

The Creation Narratives Genesis 1-2

A guide for teachers

BACKGROUND

Set at the beginning of the universe and in the very early days of human existence, Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are the creation stories of Judaism as well as of Christianity. They originated in ancient Israel, a small, pre-modern society struggling to maintain a distinct religious identity while surrounded (and sometimes dominated) by more powerful countries with very different beliefs. Their story is of the creation of the world and humanity by Israel's one God. They are a key text for Christians, who draw out from them beliefs about God, humanity and the world.

Why is the book called 'Genesis'?

The book of Genesis takes its name from its opening words, 'In the beginning'. In the Hebrew language in which the book was originally written, these words are 'Bereshith. In ancient Greek, they are 'Genesis.'

Who wrote these passages? When were they written?

Nowhere in the book of Genesis does its author identify him- or herself. Traditionally, Moses was regarded as the author of the first five books of the Bible (Genesis–Deuteronomy, known in Judaism as the Torah and in Christianity as the Pentateuch). Some Christians, accept that Moses was the author, while others think this is unlikely. Many Bible scholars argue that Moses was not the author, and that what is now the book of Genesis emerged from a variety of different sources. These stories probably passed on orally over a long period of time before they were first written down, which was most probably in the 6th or 7th centuries BC. The attribution to Moses might be because the writers themselves believed that the oral stories which they were recording had originated with him.



As well as differences in the stories they tell, some scholars have perceived differences in writing style and theology between these two passages. The most widely-held idea among scholars is that Genesis chapter 1.1 – 2.4 and chapter 2.5-25 were written by two different people (or possibly two different groups of people). These theoretical authors are known as ‘P’ and ‘J’. We don’t know their actual identities, nor the dates when they wrote.

No matter who the human author was, Christians all believe that,

along with the rest of the Bible, these passages are the inspired word of God. They commonly believe that the authors were inspired in what they wrote (God as the divine author behind the human author), that Genesis speaks authoritatively about who God is and what it means to be human, and also that readers can be inspired in how they understand what was written, and how they draw lessons and beliefs from it.

GENESIS

Chapter one

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

²The earth was barren, with no form of life; it was under a roaring ocean covered with darkness. But the Spirit of God was moving over the water.

The first day

³God said, "I command light to shine!" And light started shining. ⁴God looked at the light and saw that it was good. He separated light from darkness ⁵and named the light "Day" and the darkness "Night". Evening came and then morning—that was the first day.

The second day

⁶God said, "I command a dome to separate the water above it from the water below it." ⁷And that's what happened. God made the dome ⁸and named it "Sky". Evening came and then morning—that was the second day.

The third day

⁹God said, "I command the water under the sky to come together in one place, so there will be dry ground." And that's what happened. ¹⁰God named the dry ground "Land", and he named the water "Sea". God looked at what he had done and saw that it was good.

¹¹God said, "I command the earth to produce all kinds of plants, including fruit trees and grain." And that's what happened. ¹²The earth produced all kinds of vegetation. God looked at what he had done, and it was good. ¹³Evening came and then morning—that was the third day.

The fourth day

¹⁴God said, "I command lights to appear in the sky and to separate day from night and to show the time for seasons, special days, and years. ¹⁵I command them to shine on the earth." And that's what happened. ¹⁶God made two powerful lights,

Verse 1

The passage doesn't offer an explanation for the existence of God, it just states that he was, and that he was solely responsible for creation. The Hebrew word used for 'created' is 'bara'. This word, which has more of a sense of 'to put into order' than 'to build', is only used in the Old Testament in conjunction with God, possibly to indicate the specialness of his creation.

Verse 2

The Hebrew word translated as 'Spirit', which is 'ruach', can also mean 'wind'. Christians, reading this phrase in the context of the New Testament, usually understand the wind/spirit to be the Holy Spirit, acting as God's agent of creation.

Christians who interpret the story literally usually understand the 'days' to mean days of 24 hours. Others may understand a 'day' to mean 'an age' or 'an era'. The author of the New Testament letter 2 Peter wrote 'Don't forget that for the Lord one day is the same as a thousand years' (2 Peter 3:8).

