

The Creation Story

Reflections on the first three chapters of Genesis.

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Genesis – the book of beginnings

In this study we will be exploring some of the treasures to be found in Genesis Chapters 1-3.

Very soon we will discover that Genesis (and, indeed, the rest of the Bible) is all about GOD. It starts with God (*In the beginning God...*) and its focus all the way through is on God: His creative power; His desire for fellowship; His choice to create human beings; His love for His creation; His grace towards His created people; His justice when they sinned and ultimately the revelation of His divine plan for Creation, revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Exercise: Read Genesis Chapters 1-3 and note every verse that describes God's actions or character. e.g. God created; God said.....

We tend to read and study the Bible from our own personal, human perspective. *What can I learn? How will this help me in my Christian life? What does God want me to do?* etc. Sadly, reading the Bible this way means we come to it academically or practically, rather than devotionally. And that means we can easily miss out on many of its treasures, which are about God, and not about us.

The first part of Genesis, perhaps more than any other part of the Bible, makes little sense when it is read academically or practically (or even scientifically!!). That's because it was not written for these purposes. When it is read devotionally everything changes! We get glimpses of the bigness and greatness of God, and we get insight into His heart for all that He created. Our response will then be one of awe; of wonder; of worship. The first few chapters of Genesis will help us recognise our own smallness in the light of God's greatness and His amazing creative abilities.

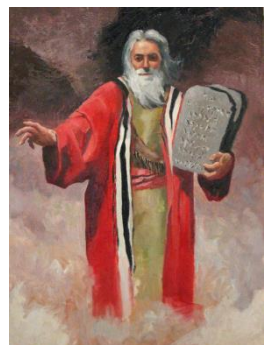
O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! Psalm 8.

Background to the Book of Genesis

Genesis is the first book in the Bible and the first book of the Pentateuch - the "five volumes" that make up the Hebrew *Torah*. The word 'genesis' comes from the Greek word *geneseos* meaning "origin" or "beginning." The name "Genesis" was given to the book in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures known as the Septuagint, because its first word *bereshith* means "in the beginning". "Genesis" reflects both the content of the book and its Hebrew name because it is the book of beginnings.

Author

Moses is the traditional author of Genesis and the other books in the Pentateuch. On several occasions the Lord commanded Moses to write down His words *in a book*. e.g. Exodus 17:14, 34:27; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 31:9. Moses is quoted as the author in other parts of the Old Testament. e.g. 1 Kings 2:3, 2 Chronicles 34:14 and in the New Testament e.g. Matthew 8:4; 19:8; Mark 7:10; 12:26; Luke 20:37.



Obviously Moses could not have written some parts of the Pentateuch as they include a description of his death. Moses would have had access to some historical records, but his primary source in writing Genesis would have been the stories, narratives, poetry and songs of the Hebrew people which had been passed down orally from generation to generation. The history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was relatively recent for Moses and this is reflected in the detail which is given for their lives. No-one knows how or where the stories of life before Abraham came from, including the creation stories recorded in Genesis Chapters 1-3. They were just part of the oral history of the Hebrew people that had been passed down over the centuries.

The style of writing in Genesis varies in different parts of the book, and this has led scholars to put forward a number of theories for who wrote different sections of Genesis. The major one is the JEDP theory which says that a number of authors wrote the book compiled from different documents focused on J (Jehovah), E (Elohim), D (Deuteronomy), and P (Priests).

Date

Some scholars think Moses lived in the 13th century BC while others think he lived in the 15th century BC or even earlier.

Main themes

Genesis is the book of beginnings.

In Genesis you will find descriptions of the beginnings of:

- the universe and the earth (Genesis 1)
- plants and animals on the earth (Genesis 1)
- people and their ability to have a relationship with God (through Adam and Eve – Genesis 2)
- the influence of Satan in people's lives (Genesis 3)
- sin and its consequences of separation from God and death (Genesis 3)
- the promise of a coming Redeemer (Jesus) who would save people from their sin (Genesis 3:15).
- the development of human institutions, professions, and culture in the Mesopotamia region.
- the spreading of people throughout the earth (through the Tower of Babel. (Genesis 11)
- the Hebrew people who would later become the nation of Israel (through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).
- those who will be able to have a relationship with God by faith (through Abraham who is called the father of faith – Romans 4:11).

