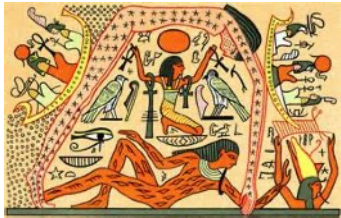


The God that's For Me, Genesis 1

◇ **Intro:** 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 rides 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. 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 correction to all the myths about human existence and the world that were floating around then and are even now.

◇ The author of Genesis isn't asking the 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

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calendar of it's 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 ...

◇ 1. **There is a God and he's ...**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 doesn't fit a scientific sequence, or details of natural history, but is only the divine and authoritative theological message God wants people to know about himself. I'd like to point out each briefly...

◇ 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

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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 it's 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. So the sequence must not be scientifically accurate. This discussion is fascinating and could be a whole class study for us.

◇ 2) what concerns us today is the theological teaching of God's word. To the pagan cultures, there were many gods

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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. People are created as an after thought to serve the gods. To the Egyptian culture, the stuff of the universe had power within it. The sun was a personality (named Re). So was the moon, the air, the water.

◇ Not so for the Hebrew. Genesis tells of One God, who is more than, or *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 called a "big light" (v16). Matter (as opposed to pagan thought) is not eternally present, but given a beginning, something science since Einstein's day has increasingly recognized.

◇ The Genesis account emphasizes that all that exists is subordinate to God in every way. 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. Or, (from another explanation more scientifically likely) if the sun and stars were already included in "*let there be light*", and a moisture layer 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,

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particularly human life, could exist. We might say that Moses' writing 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 said as she cried 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 an evolutionary accident. God owns this moment too.

◇ *"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 includes your life.

◇ 2. **There is a God and he's...Personal**: In theology we say God is immanent to his creation; that is, he is close to it, involved with it. He is in it. In the Egyptian account, Atum animalistically marries his shadow and convulses more gods into existence with which he

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makes the world. But 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, and whales may sing to one another, its a far cry from French or Korean, or even a nursery rhyme. God is not animal.

◇ 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.

◇ The Mesopotamian creation stories say mankind was created to feed the gods, or to be someone to take their anger out on. Genesis says God feeds mankind! 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, or your daughter is confused about her sexuality -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. He is not disinterested. Every square inch of matter is his artwork. Listen to him, follow his ways!

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◇ Moreover, everything in Genesis 1 points forward to the culmination of creation: mankind. It points 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. None of the pagan creations stories even hint at this. One 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."

◇ So like the Book of Scripture, the Book of Creation tells you God is for you! On your side, dear human person! 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 of creation whispers, even shouts that your importance to God is unquestionable. "*He himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.*" *Reach out to him and find him.... Do not ignor his loving instructions.*

◇ 3. **There is a God and he is...Good**; therefore what God does and makes is good. Notice another constantly repeated refrain: 4,10,12,18,21,25,31 *And it was good. This tells us a number of things*

◇ a) 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

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stream -but you more so! Genesis 1 is a romance between God and his world

◇ b) God is always in pursuit of beauty. Creation has beauty. You have beauty. Creation itself isn't inherently evil, as many pagan religions teach. Heaven is not an escape from earth, it is a renewing of earth. Salvation, heaven, eternal life -this is the restoration of earthly existence, and it's improvement.

◇ This is a good way to evaluate the things we run into. Simply pursue what is good. Ask "Is this something of which God would say "It is good."? If so pursue it. Study it. Work at it. Seek good in everything for that is what God too is after.

◇ Here is the **Conclusion** of the matter: Sin is not the first word in the Bible (It doesn't show up until chapter 3). The creational goodness of a personal God is. *The Creator God delights in creating beauty out of nothing, and even out of chaos. And of all he makes, you are what matters most.* He displayed this most in the resurrection of Jesus from the grave to forgive every sin. God, in the form of a human! And he promises the same re-creation for all who repent of sin and trust in him!

◇ Do you have chaotic spots in your life? Have you experience disorder? Ugliness? Emptiness? Genesis tells us God meant us for better, and only he can make it happen. Turn your back on any way you have disregarded your Maker. Turn to Jesus for help. Follow everything he says because his words are life.