The repetition of phrases such as 'God said, I command . . .', and that what has been created is good, has led some to suggest that the passage was originally written as a poem or hymn.

Verse 6

Throughout the passage, God's creation is intentional and made to happen by his command. There is no sense that he needs to work hard at bringing creation about, and unlike the creation stories of many other ancient civilisations, there is no conflict or power struggle between different deities involved. Some Bible scholars think that one of the purposes of the creation accounts in Genesis was to emphasise that the God worshipped by the Jews was different to the deities of other ancient civilisations in the near east (eg. good, not evil; ordered, not chaotic).

Verse 15

The two great lights are the sun and the moon. They aren't referred to directly and their names are not used (some Bible translations say 'sun' and 'moon' for

the brighter one to rule the day and the other to rule the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷Then God put these lights in the sky to shine on the earth, ¹⁸to rule day and night, and to separate light from darkness. God looked at what he had done, and it was good. ¹⁹Evening came and then morning—that was the fourth day.

The fifth day

²⁰God said, “I command the sea to be full of living creatures, and I command birds to fly above the earth.” ²¹So God made the giant sea monsters and all the living creatures that swim in the sea. He also made every kind of bird. God looked at what he had done, and it was good. ²²Then he gave the living creatures his blessing—he told the sea creatures to live everywhere in the sea and the birds to live everywhere on earth. ²³Evening came and then morning—that was the fifth day.

The sixth day

²⁴God said, “I command the earth to give life to all kinds of tame animals, wild animals, and reptiles.” And that’s what happened. ²⁵God made every one of them. Then he looked at what he had done, and it was good.

²⁶God said, “Now we will make humans, and they will be like us. We will let them rule the fish, the birds, and all other living creatures.”

²⁷So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women. ²⁸God gave them his blessing and said:

Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth.

²⁹I have provided all kinds of fruit and grain for you to eat. ³⁰And I have given the green plants as food for everything else that breathes. These will be food for animals, both wild and tame, and for birds.

³¹God looked at what he had done. All of it was very good! Evening came and then morning—that was the sixth day.

clarity, but these words are not used in the original Hebrew). The author possibly avoided those words because they were the names of gods worshipped by cultures which lived around the Israelites, and he wanted to emphasise to his readers that they weren’t actually deities, just a part of God’s creation. Some people in the ancient near east believed in local gods whose sphere of influence was limited to a particular place, but the author of the Genesis account makes his belief clear that God is the God of the whole world.

Verse 26

The creation of humans breaks the pattern seen in the other things created. God says ‘Now we will make humans, and they will be like us’. This is often expressed as humankind being in ‘the image of God’ (the Latin phrase is ‘*imago dei*’), and as meaning that humans are significantly different to the rest of creation, having things like sanctity, spirituality and free will.

Ancient civilisations often claimed a close link between their rulers and their gods, and that their rulers were the representatives, or the ‘image’ of their gods. Genesis 1 has every human made in the image of God, not just the rulers, so this passage can carry meaning for Christians about human equality as well as about the value and dignity of human life.

GENESIS

Chapter two

2 So the heavens and the earth and everything else were created.

The seventh day

²By the seventh day God had finished his work, and so he rested. ³God blessed the seventh day and made it special because on that day he rested from his work.

⁴That's how God created the heavens and the earth.

The Garden of Eden

When the LORD God made the heavens and the earth, ⁵no grass or plants were growing anywhere. God had not yet sent any rain, and there was no one to work the land. ⁶But streams came up from the ground and watered the earth.

⁷The LORD God took a handful of soil and made a man. God breathed life into the man, and the man started breathing. ⁸The LORD made a garden in a place called Eden, which was in the east, and he put the man there.

⁹The LORD God placed all kinds of beautiful trees and fruit trees in the garden. Two other trees were in the middle of the garden. One of the trees gave life—the other gave the power to know the difference between right and wrong.

¹⁰From Eden a river flowed out to water the garden, then it divided into four rivers. ¹¹The first one is the River Pishon that flows through the land of Havilah, ¹²where pure gold, rare perfumes, and precious stones are found. ¹³The second is the River Gihon that winds through Ethiopia. ¹⁴The River Tigris that flows east of Assyria is the third, and the fourth is the River Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to look after it. ¹⁶But the LORD told him, "You may eat fruit from any tree in the garden, ¹⁷except the one that has the power to let you know the difference between right and wrong. If you eat any fruit from that tree, you will die before the day is over!"