Overview of Genesis

Genesis describes how mankind began through Adam and Eve and their sons Cain and Abel. It then shows how the effects of sin led to God's judgement on the world in the time of Noah and how people spread throughout the earth as a result of the Tower of Babel.

Genesis then describes the early history of the Israelites based on the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. These characters are all listed in the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, who God sent to be the Saviour of all who would put their trust in Him.

So Genesis gives us the early history of people and events important for bringing to pass God's purposes for His creation and its redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this study we will concentrate on Genesis Chapters 1-3, exploring them devotionally. Later, we will explore their significance as Creation stories.

Prepare your heart for this study by reading Psalm 148 in which the Psalmist praises God for His wonderful creation.

The story of creation. Genesis 1:1-2:3.

Genesis Chapter 1 invites us to stand in awe of our God. It is a wonderful declaration of the creative power of the God of the universe. As we read Genesis Chapter 1 we come face to face with the all-powerful Creator God – the only One who could do such amazing things; the only One who is worthy of our worship. We recognise that “God is God, and we are wee!”

We see God reflected in His creation and this gives us confidence that He is in control; that nothing is too hard for Him, and that He is able to fulfil His eternal purposes (which is what the rest of the Bible is all about).

Our response can only be to worship Him (as in Psalm 148).

As we read Genesis 1 we soon realise that it isn't a scientific narrative, or even a story. It is so much more.

The chapter has a structure that is often used in the Psalms, and in worship services as part of a liturgy: it is based around four phrases, which makes it read like a poem, a hymn or a song:

*And God said
And it was so
And God saw that it was very good
And there was evening and morning, the day.*

When we see this we recognise that it is not really about what God did, but that He could do it, and that He did do it. It brings our focus away from ourselves and back to God, and it woos us to worship Him:

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you care for him? Psalm 8:1-4.

- *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*
Genesis begins with God and states that He is the One who has *created the heavens and the earth*. There is no attempt to describe how God was able to create the heavens and the earth. None is needed!

Lord, You are the great Creator: there is none like You. How wonderful that You that were able to create all that is. Your amazing creation shows Your greatness and power.

- Initially the earth was *formless and empty* and *darkness was over the surface of the deep*. The Holy Spirit was present on earth right from the beginning and was *hovering over the waters*.

Thank you Lord for your Holy Spirit who brings light out of darkness, and life out of death.

- On **Day 1** God created light to separate the day and night.

Lord I praise You for being a God of light. Every day the sun rises and we have a new opportunity to walk in Your light. Your light extinguishes all kinds of darkness!

- On **Day 2** God created the sky.

Thank you, Lord, for the air we breathe, for gravity that holds it in place around the earth, and for the ozone layer that protects us from dangerous radiation. Lord, help us to protect the sky above.



The word “God” is used 35 times in Genesis 1:1-2:3. The Hebrew word used is אֱלֹהִים *Elohim*, so the author for this section is known as E. *Elohim* is the plural of *El* – God. It means “the great, supreme, almighty God”, which compares to the ordinary gods (*El*) of other nations. Being in the plural is an early indication that God is “three in one” as in the Trinity. (e.g. *Let us ...* in v26).

- On **Day 3** God created *dry land and the seas*. The land produced all kinds of plants, so it was covered with vegetation.

**For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies;
For the love which from our birth, over and around us lies;
Lord of all to Thee we raise, this our joyful hymn of praise.**

- On **Day 4** God created *the sun and moon* resulting in days and seasons and years.

Thank you Lord for the warmth and light of the sun. Without it there could be no life on earth. Every new day and season is a new beginning filled with the possibilities of Your grace.

- On **Day 5** God created the *sea creatures and birds*.

How wonderful are the living things you have created O God: microbes, plants, insects, birds, mammals..... The intricate beauty of living things reflects Your life-giving beauty.

- On **Day 6** God created the *land animals*.

Plants and animals were made *according to their kinds*. God made each species distinct and unique, and there is no suggestion of evolution (although, later, some were able to interbreed or change slightly in response to environmental conditions).

How intricate is each kind of living thing, O Lord, and how diverse. You say that everything you made is “good”. So true!

- On **Day 6** God also created human beings.

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over the creatures that move along the ground. So God created human beings in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

Lord, You have made us in Your image so we could be in relationship with You. Forgive us Lord, that we have not lived in the way You designed us. Help us to live our lives more and more “in the image of God”.

