

# The Creator God, Genesis 1

What is God Really Like? #9

◇ **Intro:** In the 2010 film “Clash of the Titans” the origin of the earth and mankind is explained from the perspective of Greek mythology. We learn that Zeus, the strongest of the gods, created mankind so that they could pray to the gods, which in turn nourished the gods. They somehow, *need*, the prayers of people to survive. Yet, the god’s themselves seem less than godly on all occasions. They fight with each other. They counter each other. In fact, the hero of the film, a demi-god Perseus, is urged not to join the gods, but to remain man, which is somehow more noble, and desirable.



◇ **(picture)** The ancient Egyptian creation myth of Nut (goddess of the sky) and Geb (god of the earth), also offers a version of where we came from. It was from the same time period as when Moses wrote down Genesis. In this story, Nu is a

mass of watery nothingness before creation. Atum emerged from Nu as the sun god at the beginning of time and is the creator of the world. Atum is also called Re the sun-god that riding on the waters above Nut, in a bark(canoe) with a crew of other gods. Each night he would die and sink into the under world. Re was considered the creator god. He was married to Nut (skygod), but Nut was “nuts” over Geb (earth) and so Re blew the air-god Shu between them to keep them apart. (Can’t have the god’s cheating on their mates, you know.)

◇ We could go on and on about these myths. The reason I share them with you, is so that you can see that Genesis was written, not so much as a photo-log of how God made the universe and more specifically us, but as a polemic, and a direct challenge to all the myths about human existence and the world that were floating around then and are now.

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◇ The author of Genesis isn't asking science questions that we are so intrigued with today. He isn't asking how long it took, or how God did it. He is teaching us the theological truth about the history of our origins. Does the writing of Genesis 1 fit with science, or counter science? I believe it fits very well, and that we will see more and more of that when science catches up with God. However, my main point today is not to investigate the science of the earth's age, or the calendar of its development. Moses wasn't teaching a science class. He was teaching theology and this is where we start. One of the first things we see in the biblical account is that ...

◇ **There is a God and he's ...**

◇ A. More than. God is transcendent over his creation. That is, he is outside of creation. He is not born of it. It comes from him. All that exists came from nothing. By the way, the Big Bang theory of origins and other space-time theorems affirm that the universe is expanding, must have had a beginning, and is not eternal, and must have a causal agent. We see all that in Genesis 1 thousands of years before modern science spoke of 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, NIV.*

◇ 1) Now there are at least 9 prevailing ways of interpreting Genesis 1 today. These can be divided into two major camps: one believing that God made the earth in the same sequence described in Genesis 1; the other holding that Genesis is not teaching a scientific sequence, or details of natural history, but the divine and authoritative theological message God wants people to know about himself. I'd like to point out each briefly...

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- ◇ a) Concordist view: this view holds that the sequence of Genesis is accurate and should fit science and natural history, and that it demonstrates the order of how God created. Both believers who think the world is young (10,000 years or less), and those who believe the world is very old (4.6 billion years or so) can be found in this camp. (Linguistically, Genesis 1 can be read either way. The word “day” (yom) can mean 12 hours of daylight, 24 hours, or even a long epoch of time.) As an example of the concordist view, let's take the formation of the continents. Modern science suggesting an old earth, also points out that continents formed when the earth was about half its present age. Christian geologists observe that this fits well with the Genesis account of a 6 period creation in which the land was formed on the 3rd Day, or in the third period of creation.
- ◇ b) non-concordist view: This view holds that Genesis is making no attempt to teach science or natural history and that these are inconsequential to the point of the text is making. For example, it is observed that Genesis tells us about the days of creation in a parallel pattern: Days 1-3 parallel days 4-6
  - ◇ Day 1 is light/dark; Day 4 is the sun and moon that “rule” them.
  - ◇ Day 2 is heavens above and waters below; Day 5 is fish and birds that inhabit those places
  - ◇ Day 3 is dry land, plants, trees; Day 6 is animals who live there, and man who rules there.
- ◇ There are many things that require interpretation.
- ◇ 2) Even chapter two in Genesis *seems* to present a contradicting order to chapter one. There it appears at first that God made plants after he made