¹⁸The LORD God said, "It isn't good for the man to live alone. I need to make a suitable partner for him."

Verse 4

The first of the two creation stories ends here, and the second begins. In the first story, the word used for 'God' is 'Elohim'. The second story uses 'Yahweh' as well. This is God's personal name, which is translated into English as 'LORD'. The first story places more emphasis on God's omnipotence on a global scale (transcendence), while the second places more emphasis on his personal and relational nature (immanence). Christians see these two views of God as showing different aspects of his nature, and not being in conflict with each other.

Verse 7

The Hebrew word used for the man is 'Adam' (it only starts to be used as his personal name in chapter 3). There is a close similarity to the Hebrew word 'Adamah', which means the 'ground', 'soil' or 'dust,' from which God creates him.

God breathes life into the man. Later on, when God creates the animals and birds from soil, they do not receive the breath of God.

Verses 10-14

Despite the apparently very specific details in the passage, Eden's location remains a mystery. There is no known location of Havilah or the Pishon or Gihon rivers, and despite many attempts, Eden hasn't been satisfactorily identified, apart from generally being somewhere in the near east (this assumes, of course, that it was intended to be understood as a real place).

Verses 15 and 20

Chapter 2 includes the theme, also found in chapter 1, about humankind's relationship with the created world. Chapter 1 speaks of humans 'ruling' the



¹⁹⁻²⁰ So the LORD took some soil and made animals and birds. He brought them to the man to see what names he would give each of them. Then the man named the tame animals and the birds and the wild animals. That's how they got their names.

None of these was the right kind of partner for the man. ²¹ So the LORD God made him fall into a deep sleep, and he took out one of the man's ribs. Then after closing the man's side, ²² the LORD made a woman out of the rib.

The LORD God brought her to the man, ²³ and the man exclaimed,

"Here is someone like me!
She is part of my body,
my own flesh and bones.
She came from me, a man.
So I will name her Woman!"

²⁴ That's why a man will leave his own father and mother. He marries a woman, and the two of them become like one person.

²⁵ Although the man and his wife were both naked, they were not ashamed.

fish, birds and other creatures (v.28). This idea of dominion can be seen in chapter 2 where the man names the animals, thus showing his rule over them. Chapter 2 also says that he is to take care of the Garden, which links to the Christian belief in good stewardship of the world.

Verses 21-24

These verses might appear to reflect a patriarchal culture, but they can also be seen as speaking about the equality of men and women in God's creation – man is not given dominion over the woman, and human beings are described as being in the image of God as male and female. Verse 24 is often read in the context of the institution of marriage.

Verse 25

While this looks like an odd way to end the story, the author uses it to lead into the events of chapter 3. The man and woman's nakedness is often seen as a way for the author to establish their innocence, in advance of their meeting with the snake and the drastic changes brought about by their Fall.

The relationship between chapters 1 and 2

There are divergent understandings within Christianity about how these two passages fit together.

Some think the two accounts are complimentary parts of the same story, with the first account describing the broad sweep of creation without

pausing to dwell on any detail, and the second account more closely focussed on the creation of humanity, almost as if colouring in some of the detail in the broad-brush picture of the first account. For others, they are two parallel but separate stories, two different attempts to answer the same big questions about origins.

Some tasks to help your students to explore this issue in more depth can be found on pages 13-19.

INTERPRETATIONS

Some Christians understand this passage as a literal record of events which actually happened.

Others (probably including most Christians in the UK) understand it non-literally, but still hold that it expresses central truths about God, the world and humanity.

More literalist interpretations of the creation narratives are likely, though not exclusively, to be found in some fundamentalist, Pentecostal and evangelical churches and traditions. More symbolic interpretations are likely, though not exclusively, to be found in some evangelical, Catholic and Anglican churches and traditions. In all cases, Christians believe that the creation stories speak authoritatively about who God is, the nature of creation and what it means to be human.