God blessed the human beings He had made and told them to *be fruitful and increase in number*. They were to *fill the earth and subdue it*. All plants and animals were given to them for food.

Then God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.

Lord, help us to care for the planet that You have placed us on, and not to destroy it. Help us to take our responsibilities towards the conservation of our planet seriously and to ensure that all peoples on the earth are treated with equity, justice and love.

- On **Day 7** God rested because *the heavens and earth were completed in their vast array*. He had *finished the work He was doing*. God blessed the seventh day (Sabbath) and made it holy.

Lord you rested when you finished Your creation and took time to appreciate all that You had made. Help us to rest in You and appreciate Your goodness at all times. You have done all things well.

Genesis never tries to give a scientific explanation for the beginnings of the earth. To say that it does or doesn't fit with scientific theories is to miss the point of why it was written. Genesis simply states that God created the universe and everything in it, including the earth and all living things on it.

The Hebrew word for “day” *yom* means a period of time with a beginning and an end. It could mean a 24 hour time period but it could equally mean a period of time covering millions of years.

Genesis shows us that God created the universe, the sun, the moon, the earth, the seasons, the plants and animals, and that He created human beings. God is the great Creator!

Everything that God made was *very good*. God created the world exactly how He wanted it to be.

Initially, there was no sin in the world, but that didn't last very long!

Significance of the number 7.

Throughout the Bible the number 7 signifies “perfection”, “completion” or “fulfilment”. It is not surprising that Genesis 1:1-2:3 contains lots of 7s because it describes the process by which God created the universe – perfectly, completely and in total fulfilment of His purposes. God created in 7 days; God rested on the 7th day; the name “God” occurs 35 times (7x5); God’s work is described as “good” 7 times; the word “earth” is mentioned 21 times (7x3); the words “day” and “light” occur in multiples of 7 (14 and 7 times) while the words “darkness” and “night” only occur 4 times – signifying their ordinariness or earthliness. Incorporation of the number 7 does not continue in later chapters because Genesis 1:1-2:3 completes the description of the creation of the universe.

Using the number 7 like this is common in Hebrew and Jewish literature.

Adam and Eve. Genesis 2:4-25.

Chapter 2 gives another account of *the heavens and the earth when they were created*. There are many differences from the creation story in Genesis 1 because it has a totally different purpose. Genesis 2 doesn’t try to describe how all things were created or glorify God for His amazing power. Instead, it describes why human beings were created, and how people are central in God’s creative work. God created people because He wanted to have a relationship with them.

God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

The Hebrew word for “man” is *ha-adam* meaning “the man”, or “mankind”. This word is based on the word for ground or earth *adamah*. God made Adam’s physical body from the various elements in the earth (carbon, nitrogen, oxygen etc.). When Adam died he would return to these elements. This is described in Genesis 3:19 as *dust you are and to dust you will return*. What distinguished Adam from all other created organisms was that God gave him a spirit when He *breathed into him the breath of life, and the man became a living being*.

Human beings descended from Adam are also made of the basic elements of the earth, and have a limited lifespan. When we die our physical bodies return to the earth as dust. Our spirits, though, are eternal and enable us to fellowship with God, and give Him pleasure. That’s why God made the first man, Adam, and that’s why He created you! Revelation 4:11.

Thank you, Lord, for creating us.

How wonderful that the God of the universe wants to have a relationship with us!

Help us to always put relationship with You first in everything we do and are.



In this creation story God is referred to as the “LORD God” (rather than just “God” as in Chapter 1).

The Hebrew word LORD is יְהוָה (*YHVH, Yahweh or Jehovah*) – the name of the God of Israel; a name of relationship. The word “God” is אֱלֹהִים *Elohim*, as in Chapter 1.

The author of this section is known as J because he uses the name Jehovah.

Moses had this name revealed to him in Exodus 3:1-6 long after the events described in Genesis 2.

Scholars believe the early chapters of Genesis were written by J and that Genesis 2 was written by J before Genesis 1 was written by E.

God put *the man He had formed* in a garden in the east, in Eden, where there was plenty of food and rivers for water. The Garden of Eden was possibly located near the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in modern day Iraq. (This was the known world for the early Hebrew people). The garden contained two important trees: *the tree of life* and *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. Adam was told to *take care* of the garden and gave names to all of the animals. He was forbidden to eat from the tree of good and evil because then he would *surely die*.

