verse 2

The absence of violence in creation

Light appearing before the sun

Sea monsters being created, not destroyed

Write brief notes explaining why that detail matters.

2. Where Would an Information Box Be Helpful?

Information boxes slow the reader down and offer orientation.

Ask:

- Where does the text push back against empire, power, or domination?
- Where does Genesis differ from other ancient creation stories?
- Where does this passage reshape how we think about God, fear, or authority?

Examples of possible info boxes:

“Creation Stories in the Ancient World”

“Why the Sun and Moon Aren’t Named”

“Chaos as a Given, Not a Problem”

“Order Without Violence”

3. What Needs Explanation—Not Defense?

Instead of asking:

“How do we prove this is true?”

Try asking:

“What kind of people would this shape?”

“What habits does this reading encourage?”

“What instincts does it resist?”

Note where the text:

Undermines certainty

Refuses easy answers

Values life before usefulness

Makes space for fear without surrendering to it

4. Where Do You Feel Resistance?

Pay attention to your own reactions.

What feels uncomfortable?

What challenges how you were taught to read Scripture?

What feels relieving?

Those moments are worth marking.