Christians who hold a non-literal understanding of these passages are often said to believe that they are 'myths'. This can be a misleading term to use, in that it can suggest something which comes only from someone's imagination. A more specific term to use instead of 'myth' is 'aetiology' - a story which isn't intended to be understood as a literal account, but which expresses beliefs about the causes behind significant realities.

Types of writing

A useful approach to use with your students when examining the different interpretations of Genesis 1-2 is to consider the issue in terms of there being different types of writing in the Bible.

The genres found in the Bible include myth/aetiology, history, letters, poetry, prophecies, genealogies, and hymns. In a similar way to how we might expect something different from a novel and from a science textbook, what a reader understands about the nature of a piece of writing in the Bible influences how they draw meaning from it.

So, some Christians believe that these passages recount actual historical events (i.e. a literalist interpretation), others see them as myths/aetiologies

(non-literal), or as poetic expressions of beliefs (also non-literal). Getting students to think about Christian understandings of Genesis 1-2 (and other biblical passages) through the lens of different types of writing can help them to access a wider range of interpretations about the passage.

Similar theological lessons

Christians often draw out similar ideas and convictions from these passages whether they have literal or non-literal understandings of them. For Christians who understand these stories to be poetic, symbolic or aetiological, the truths that it contains about God, the world and humanity are still as powerful and relevant as for those who understand them as being historical accounts. The theological beliefs which Christians draw from these passages include:

That God is good, that he is a creator, and that he is omnipotent.

That God is transcendent, above creation rather than a part of it.

That the created world is a witness to God.

That humanity was created by God to be in relationship to him, and to have dominion and stewardship of the created world.

An early Christian interpretation of Genesis 1-2

Christian understandings about Genesis chapter 1 as a non-literal account can be found much further back in the history of Christianity and Judaism than is sometimes assumed. The early Christian thinkers known as the Church Fathers wrestled with the same issues about these passages as we have considered above, with the advantage that they lived in a culture much closer to the one in which they were written in. The second century Christian thinker Origen of Alexandria wrote about the Genesis creation accounts 'I cannot imagine that anyone will doubt that these details point symbolically to spiritual



meanings by using a historical narrative which did not literally happen’.

The full quotation, which comes from his theological treatise 'On first principles', is:

‘What intelligent person can imagine that there was a first day, then a second and third day, evening and morning, without the sun, the moon, and the stars? And that the first day – if it makes sense to call it such – existed even without a sky? Who is foolish enough to believe that, like a human gardener, God planted a garden in Eden in the East and placed in it a tree of life, visible and physical, so that by biting into its fruit one would obtain life? And that by eating from another tree, one would come to know good and evil? And when it is said that God walked in the garden in the evening and that Adam hid himself behind a tree, I cannot imagine that anyone will doubt that these details point symbolically to

spiritual meanings by using a historical narrative which did not literally happen.’

Origen had a very high regard for the Bible, and believed that it was the word of God and without error. Yet he also recognised that apparent contradictions can be found within it, including in the stories of creation. On creation, he took the position that the stories are aetiologies. His more general point was that the surface meaning of scripture should be distinguished from its deeper, spiritual meaning. (An alternative school of thought based in the Syrian city of Antioch argued that readers should seek the plain meaning of the text, to avoid potentially fanciful interpretations.)

Some tasks to help students to engage with Origen’s thinking on the creation narratives can be found on page 17.

Genesis 1-2 and science

Genesis chapters 1 and 2 offer an explanation (or possibly, explanations) of the origins of the world and of life, but they are not the only ones. For example, other ancient cultures in the near-east had their own origin stories, such as the Babylonian creation story the Enuma Elish.

Today, the prevailing alternative narrative to the Genesis creation accounts, at least in the West, comes from science. The contradictions between the biblical accounts of creation and the scientific understandings of how the world came into being and life developed, the big bang theory and the theory of evolution, sometimes lead to them being thought of as being in competition to each other. This can be seen in the popular understanding of the famous 1860 Oxford evolution debate, in which Thomas Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce disagree over whether Darwin's theory or the Genesis account was correct (actually, there are various accounts of what was said between them which are not consistent with each other). As we have seen, the way that Christians interpret Genesis chapters 1-2 varies, and how they relate what the Bible says to modern understandings of science varies as well. Some Christians might feel that the way that the debate is sometimes framed as 'science versus religion' misses the mark through over-simplification.