Lord, You have provided all we need to live on planet Earth. Thank you for creating such a great place for us to live. Help us to care for our planet so we will always be able to fulfil Your purposes: to fellowship with You, and give You pleasure.

Adam had no *suitable helper* so God created a woman, Eve, out of his ribs as he slept. The Hebrew word for “man” used here is *ish* and the word used for “woman” is *ishshah*. Adam and Eve were *both naked* – indicating that they were pure and as yet undefiled by sinfulness. This established God’s perfect plan for marriage and for families: men and woman living together as one in purity; equal partners complementing and supporting each other. They would produce children who would have similar marriages and set up similar families. *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*

Men and women were created by God and are loved by Him equally. God created human beings for fellowship and He still delights when we freely give Him our love. In Galatians we are told that that in Christ *there is neither male nor female* for we are *all one in Christ Jesus*. Galatians 3:28.

This is how God originally designed us to be. Men and women living in harmony with God and His creation; living in fellowship with God and with each other, and giving God pleasure.

It was You who formed my inmost parts; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works. Psalm 139:13,14.

Thank you Lord for your wonderful design for men, women, marriages and families. Help us to always live like this, so that we can truly glorify You.

The fall. Genesis 3:1-24.

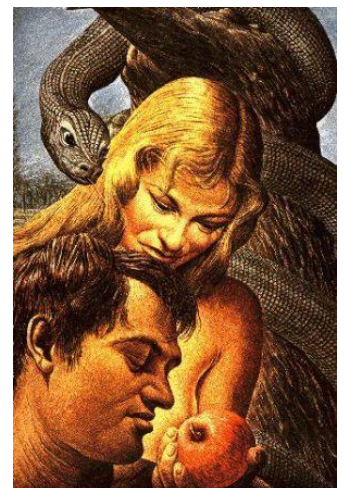
Now comes the saddest moment in human history.

God didn’t want His created people to be like robots, acting towards Him out of compulsion or fear. Rather, He wanted them to freely choose to love Him; to worship Him only, and to live their lives in unhindered relationship with Him. So God gave Adam and Eve a free choice: to obey or disobey Him. Out of all the trees in the garden they were not to eat from just one - *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. If they chose to eat from this tree they would be *like God, knowing good and evil*. They chose to disobey God, thus trying to elevate themselves and become *like God*.

Eve was tempted by the serpent and listened to his lies. *Eve saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and also desirable for gaining wisdom* so she ate some and *gave some* to Adam who also ate. Sin entered into the creation for the first time. (Ultimately, sin is anything that opposes or demeans God and His ways).

Through the disobedience of Adam and Eve sin entered the world. The effects of this sin were immediately seen.

- Adam and Eve realised they were both naked and, in shame, sewed fig leaves for themselves as coverings.
- Adam and Eve hid from God and when God asked them why, Adam tried to blame Eve and Eve blamed the serpent.
- God cursed the serpent so it would *eat dust* all the days of its life.
- God put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between its offspring and hers. This is the first indication in the Bible that God was



beginning the process of redemption that would culminate in people getting back to fellowship with Him, and that the power of sin would one day be broken. This was fulfilled at the Cross when the offspring of the serpent (satan) struck at Jesus resulting in His death. The good news is that Jesus then crushed the power of satan, by taking the punishment for sin that all people deserved and rising from the dead. When we receive Jesus as Saviour He forgives our sin and enables us to live free from sin's power. Because of Jesus we can experience the kind of relationship with God that Adam and Eve had before the fall!

- Eve and all other woman would have great pain when bearing children.
- Adam and all other men would have to engage in *painful toil*, and would have to work hard to make a living. *By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food.*
- Ultimately all humans would die and *return to the ground*. The wages of sin is always death. Romans 6:23. This death is both physical (meaning that we all have a limited life span and will die one day), and spiritual (meaning that we are separated from God).
- People lost their innocence and became like God, *knowing good and evil.*
- God made clothes for Adam and Eve and banished them from the Garden of Eden.

The verses in Genesis 3:14-19 are *descriptions* of the result of sin; not *prescriptions*. They should not be used to blame or subjugate women, or to precipitate God's judgements on mankind (as has often happened). God is still gracious towards His created people, as shown in verses 20,21 and still wants to fellowship with us.

Thank you Lord for not giving up on us. Thank you that the blood of Jesus was shed for the forgiveness of sins, so we can have a relationship with You. We have inherited a lot from Adam, but in Christ we can still glorify You, and fulfil your purposes for our creation.

