

THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

*"It is fashionable today to profess disbelief in miracles. Accept [Genesis chapter 1], and there will be little difficulty in accepting all of the miracles that follow; for the less are included in the greater." —J. Sidlow Baxter, **Explore the Book***

"God & Creation"**The God of All Creation:**

1. He Pre-exists all things.
2. He is All-powerful.
3. He creates *ex nihilo*.
4. He is the Triune God.

⇒ Though not understood by Israel, in light of further revelation we can see that the Triune God is present and active in the various aspects of Creation.

- * **The Sovereign God**—In the beginning **God created** the heavens and the earth. (1:1)
- * **The Spirit of God**—And **the Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters. (1:2b)
- * **The Word of God**—And **God said**, "Let there be light," and there was light (3:1).

The Beginning of Creation: Genesis 1:1-2**"The Heavens & the Earth"**

- This is the summary statement for all that follows and refers to both physical and spiritual reality.
- More specifically, it seems that God created the universe as a whole as well as the primordial form of the Earth.

Is. 40:22—It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;

"Darkness"

- Darkness is, at certain times in Scripture, associated with the powerful _____ of God (Gen. 15:2; Ex. 20:21; 1 Kings 8:10-13)

"...the Spirit of God was hovering..." רָחַף → "To hover or brood over."

Deut. 32:11—Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions,

The Structure and Sequence of Creation: Genesis 1:3-2:3**Creational Theories**

The 24-Hour Day View:

The Day-Age View:

The Intermittent Day View:

The Framework View:

The Literal–Historical Framework View

- Because of the presence of the formula, “And there was evening and morning, the ____ day,” linguistically these must be literal, 24 hour days.
- There is, however, a clear, literary framework that is shown in what God creates and on which days He chooses to create them.
- This view holds to the literal understanding which is affirmed throughout the Scriptures while also recognizing that the literary structure is in primary view.
- God created just as the Scriptures describe, but His purposes in creation is demonstrated through the shaping and filling of His Creation.

<i>FORMLESS [Tohu] The Shaping of Creation</i>	<i>VOID [Bohu] The Filling of Creation</i>
<u>Day 1</u>	<u>Day 4</u>
<u>Day 2</u>	<u>Day 5</u>
<u>Day 3</u>	<u>Day 6</u>
<u>Day 7</u>	

Knowing our God through His creative work:

1. God creates and sustains by His powerful _____.
2. God _____ and _____ all things. (Anticipation → Fulfillment)
3. All of God’s creative work moves towards worshipful _____.

An Introduction to Polemical Theology

One of the important functions of the Torah is to serve as a polemic against God's enemies. We noted in Part 1 of this series that a polemic is a strong written or verbal attack on someone or something. The writings of the Torah are an attack on the beliefs, practices, and morals of the Ancient Near East (ANE), a region that was populated by various civilizations and cultures that the Hebrews would have interacted with. The writings of the Old Testament accomplish their polemical goal by drawing on various stories and myths from the ANE. For this reason some have charged the Scriptural authors with plagiarism due to the similarities that exist between some ANE writings and certain accounts or motifs found within the Bible. We want to recognize that while various parallels and similarities do exist, they are intentional and for the purpose of communicating the supremacy of Yahweh both to His people as well as those with whom they had interaction.

One of the leading biblical scholars who has written on polemical theology is John Currid from Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC. In his 2013 work, ***Against the Gods***, he defines polemical theology and explains its purpose as follows:

Polemical Theology is the use by biblical writers of the thought, forms, and stories that were common in ancient Near East culture, while filling them with radically new meaning. The biblical authors take well-known expressions and motifs from the ancient Near East milieu and apply them to the person and work of Yahweh, and not to the other gods of the ancient world.

At various times in our Genesis series I will provide a sheet like this that goes into some detail regarding the polemical nature of certain passages, describing how they are similar to various writings from the ancient Near East. ***Against the Gods*** will be the primary source that we will draw upon as we consider these things in greater detail.

The Polemical Theology of Genesis 1

The Genesis account has parallels with certain other ANE creation accounts, particularly the Babylonian *Enuma Elish* and certain Egyptian myths.