Scripture over science?

Some Christians do reject the explanations of how the world and humanity came to exist offered by science, because they are seen as incompatible with the biblical accounts. They assert that the biblical accounts are factually accurate and serve to explain how creation happened without the need for a scientific explanation (ie. a 'literalist' perspective). Such 'creationist' explanations are commonly based on the belief that God has revealed his truth through scripture, which cannot be contradicted by science because, unlike human understanding, God's word is infallible. They might include

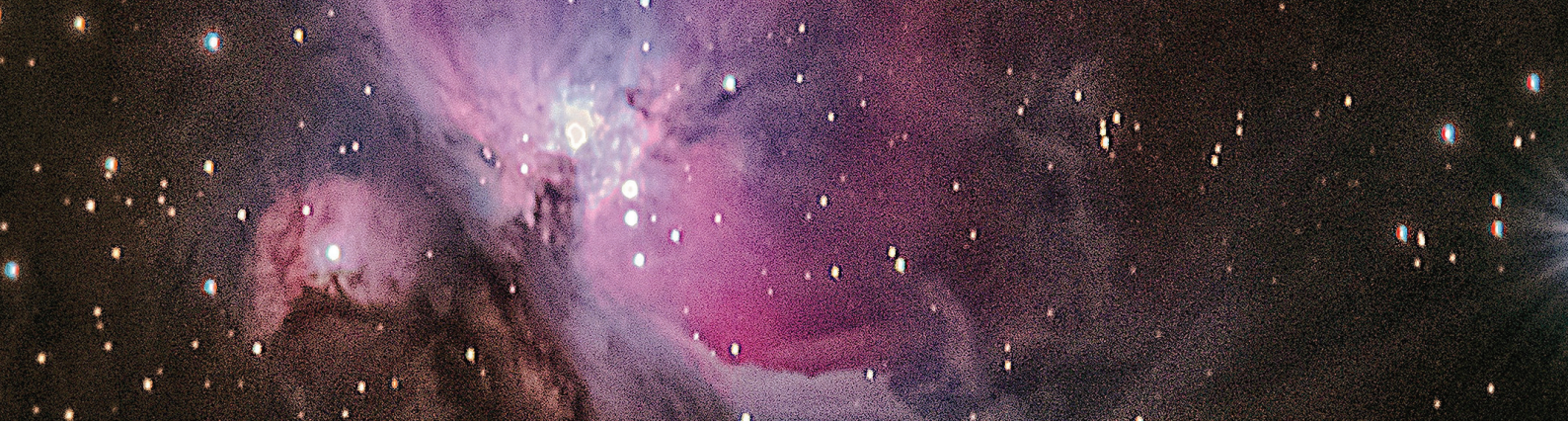
- belief that the earth is around 6,000 years old and was created as described in Genesis 1-2 (young-earth creationism).
- belief that there were two creations, one of the earth and the other of Adam and Eve (gap creationism).
- belief that species were created in great variety and with their characteristics complete at the time of creation.
- seeing friction between the idea that humans evolved from animals and humankind being made in the image of God.

Separate forms of truth?

However, many Christians today do not perceive antagonism between the Bible and science, believing that the significant truths can be found within the Bible don't require them to deny the truth of scientific insights.

The view that religion and science are separate domains can be found among scientists such as Stephen Jay Gould, who suggested that science and religion are 'non-overlapping magisteria', or areas of knowledge which do not overlap or intrude on each other. Christians who understand Genesis 1-2 to be non-literal pieces of writing might take a similar view, seeing science and religion as separate domains which both hold truth, but different types of truth. In this view, both religious and scientific accounts of creation provide answers to different types of questions, with the scientific accounts describing how the world was created and the religious account explaining why and by whom. This might mean that attempts to match the Genesis accounts of creation to scientific evidence are unhelpful or unnecessary. Christians who take this view might think that

- the Bible is a text which is theologically true, but not intended to be used as a science handbook.
- things such as the nature of humanity can be explained both in scientific terms, as being evolved, and in theological ways, as being in the image of God.



Scripture and science?