The significance of Adam

The Hebrew word *adam* is not really a proper name; rather it means "man", "mankind", or "human being". This is how the word is used in verses like Genesis 9:5-7; Deuteronomy 5:24; 8:3; 1 Kings 8:39; Psalms 8:4; 89:48; 107:8-31; Micah 6:8; Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22,45; 1 Timothy 2:13-14.

Adam represents the whole human race. In the ancient Hebrew mind-set individuals were less important than the social groups they belonged to. A representative could portray the qualities of the whole group. If the group was a family, the father was usually considered the representative of the whole family. e.g. Abraham is seen as the "father" of the Israelites, the Arabs and of all those who have faith in Jesus Christ. Genesis 17:1-8, Hebrews 7:1-10. Adam, then, was the father of mankind and represents the whole human race. In the New Testament Paul shows how Adam's disobedience resulted in everyone having a sinful nature, and this has brought condemnation and death to all human beings. Romans 5:12-21

The good news is that through Jesus' obedience (at the Cross) the power of this sinful nature is broken for those who are in Christ, and we can live a new life of righteousness. Human beings are thus either "in Adam" (and under condemnation due to their sinfulness), or "in Christ", and righteous in God's sight. To be "in Christ" is to be a new creation made in Jesus' image, increasingly taking on the qualities of Jesus in our lives. See Romans Chapters 5-8, 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17-21; Galatians 3:26-28; 6:15). Ephesians 1:3-2:22; 4:20-24; Colossians 3:9-10. At the Cross Jesus won back for us what Adam lost! Now we can once again have unhindered fellowship with God – in Christ Jesus.

Creation stories

Creation demands a Creator

Look up at the sky on a clear, starry night and you will be faced with the bigness of creation and with your own smallness. Then think about the incredible complexity of natural systems and of how life exists and operates on Planet Earth. Once again, you will be faced with the bigness of creation – this time with its amazing complexity and order.

You will probably ask the same questions that human beings have always asked when faced with the bigness of creation:

- How did all this get here?
- Where did it come from?
- Who made it?
- What power is holding it all together?
- Where do I fit in it?

Pretty soon you will come to the conclusion that something or someone far bigger and greater than any human being must have been involved in creating the Universe and everything in it. Creation demands a Creator!

The heavens declare the glory of God. Psalm 19:1.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Psalm 139:14.

This has been true of every people group who have ever lived on Planet Earth. All have come to the conclusion that there must be some kind of Creator who is powerful enough to create the “heavens and the earth” and then to sustain its existence. That’s why all cultures have a creation story.



Myths and legends

Myths and legends are stories that have been passed down from generation to generation to explain the history of a particular group and how its peoples, customs, institutions and taboos developed. The main characters in myths are usually gods or supernatural humans. Similar stories based on everyday human beings are usually contained in legends, as opposed to myths. Creation stories are normally classified as “myths”.

Unfortunately the words “myth” and “legend” have come to have a meaning in which their stories are imaginary and not objectively true. As a result, members of affected groups often object strongly to their stories being labelled as myths or legends. (In today’s world all religions including Christianity are labelled as myths). In its original meaning, though, a myth or a legend is a story that explains why things are or were. Whether the events in the story actually happened in the way described is not relevant.

Creation stories

Here are a few examples of Creation stories that have developed as people have pondered on the world in which they live. All of these Creation stories involve a creator (a “god”) who is all-powerful and who makes and then sustains the known world out of themselves, out of something, or out of nothing. Often they are linked to specific events that have occurred in specific locations. Each Creation story has had some sort of beginning in peoples’ minds, and then has been passed on to future generations, adapting and evolving with time. None of the Creation stories can be “proved” as the “creating” took place long ago, but they are firmly believed to be “true” by those who hold to them. There are probably more Creation stories than there have been people groups in history, as many groups have multiple Creation stories!

Chinese Creation story. Pan Gu and Nü Wa

The universe was once an egg-shaped cloud. Deep within the cloud was a giant, Pan Gu who woke up one day and stretched, breaking the egg. This released the matter of the universe. The lighter parts drifted upwards to make the sky and heavens, and the heavier impure parts settled as the earth. When Pan Gu died the parts of his body formed the parts of the world. e.g. his blood became the rivers; his teeth and bones became the minerals and rocks; his left eye became the sun, and his right eye became the moon. Much later the goddess Nü Wa became lonely and resolved to make something like herself for company. She shaped mud into the form of human beings (which became the aristocrats), and droplets from a long vine of mud (which became the common people). When Nü Wa died the parts of her body adorned the world that she had restored.



