

## 8 In the beginning - what Genesis says

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There are a lot of occasions in the New Testament when the Lord Jesus and the apostles referred back to the account of creation in Genesis. We can learn from these references because they help us to see what is important about the account of creation.

### God the creator and sustainer

Read Acts 17:24-27. Here Paul is speaking to the Greeks in Athens. What does he tell them about what God does now, and why?

### Let there be light

Look at 2 Corinthians 4:4-6. What is the 'light' in this passage? What does that tell you about what God meant in the beginning?

### Adam and Eve

Look at Matthew 19:3-5; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 1 Corinthians 11:7-9. Which truths in Genesis are used in teaching of Jesus and the apostle Paul. How do they interpret them?

(In passing, do you think that 1 Timothy 2:15 could be referring to the 'seed of the woman' in Genesis 3:15?).

### Adam

1 Corinthians 15:22-23; Romans 5:14-18. What do these verses tell us about Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ?

### Let us make man in our image

Remembering what God said in Genesis 1:26-27 about making man in his image, look at 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:4 and 1 John 3:2. So are we in God's image now or not? What does this tell us about what God meant when he first spoke?

### The dominion of the King

Think about what God said in Genesis 1:28, when he told man to 'rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground'. Look at Psalm 8:4-8, and see how that speaks as though it has already happened. But now look at 1 Corinthians 15:27-28. Has what God said been completely fulfilled? If not, when will it be? What else does this tell us about Genesis 1?

### The sabbath

Read Hebrews 4:1-10. What does God mean by the sabbath, and his day of rest, in these verses.

### The tree of life and the curse

Look at Revelation 2:7; 22:2,3. What does this teach us about the Garden of Eden?

## The words God used to describe what he did.

It is interesting to look at the language of Genesis 1, to see the words God uses to describe his creative actions. These passages have been chosen to illustrate how each word is used; it is not a complete list. The quotations are taken from the NIV, though there is not much difference between the various translations.

**bara, to create.** This word is nearly always used of things God did. It implies special acts of creation. You may like to look at Isaiah 40:26 and 42:5, where it is also used.

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

1:21 So God created the great creatures of the sea ...

1:27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

**asah, to do or make.** This is the common word for making things: it is used to describe how Noah built the ark, for example.

1:16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light...

1:25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds ...

1:26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image ...

**male, to fill.** The ordinary word for filling something.

1:22 God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas ...

1:28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.

**tsamach, to sprout or grow.** Used to describe something growing out of something else - like hair out of someone’s head.

2:5 Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up ...

2:9 The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground ...

**dasha, to sprout.** This word describes the process of things growing. It is only used in one other place - Joel 2:22, where it is ‘spring’ in the AV, or ‘are becoming green’ in the NIV.

1:11 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation...

**yatsa, to go out.** A very common word, usually meaning to leave somewhere.

1:12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds ...

1:24 And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds ...

**sharats, to teem or swarm.** Mostly used to describe a lot of things walking or crawling, like the frogs that plagued Egypt.

1:20 Let the water **teem** with living creatures ...

1:21 So God created ... every living thing with which the water **teems** ...

**yatsar, to form or mould.** To mould something into shape, like a potter shaping clay.

2:7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground ...

2:8 Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed..

2:19 Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky...

**banah, to build.** Usually refers to building a city, or an altar.

2:22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, ...

## Summary

So what have you learned from all these passages about what Genesis was written for, and what is important about it?



## Postscript: Two other accounts of creation

It is instructive to compare some other accounts of creation with the early chapters of Genesis. Imagine if the Bible had said this!

### The Chinese account of Pan Gu

The Pan Gu story has become firmly fixed in Chinese tradition. First mention of it is in a book on Chinese myths written by Xu Zheng in the Three Kingdoms period (AD 220-265). There are several versions, but here is one.

In the beginning there was nothing in the universe except a formless chaos. However this chaos coalesced into a cosmic egg for about 18,000 years. Within it, the perfectly opposed principles of Yin and Yang became balanced and Pangu emerged (or woke up) from the egg. Pangu is usually depicted as a primitive, hairy giant with horns on his head and clad in furs. Pangu set about the task of creating the world: he separated Yin from Yang with a swing of his giant axe, creating the Earth (murky Yin) and the Sky (clear Yang). To keep them separated, Pangu stood between them and pushed up the Sky. This task took 18,000 years; with each day the sky grew ten feet (3 meters) higher, the Earth ten feet wider, and Pangu ten feet taller. In some versions of the story, Pangu is aided in this task by the four most prominent beasts, namely the Turtle, the Qilin, the Phoenix, and the Dragon.



After the 18,000 years had elapsed, Pangu was laid to rest. His breath became the wind, mist and clouds; his voice the thunder; left eye the sun and right eye the moon; his head became the mountains and extremes of the world; his blood formed rivers; his muscles the fertile lands; his facial hair, the stars and milky way; his fur the bushes and forests; his bones the valuable minerals; his bone marrows sacred diamonds; his sweat fell as rain; and the fleas on his fur carried by the wind became the fish and animals throughout the land. Nüwa the Goddess then used the mud of the water bed to form the shape of humans. These humans were very smart since they were individually crafted. Nüwa then became bored of individually making every human so she started putting a rope in the water bed and letting the drops of mud that fell from it become new humans. These small drops became new humans, not as smart as the first.

*The Pangu legend, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pangu>*

## A Norse account

This account was written about 1200 A.D. by the Icelandic poet and politician Snorri Sturluson. He probably didn't believe the story himself, but he was writing down the beliefs of previous generations.

### The Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson

The sons of Bor then carried Ymir to the middle of Ginnungagap and made the world from him. From his blood they made the sea and the lakes; from his flesh the earth; from his hair the trees; and from his bones the mountains. They made rocks and pebbles from his teeth and jaws and those bones that were broken.



*Ymir, The Father of frost giants*

Maggots appeared in Ymir's flesh and came to life. By the decree of the gods they acquired human understanding and the appearance of men, although they lived in the earth and in rocks.

From Ymir's skull the sons of Bor made the sky and set it over the earth with its four sides. Under each corner they put a dwarf, whose names are East, West, North, and South.

Then they took the sparks and burning embers that were flying about after they had been blown out of Muspell, and placed them in the midst of Ginnungagap to give light to heaven above and earth beneath. To the stars they gave appointed places and paths.

The earth was surrounded by a deep sea. The sons of Bor gave lands near the sea to the families of giants for their settlements.

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*abstracted from The Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson by D. L. Ashliman © 1997-2010*

Just think - the Bible account of creation was probably written down by Moses around 2600 years before Snorri Sturluson put pen to paper. Which makes more sense?