Christians might also believe that the scientific explanations of the origins of the world and life are valid, but also that the processes which they describe were initiated by God to fulfil his purposes and intentions for creation. This view is sometimes called 'theistic evolution'. More generally, they might advocate for science and religion being complementary as essential components in a holistic way of understanding the world, with no choice needing to be made between them. They might point to examples of scientists with a religious faith, both in the past and in the present day. One such example is Georges LeMaitre (1894-1966), a leading physicist and astronomer who made significant contributions to the development of the big bang theory, and who was also a Catholic priest. They might suggest that:

- all forms of learning and understanding are gifts from God.
- our very ability to understand creation through scientific enquiry derives from humanity being made in the image of God.
- both scientific and theological understanding are 'pointers' towards God and what he is like.
- it is possible to be comfortable with scientific discoveries about the universe and the idea that God has a role in creating and sustaining it.

For Christians, God is beyond the parameters of science, so while they might believe that science can investigate and describe how creation took place, they also believe that in some ways God is simply beyond human understanding. They hold that reality consists of more than only the material, observable world, so for them scientific understandings alone cannot explain everything, and some things cannot be explained by science.

They also believe that, whereas evolution is usually seen as an impersonal and unstructured process which has no particular end-goal, in Christianity the universe is working towards a definite end point, marked by the return of Jesus (the parousia).



RESOURCES

Are there two accounts of creation in the Bible?

Instructions for students	13
Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 – chapter 2 verse 4	14
Genesis chapter 2 verses 4-25	15
Table	16

What did Origen of Alexandria write about the creation stories?

Information and questions	17
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The Bible and Science

Information and tasks	18
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Are there two accounts of creation in the Bible?

At the beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, there are two stories which attempt to explain how the world and humanity began.

Within Christianity, there a range of different ways of understanding these stories, ranging from seeing them as historical accounts which relate actual events to understanding them as myths or stories or poems which aren't intended to be literally true, but which express a particular understanding about God, the world and humanity.

There are also differences in how Christians think these two stories fit together. They might ask questions like:

Can they be describing the same event?

Are they supposed to follow on from each other?

Is the second story a deeper look at part of what the first story says?

Are they two completely different stories?

Take a look at these two stories in more depth to explore these issues.

Step 1

- Start by reading each story. You could do this in pairs, taking one story each and explaining your story to your partner after you have read it.

Step 2

- Fill in the two columns in the table to show all of the actions done by God in these two stories, including what he says and what he thinks. You

could use different colours for things which God does, says and thinks.

Step 3

- Look at your table and compare God's role in creation in each of the two stories.
- Are there places in them where God does or says something which is the same, or similar, to the other story? If so, draw lines between them to connect them up.
Remember that the same thing might be described in different ways in the two chapters – they don't need to use exactly the same words for it to count as a 'match'.

Step 4

- Compare what happens in each story.
- Do the same things happen in each story? Do they happen in the same order?
- Which words and phrases are used most commonly in Genesis chapter 1? Which are used most in chapter 2?

Step 5

- Think about what each story is trying to tell the reader about God, the world and humanity. Write on some keywords to show this. For example, where the first story says that God commands there to be light, you could write 'powerful'.
- You could use one colour for things about God, another for the world, and another for things about humanity.

Questions

1. Which story emphasises God's omnipotence (his all-powerful nature)?
2. Which story emphasises God's closeness to humanity?
3. Which story gives humanity more dominion (control over the earth)?
4. Do you agree that the two accounts have the same messages
 - that God made all things
 - that God is all powerful
 - that God is good?
5. Are there other messages which they have in common which you would add to this list?

6. Overall, how similar are these two passages in the story they tell?
7. Overall, how similar are they in what they say about God and humanity?
8. If Genesis chapter 1 and chapter 2 were people, would they be . . .
 - Identical twins?
 - Next door neighbours?
 - Friends?
 - Distant relatives?
 - Total strangers?
 - Why?

GENESIS

chapter 1 verse 1 – chapter 2 verse 4

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

²The earth was barren, with no form of life; it was under a roaring ocean covered with darkness. But the Spirit of God was moving over the water.

The first day

³God said, "I command light to shine!" And light started shining. ⁴God looked at the light and saw that it was good. He separated light from darkness ⁵and named the light "Day" and the darkness "Night". Evening came and then morning—that was the first day.