Greek Creation story

In the beginning, there was chaos – an abyss from which emerged Gaia, mother Earth; Tartaros, the depths of the Earth where condemned dead souls go to their punishment; Eros, the love that fills bodies and minds; Erebus, the darkness, and Nyx, the night. Erebus and Nyx made love and from their union came Aether, the air, and Hemera, the day. Gaia later gave birth to Uranus, the starry heavens; the mountains, where the Nymphs live, and Pontos, the sea. Then Gaia lay with Uranus and gave birth to Okeanos, the oceans and later twelve children – the Titans. From their offspring came the great god Zeus, and Prometheus who made the first humans from clay. Zeus became disgusted with the behaviour of humans so he and his brother Poseidon, caused rains to fall and rivers to flood, so that all of the humans would be drowned. Only two people survived: Deucalion, a son of Prometheus, and Pyrrha. They threw stones over their shoulders which slowly softened and became humans, the ancestors of all humans today.

Brazilian tribal Creation story. Monan, who was without beginning or end, created sky, earth, birds, animals and people. Monan saw the wickedness of people and sent Tatá, fire from the sky, to consume all but Irin-Magé. Seeing the destruction Irin-Magé begged Monan to stop so he sent a great flood from which came the waters of the ocean. The people of the tribe all descended from Irin-Magé and his wife.

Maori Creation story. In the beginning was Te Kore – emptiness. Out of this emerged Rangi, or sky father, and Papa, earth mother. Rangi and Papa loved each other and gave birth to Tawhiri, the god of weather; Rongo, the god of crops; Tu, the god of war; Tangaroa, the god of the sea; Tane, the god of the forests; and Haumia, the god of plants. Rangi and Papa were closely intertwined. When the children rebelled this separated them revealing light and sky. People were created out of the earth by Tane. Wars between the children explain much of what has happened throughout history, and is happening today.



Modern Creation story. Energy and matter are connected ($E=mc^2$). Long ago, there was an enormous explosion and matter was created out of energy (the big bang). This matter spiralled outwards forming the universe, which is still expanding today. Gravity caused parts of the matter to come together resulting in trillions of galaxies, stars and planets. The planets of our solar system (including Planet Earth) were formed as matter was thrown out from one of the stars – our sun. As the earth cooled conditions arose which were suitable for sustaining life: mainly oxygen, and water in liquid form. Puddles formed on the surface of the earth in which random chemicals came together. By chance, some of these were chemicals that aggregated to form simple living organisms, which over time were able to take in nutrients, grow and reproduce. Organisms which could live and reproduce successfully in their environment prospered, while those that couldn't, died out. Over long periods of time more and more complex organisms evolved including all plants and animals. Natural selection ensured that only those which were fit for their changing environment survived and reproduced. Evolution is ongoing as organisms adapt to changing environments.

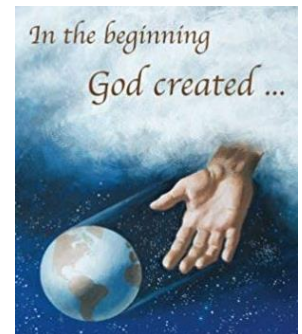


Creation stories in the Bible

The Bible contains a number of Creation stories:

1. The Creation of the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1-2:3).

Scholars believe the Creation story in Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 was written in the sixth century B.C, after Israel had been conquered by the Assyrians (722 B.C.) - when the Hebrews were faced with exile in Babylon. (This was three or four centuries after the story in Genesis 2:4-3:24 had been written). Some scholars believe Genesis 1:1-2:3 was written by E as it uses the term "Elohim" for God, but most believe it was written by P as it has a strong "priestly" perspective. They see it as a story created for the benefit of a lost nation in need of encouragement and affirmation.



Genesis 1:1-2:3 describes how *In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth*. Over six time periods God created day and night (Day 1); the sky (Day 2); the land, the sea and all vegetation (Day 3); the sun and the moon (Day 4); all living creatures including sea creatures, birds and land animals (Day 5), and human beings - male and female. (Day 6). Human beings were made *in God's image*, and were to be *fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and rule over it*. *God saw all that He had made and it was very good*. The climax of God's creation was when God rested on Day 7 and made that day holy, because *on that day He rested from all the work of creating that He had done*.