* Both charts taken from Currid pgs. 37–39

Superficial Similarities, Fundamental Differences:

Despite the presence of certain parallels, the differences between the accounts in their various details are significant.

- **All of the ANE civilizations and cultures were polytheistic.**
All of these cultures believed in the existence of multiple gods and goddesses who were not all-powerful or all-knowing. In their temperaments, they were very much like humans, fighting with one another, exhibiting jealousy, and frequently acting in perverted and depraved ways. They were also subject to the forces of life and nature just as humans are.
⇒ **Yahweh, however, is transcendent and all-powerful. He is the One true God who has no rival.**
- **These gods were themselves created.**
The ANE societies had genealogies for their gods as well as a pantheon and hierarchy.
⇒ **Yahweh, however, is the sole Deity. He is the Creator and Sustainer of everyone and everything.**
- **In ANE myths, the most powerful gods were the ones with the most magical prowess.**
In the *Enuma Elish* the god Marduk becomes the king of the gods through the use of his magical powers to make a piece of cloth disappear in the presence of the other deities. Magic, in the ANE worldview, was the most potent force in the universe.
⇒ **The creation account of Genesis depicts Yahweh as supreme and without rival. He does not possess magical powers, but sovereign authority over the cosmos itself.**

- **The gods create from that which already existed.**

In the Enuma Elish and some Egyptian accounts the gods created themselves from pre-existent, primordial waters. In one Egyptian account Atum created himself and the other gods from a hill that arose from these waters. In one Mesopotamian account Marduk had to battle and subdue the forces of chaos in order to create the earth.

⇒ **Yahweh, in contrast, creates everything *ex nihilo* (from nothing). He is the only being that is preexistent.**

- **The gods create through a variety of methods.**

In the Egyptian accounts there are at least three ways Re is portrayed as creating: (1) through individual sexual means, (2) through spitting, or (3) through the naming of various body parts which then spawned various other deities. Most Mesopotamian accounts involve sexual procreation between certain deities as necessary for creation. This is demonstrated by the prevalence of ANE fertility cults.

⇒ **Yahweh creates through His powerful Word. He speaks and those things which were not, come into being.**

- **These writings are all examples of the genre of "mythic narrative."**

These tales contrast sharply with other texts from these cultures which were intended to convey history or law. These were mythic tales that were ahistorical and offered as mythical explanations for certain forces. They are really only narratives in the sense that they have a storyline that moves forward.

⇒ **Genesis, however, is never portrayed as mythic narrative. In its language and structure the book is to be viewed as historical narrative. It is the accurate account of the powerful works of Yahweh both in primeval history as well as in the lives of the Patriarchs.**

The Polemic of Genesis 1:

The book of Genesis served to correct the beliefs both of God's people as well as the peoples and nations of the Ancient Near East. When God inspired the writing of Scripture, He did so in such a way as to describe actual, historical events. The ways in which these events were portrayed connected in many ways to various myths that were present in the ANE which were, perhaps, altered accounts of the original creation account. The parallels that exist between Genesis and other ANE accounts are intentional in order to both attack and correct these mistaken views. Yahweh's goal is to lead people to turn from them and the gods they describe so that they might come to be His worshippers.

Some specific examples:

The creation of "sea creatures" on Day 5 – In certain Canaanite accounts, a large sea creature was the enemy of Baal who had to be defeated or subdued. . In the Genesis account, God is the creator of the sea creatures who are not in rebellion against Him but instead glorify Him and are considered "good."

The creation of the sun, moon, and stars on Day 4 – In ANE myth, the creation of the heavenly luminaries is equated with the creation of the various gods. These heavenly bodies are to be worshipped because they are the various stations or representations of certain deities. The book of Genesis and the Bible as a whole reject astral worship because it is God alone, the Creator, who is to receive worship and praise.

The creation of mankind on Day 6 – In the ANE religions, humans were the slaves of the gods, created because the gods wanted someone else to share the burden of caring for and maintaining the earth. Part of their role as slaves was the offering of sacrifices which served to give the gods strength. The gods were needy and subject to the same kinds of needs that people have such as hunger, thirst, etc..