The second day

⁶God said, "I command a dome to separate the water above it from the water below it." ⁷And that's what happened. God made the dome ⁸and named it "Sky". Evening came and then morning—that was the second day.

The third day

⁹God said, "I command the water under the sky to come together in one place, so there will be dry ground." And that's what happened. ¹⁰God named the dry ground "Land", and he named the water "Sea". God looked at what he had done and saw that it was good.

¹¹God said, "I command the earth to produce all kinds of plants, including fruit trees and grain." And that's what happened. ¹²The earth produced all kinds of vegetation. God looked at what he had done, and it was good. ¹³Evening came and then morning—that was the third day.

The fourth day

¹⁴God said, "I command lights to appear in the sky and to separate day from night and to show the time for seasons, special days, and years. ¹⁵I command them to shine on the earth." And that's what happened. ¹⁶God made two powerful lights, the brighter one to rule the day and the other to rule the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷Then God put these lights in the sky to shine on the earth, ¹⁸to rule day and night, and to separate light from darkness. God looked at what he had done,

and it was good. ¹⁹Evening came and then morning—that was the fourth day.

The fifth day

²⁰God said, "I command the sea to be full of living creatures, and I command birds to fly above the earth." ²¹So God made the giant sea monsters and all the living creatures that swim in the sea. He also made every kind of bird. God looked at what he had done, and it was good. ²²Then he gave the living creatures his blessing—he told the sea creatures to live everywhere in the sea and the birds to live everywhere on earth. ²³Evening came and then morning—that was the fifth day.

The sixth day

²⁴God said, "I command the earth to give life to all kinds of tame animals, wild animals, and reptiles." And that's what happened. ²⁵God made every one of them. Then he looked at what he had done, and it was good.

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²⁷So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women. ²⁸God gave them his blessing and said:

Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth.

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2 So the heavens and the earth and everything else were created.

The seventh day

²By the seventh day God had finished his work, and so he rested. ³God blessed the seventh day and made it special because on that day he rested from his work.

⁴That's how God created the heavens and the earth.

GENESIS

chapter 2 verses 4 - 25

The Garden of Eden

When the LORD God made the heavens and the earth, ⁵no grass or plants were growing anywhere. God had not yet sent any rain, and there was no one to work the land. ⁶But streams came up from the ground and watered the earth.

⁷The LORD God took a handful of soil and made a man. God breathed life into the man, and the man started breathing. ⁸The LORD made a garden in a place called Eden, which was in the east, and he put the man there.

⁹The LORD God placed all kinds of beautiful trees and fruit trees in the garden. Two other trees were in the middle of the garden. One of the trees gave life—the other gave the power to know the difference between right and wrong.

¹⁰From Eden a river flowed out to water the garden, then it divided into four rivers. ¹¹The first one is the River Pishon that flows through the land of Havilah, ¹²where pure gold, rare perfumes, and precious stones are found. ¹³The second is the River Gihon that winds through Ethiopia. ¹⁴The River Tigris that flows east of Assyria is the third, and the fourth is the River Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to look after it. ¹⁶But the LORD told him, “You may eat fruit from any tree in the garden, ¹⁷except the one that has the power to let you know the difference between right and wrong. If you eat any fruit from that tree, you will die before the day is over!”

¹⁸The LORD God said, “It isn’t good for the man to live alone. I need to make a suitable partner for him.” ¹⁹⁻²⁰So the LORD took some soil and made animals and birds. He brought them to the man to see what names he would give each of them. Then the man named the tame animals and the birds and the wild animals. That’s how they got their names.

None of these was the right kind of partner for the man. ²¹So the LORD God made him fall into a deep sleep, and he took out one of the man’s ribs. Then after closing the man’s side, ²²the LORD made a woman out of the rib.

The LORD God brought her to the man, ²³and the man exclaimed,

“Here is someone like me!
She is part of my body,
my own flesh and bones.
She came from me, a man.
So I will name her Woman!”

²⁴That’s why a man will leave his own father and mother. He marries a woman, and the two of them become like one person.

²⁵Although the man and his wife were both naked, they were not ashamed.