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mankind. My point in presenting the differing opinions on Genesis is this: whenever we read God's word we shall have to do interpretation and ask what God is trying to tell the original hearers and also us. These things I think come out clearly regardless of your opinion about the science involved. Remember the time and place Israel received Moses writings. They had just left Egypt. To the pagan cultures, there were many gods and powers, fighting, interacting, creating almost by accident, or run-ins, or overflows of emotions. In the Babylonian myth, there is a preexisting watery chaos right along side the gods. It's inhabited by the god Tiamat who Marduk must slay. To the Egyptian culture, the stuff of the universe had power within it. The sun was a personality, a god named Re. So was the moon, the air, the water.

◇ Not so for the Hebrew. Genesis tells of One God, who is more than (transcendent). He "creates" the heavens and the earth." There is no pre-existence watery mass. Whereas the Ancient Near East peoples thought of the sun as a god itself, Genesis doesn't even give it a proper name. It's only call a "big light" (v16). Matter is not eternally present, but given a beginning. [Science itself affirms the principle of contingency: everything is dependent on something else for it's existence. There are no flowers without water. There is no water without hydrogen. There is not hydrogen without protons. How far back can we go? What was first? Genesis says God, and it's scientifically intelligent.]

◇ The Genesis creation account emphasizes the intentionality of God at work, and the power of God over all things. Each piece of creation was made in preparation for the next step, all culminating with the life of mankind. God's power is beyond the power in the universe itself; if there was light, even though there was no sun yet, the theological implication is that God doesn't need the sun to produce light. If the sun and stars were already included in verse 1, and the moisture layer

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around the earth didn't permit light through until Day 4, well then it is still plain that God was step by step miraculously bringing about a planet on which life, particularly human life, could exist. We might say that Moses is trying to help us understand that there really isn't a "natural order" so much as a "God-designed order" to the world.

One thing is quite clear in Genesis One: There is Creator, who is more than creation, and there is creation, that is contingent upon him. This truth is our comfort just as it was to Israel wandering through the wilderness, or later languishing in Babylonian exile. When we are tempted to believe that there is no purpose to our predicament, or when we are doubting that there is really a God, -the contingent creation itself tells us there is a God, and we have purposes.

◇ "I believe everything has a purpose," she says as she cries over her brother's death. I said, "I do too. Because God is sovereign. There is no part of this world where his arms do not reach." This life is not random. Your life is not random. That you are here at this moment is not happenstance. God owns this moment to.

◇ "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." Hebrews 1:3, NIV.

◇ *"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Colossians 1:16, 17, NIV.*

And that leads us to

◇ **There is a God and he's...**

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◇ **B. ...Personal**: In theology we say God is immanent to his creation; that is close to it, involved with it. In the Egyptian account, Atum animalistically marries his shadow and convulses more gods into existence with which he makes the world. Moses tells us the Creator in Genesis *speaks* the world into existence. Speaking is something present in the highest forms of life. Alligators do not speak. And while bucks may grunt and wheeze, its a far cry from French or Korean, or even a nursery rhyme.

◇ Unlike the pagan accounts, the God of the Bible is a personal interacting being. Furthermore, this God by his nature as creator, is a love-giving being. To create is to give!

◇ The Mesopotamian myths believe mankind was created to feed the gods. Genesis says God feeds them! The Greek myths say that the gods need the human prayers. Genesis says otherwise. We need him.

◇ *““The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.” Acts 17:24, 25, NIV.*

◇ And this too is our comfort. When you are tempted to believe God has abandoned you in your financial mess, or in your struggle with an unhappy spouse, or when your son is addicted to a substance -*Genesis reminds us, like it reminded the Israelites as slaves in Babylon –that God is near to us, he will never leave us or forsake us.* As believers, we even see science trumpeting the same divine message. The universe we know and study is finely tuned for the existence of human life!