2. Adam, Eve and the fall of mankind. (Genesis 2:4- 3:24).

Based on the style and content of this story scholars think it was written in the 10th Century B.C. - around the time of King Solomon's reign when Israel was a powerful nation. The author of the story in Genesis 2:4 to 3:24 is J, because God is always referred to as the LORD God "YHVH Elohim". (The Hebrew word LORD is יהוה -YHVH, *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*. This word is too holy to be written or spoken by Jewish people (Exodus 20:7), so it is normally replaced by "Adonai", meaning "my Lord"). J may have been a poet, a rural farmer, or possibly a priest. He uses the names "Adam" and "Eve" not as proper names, but as representative of types of human beings. "Adam" meant "man" in ancient Hebrew and was a play on "adamah", the Hebrew word for "earth" or "clay". "Eve" was the word for "life".

Genesis 2:4-3:24 describes how the LORD shaped Adam from the earth, breathed life into him, and placed him in the Garden of Eden. This garden contained all the resources that Adam needed and also *the tree of life* and *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*. Adam was to cultivate the garden and to eat of whatever fruit he liked, except for the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God and man could have unbroken fellowship while Adam had no knowledge of good and evil, but in the day he ate of the tree he would *surely die*.



God gave His created people a free will – so they could choose to love and obey Him in righteousness. Disobeying God’s command would break the fellowship that God desired. Sin would enter into the relationship and Adam would be *like one of us, knowing good and evil*.

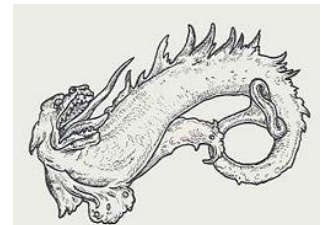
The LORD provided a helper for Adam: his wife Eve. The serpent persuaded Eve that she could eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil without dying, and this would mean she would be *like God*. Eve ate the fruit and so did Adam, then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised they were naked.

Sin entered into the relationship between God and His created people, with many consequences:

- Adam and Eve were ashamed and had to cover their nakedness. They even tried to hide from God.
- God could no longer have open fellowship with people, because people were sinful.
- The way people lived their lives would always be affected by their sinfulness.
- God drove Adam and Eve from the garden so they wouldn’t be able to eat from the tree of life and live forever.
- People needed a way of having their sin forgiven so they could come back into fellowship with God. The rest of the Bible tells how this took place!

3. The Leviathan

The Leviathan is a mythical sea monster referred to in a number of places in the Old Testament and in Jewish writings. Sea monsters, whales and dragons are part of the creation stories in many cultures. Its equivalent in land animals is a Behemoth.



The Leviathan are sometimes used as a symbol of a god’s creative abilities, and sometimes as demonic monsters to be afraid of. The term Leviathan comes from the old Hebrew name לִיְיָטָן, Livyatan, or Liwyātān, which means "twisted, coiled". When the Old Testament was translated into Greek it was called a dragon, but in most English Bibles it is translated Leviathan. The word "Leviathan" appears six times in the Bible:

Isaiah 27:1: *In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.*

Psalms 74:14. Psalms 104:25,26. Job 3:8; 40: 24-32; 41:1-24

In Judaism the Leviathan was created on the 5th day, for God to play with. Its flesh will be reserved for the righteous in the banquet for the coming of Messiah. The festival of Sukkot (Festival of Booths) concludes with this prayer: *May it be your will, Lord our God and God of our forefathers, that just as I have fulfilled*

and dwelled in this sukkah, so may I merit in the coming year to dwell in the sukkah of the skin of Leviathan. Next year in Jerusalem.

In Christianity the Leviathan is sometimes associated with satan, and sometimes with mankind's opposition to God.

4. The New Testament Creation story.

The first Christians were Jewish, so would have been fully aware of the Genesis Creation stories. e.g. the genealogy of Jesus is traced back to Adam in Luke 3:38, and Paul based much of his teaching around *As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.* 1 Corinthians 15:22. See Romans 5:12-21.

References to Creation in the New Testament reflect the Jewish understanding of how God created the heavens and the earth: *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; their starry host by the breath of His mouth. For He spoke, and it came to be, He commanded and it stood firm.* Psalm 33:6,9.