The first story Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 – chapter 2 verse 4	The second story Genesis chapter 2 verse 4 – verse 25
<p>God commands light to shine, and named the light 'day' and the darkness 'night'.</p> <p>He commands there to be a 'dome', making the sky.</p>	<p>God forms man from soil and breathes life into him.</p> <p>He plants the garden of Eden.</p>

What did Origen of Alexandria write about the creation stories?

Origen was from Alexandria, in Egypt. He lived between about 184 and 265 CE.

He is one of the 'Church fathers', ancient Christian thinkers whose work explored some of the key beliefs of Christianity.

He wrote nearly 2,000 books or articles on Christian theology.

Not all of his ideas are accepted by all Christians today, but much contemporary Christian thinking has its origins in the work of Origen and the other Church fathers.

“What intelligent person can imagine that there was a first day, then a second and third day, evening and morning, without the sun, the moon, and the stars? And that the first day – if it makes sense to call it such – existed even without a sky? Who is foolish enough to believe that, like a human gardener, God planted a garden in Eden in the East and placed in it a tree of life, visible and physical, so that by biting into its fruit one would obtain life? And that by eating from another tree, one would come to know good and evil? And when it is said that God walked in the garden in the evening and that Adam hid himself behind a tree, I cannot imagine that anyone will doubt that these details point symbolically to spiritual meanings by using a historical narrative which did not literally happen.”

- Origen of Alexandria, *On First Principles*

Questions

1. Sum up what Origen was trying to say in 25 words or less.
2. What genre (type of writing) did Origen think of Genesis 1-3 as being?
3. What objections does Origen have to a literal understanding of Genesis 1-3?
4. Is this what you would have expected an ancient Christian thinker to say?
5. If Origen met a modern day Christian who believes that Genesis 1-3 is history, how might a conversation between them go?
6. If he met a modern day atheist, how might a conversation between them go?
7. Who (out of the Christian and the atheist above) do you think Origen would have the most in common with?



The Bible and Science

For each t-shirt logo, write three keywords which explain what the logo is saying about the relationship between religion and science.

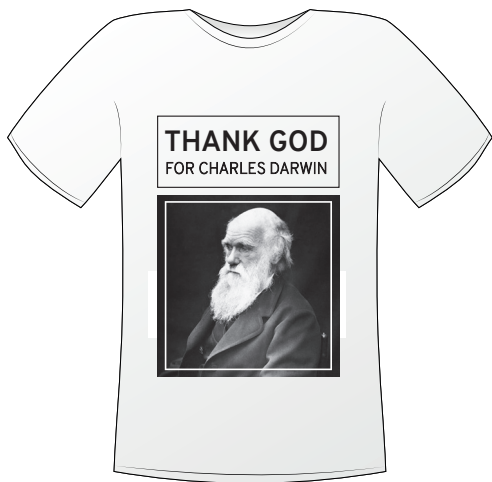
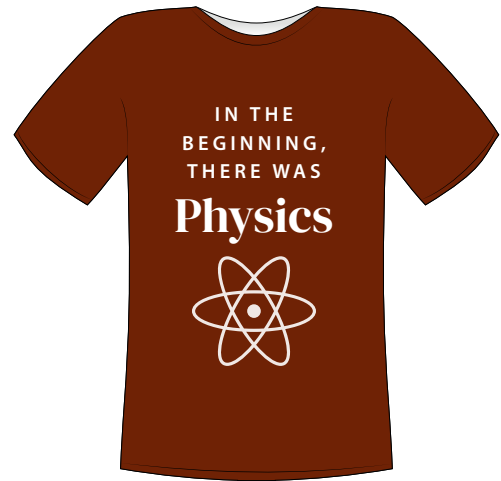
Which of the logos would a Christian who believes that the world was created just as described in Genesis chapters 1-2 agree with? Why?

Would a Christian who believes both that the big bang theory and the theory of evolution explain how the world came about and that Genesis 1-2 explains truths about God and humans, agree with any of them? Why?

Which of the logos would a Christian who thinks that religion and science are both necessary to understand the world agree with? Why?

Are there any of the logos which no Christian could agree with?

Choose any one of the logos, and design a logo of your own which gives a reply to it.





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