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- ◇ Everything in Genesis 1 points forward to the culmination of creation: mankind. To the fact that all of the universe was put in place precisely for us, to be able to live and relate to the Maker. On astrophysicist writes, “More than 900 different features of the universe and solar system must be exquisitely fine-tuned to make advanced life possible. This fine-tuning indicates that the casual Agent must be a personal Being.” The scientific data tells us there was an average of one new species a year in the fossil record (over 1/2 a billion) since the Cambrian Explosion. But there is no new species in the fossil record since the appearance of man.
- ◇ So like Book of Scripture, the Book of Creation tells you God is for you! On your side. The fact that the 6 days show a progression of complexity moving from separation of light and dark, to biological life, to life with minds and responsivity, to beings with souls and spirits, the crown of creation, men & women, no matter really how long it took – this progression whispers, even shouts that your importance to God is unquestionable. *“He himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.”*
- ◇ Even the hebrew clock tells us of a God that brings us and life forth, ever and always, life. Hebrews count days starting with the evening, sunset.
  - ◇ v5,8,13,19,23,31 rings like the toll of a bell. Why evening and morning. Because God brings day out of night, something out of nothing, he is creator, inventor, producer of the new and the yet-to-be. Light is a something, while darkness is an absence of something
- ◇ **There is a God and he is...**
- ◇ C. Good; therefore what God does and makes is good.

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◇ Notice another constantly repeated refrain: 4,10,12,18,21,25,31 *And it was good.*

◇ *This tells us a number of things*

◇ 1) God delights in what he makes! He is happy to do it. In contrast to the domineering, enslaving gods of the pagans who are only to be feared, the true God *likes* his creation, even loves it. You are a joy to him! As is the fresh mountain stream -but you more so. Genesis 1 is a romance between God and his world

◇ 2) God is always in pursuit of beauty. Creation has beauty. You have beauty. I didn't say "creation is beautiful" because we experience creation *after* the fall into evil. But creation itself isn't inherently evil, as many religions teach. Heaven is not an escape from earth, it is a renewing of earth. You are not merely a drop in the sea, and Nirvana is not an escape of conscious being. Far from it. Salvation, heaven, eternal life -this is the restoration of earthly existence, and it's improvement.

◇ The material world is not to be despised. Pleasure is not to be shunned. But it is also true that beauty comes when physical existence conforms to God's design. For example, sex is most beautiful...in marriage. Wealth is a blessing...when we live as a steward, not a collector/consumer. Drugs can heal...when applied properly. They can also destroy.

◇ Everything in Genesis 1 shows detailed order: birds have their space, and they produce after their kind. They don't hatch dogs. The world is not irrational. [ And this very order is the only reason at all that we humans can even do what we call science. Science is observing

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the order in the world. That's all it is. It cannot say what may be, or can be. It can only say -this is what we can observe.]

◇ Here is *yet another great comfort: God is a god who delights in creating beauty out of chaos.*

◇ Do you have chaotic spots in your life? Have you experience disorder? Ugliness? Emptiness? The God of the Bible has a heart with the primary intention of creating beauty. Another word for that intention? Love.

◇ Some christian people have gotten lost in an almost exclusive teaching about sin. But sin is not the first word in the Bible.

Creational goodness is. Of all people, God-followers are to be those who see goodness, and celebrate; who delight in everything they can spot to delight in. Like our maker we are to be people of art, and music, and dance. People who marvel at the intricacies of a motor, or the design of DNA and praise God for it. We are to be people who see. And point.

◇ **Conclusion:**

◇ Because of the similarities to other Ancient Near Eastern creation stories, many scholars chose to see Genesis as nothing more than the Christian and Jewish creation myth. Because they read it like a biological history text, many scientists assume it's neither true, nor accurate. But the more we learn the more factual it looks. Many Christians have argued long and loud about whether it happened in 6 -24 hour days, or 6 million years. My advice is "dig into it!" Read. Go to websites like Reasons.org. Become a student of God's world.

◇ In the end God will be glorified by what he has made. God is no myth. Creation is real. History is real. Mankind is real. In fact, the

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biblical creation account is the only one that consistently fits with science as we learn it. No other ancient creation account even continues to be studied!