God simply spoke the Word and the Universe came into existence. No-one knows when this happened: some think it was millions of years ago; others only thousands of years ago. No-one knows how God did it: we just believe that He did do it!

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. Hebrews 11:3.

It is best expressed by John at the beginning of his Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. 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 1:1-5.

The word "word" used here is *logos*. In Jewish thought the *logos* of God was seen as being an essential part of who God is. The Word (*logos*) of God is the way by which God communicates to His people and into His created world.

Name: יהוה 'I am', 'JHVH', 'Yahweh', 'Jehovah'.
Revealed as: Father, Jesus Christ, The Holy Spirit.

Logos - the infinite mind, reason, intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, creativity and power of God.

God

God's *logos* is expressed in countless ways. Here are some of them:

- **Creation.** By His *logos* God spoke the world into existence. John 1:3. Psalm 33:6.
- **Life.** God breathed into His creation giving life to plants, animals and people. Proverbs 4:22; John 6:63. Genesis 1. Whenever the *logos* of God is received it still brings spiritual life. Matthew 4:4.
- **Light.** God's *logos* gives light and direction. Psalm 119:105, 130.

- **Jesus.** Jesus is the incarnation of the logos of God. The logos became flesh in Him. John 1:14. Hebrews 1:3. 1 John 1:1-3. Hebrews 1:1-3.
- **Bible.** The Bible was inspired by God and is the main way by which we can get insight into the logos of God. Hebrews 4:12. 2 Timothy 3:16,17.
- **Revelation.** The Holy Spirit reveals the logos of God to us by means of a rhema – a spoken word. 1 Corinthians 2:1-16. Matthew 21:21. Romans 10:17. This is the main way by which the Holy Spirit communicates to us today (often by revelation from parts of the Bible, or by giving gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially prophecy, word of knowledge and word of wisdom). 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.
- **Anointing.** When we receive the logos of God as a revelation it typically comes with an anointing, so we know what it means, and what to do with it. 1 John 2:20.
- **Faith.** Faith comes by hearing the logos of God. Romans 10:17.
- **Love.** Love is an expression of the logos of God. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. 1 John 4:7,8.
- **Joy.** When God's logos is received it brings joy. Jeremiah 15:16. Nehemiah 8:12, Luke 24:32. John 15:11. John 17:13.
- **Truth.** God's logos is truth. Psalm 33:4. Psalm 18:30. Isaiah 40:8. Psalm 119:160. James 1:18. John 8:31,32. John 17:8. 2 Timothy 2:15. Whenever the logos of God is received it brings truth.
- **Grace.** Whenever we receive God's logos it comes by God's grace. We deserve God's judgment for our sin, but instead He chooses to bless us because He loves us. John 1:14. Ephesians 1:3-14; Ephesians 2:8,9. Ephesians 4:7. 2 Corinthians 3:18. John 1:16,17. 2 Corinthians 12:9.

This concept of the logos of God was similar in Jewish and Greek thought (which was the culture that the early Christians grew up in).

- To the Greek the Word of God meant the reasoning, intelligent, guiding, correcting, controlling mind and wisdom of God. The logos is behind everything that happens. Why is there night/day? How were we made? Why do things happen as they do? How can we know right from wrong? Easy! The logos of God. The logos pervades all things; makes sense of the world, and keeps everything in its proper order.
- To the Jew a word wasn't just a sound. It had an independent existence, was powerful and did things. Blessings were conferred by words. Wisdom was often personified. Names and their meanings were all important. By His Word God created the world. God spoke and things happened. By His Word God gave life and light. God is His Word.

Both Jew and Greek recognised that it was the Word of God that made everything, sustains everything and makes sense of life.



So, do our reflections on the various Creation stories help us know just **how** the Universe was created? Perhaps, in some measure. (But God is too big for mere human beings to ever understand all that He can do).

Or, do our reflections help us know **why** God created the heavens and the earth? Definitely. They show us a God who longs to fellowship with His created people and who will go to extraordinary lengths to maintain that fellowship (even to the point of sacrificing His Son!).

And what is our response to this all-powerful, all-loving God? We believe *that the universe was formed at God's command*, (Hebrews 11:3), so we must respond by acknowledging the greatness of our God, and worshipping Him. *Let us praise the name of the LORD, for His name alone is exalted; His splendour is above the earth and the heavens.* Psalm 148:13.