

# The Creation

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Do these accounts describe the creation of the earth in the same order?

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Notable differences:  
Abraham's account actually includes twelve different "labors" of the Gods, divided up among the "days" in the manner of Genesis. The later temple account of creation gives an abbreviated version of those labors, divided up differently among the seven days while retaining the same order,

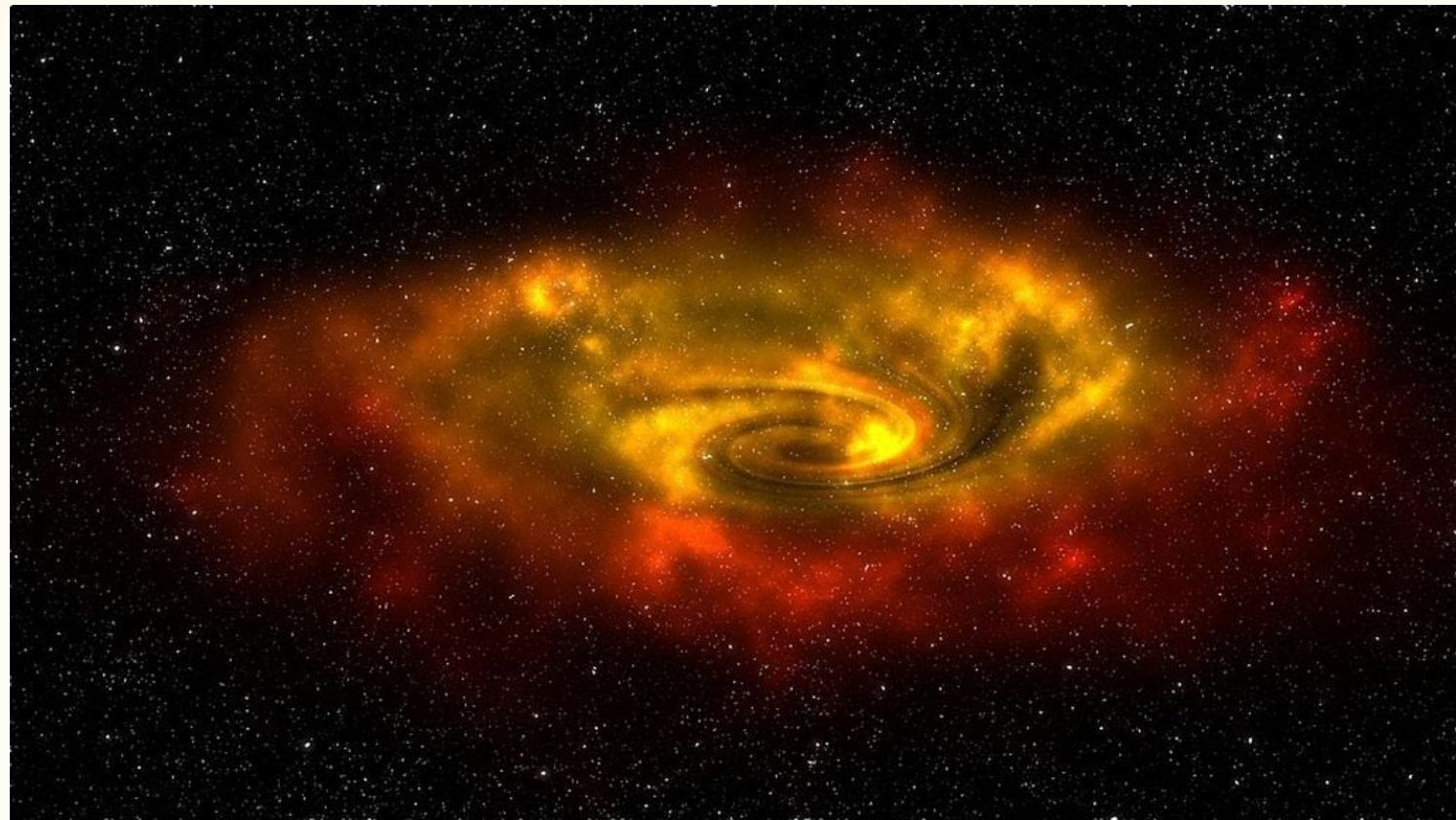
What might God be trying to tell us by having the Creation accounts deliberately appear in different orders?



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These accounts do not provide a distinct description of the how, rather they explain the why. These accounts also exist to teach us about God and his plan for us. So, what do we learn about God from these different creation accounts?



Jamie Haslam Jensen, Professor of Biology @BYU, “Faith and Science: Symbiotic Pathways to Truth,” BYU Devotional 2020

Dogmatism—in science or in religion—closes down your ability to learn and progress. If something seems to conflict between what science reveals and what you have learned through your religious faith, don’t abandon one or the other. Hold off judgment, be patient, and keep an open mind to truth from both sides.

When he was an apostle, President Russell M. Nelson said at the dedication of the BYU Life Sciences Building, “There is no conflict between science and religion. Conflict only arises from an incomplete knowledge of either science or religion, or both.”

Do not be so proud that you cannot accept that you may not know everything. Be patient and stay faithful, and in time, understanding will come. And please keep in mind that your eternal salvation does not depend on your complete understanding of science. If learning scientific theories puts your faith in jeopardy, choose your faith. Choose your faith until you can better understand the science—or until science can provide better explanations. I firmly believe that both truths—religious and scientific—exist in harmony.

**A battle has been raging for centuries, a battle between faith and science, a conflict that is tragic and completely unnecessary. It is a false dichotomy.**

Truths found through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to His commandments and truths found through the diligent study of His scientific processes here on Earth can combine into a beautiful blessing of knowledge that can enhance our lives, save our children, bless our Earth, and help us return back to our heavenly home with the blessings of exaltation.

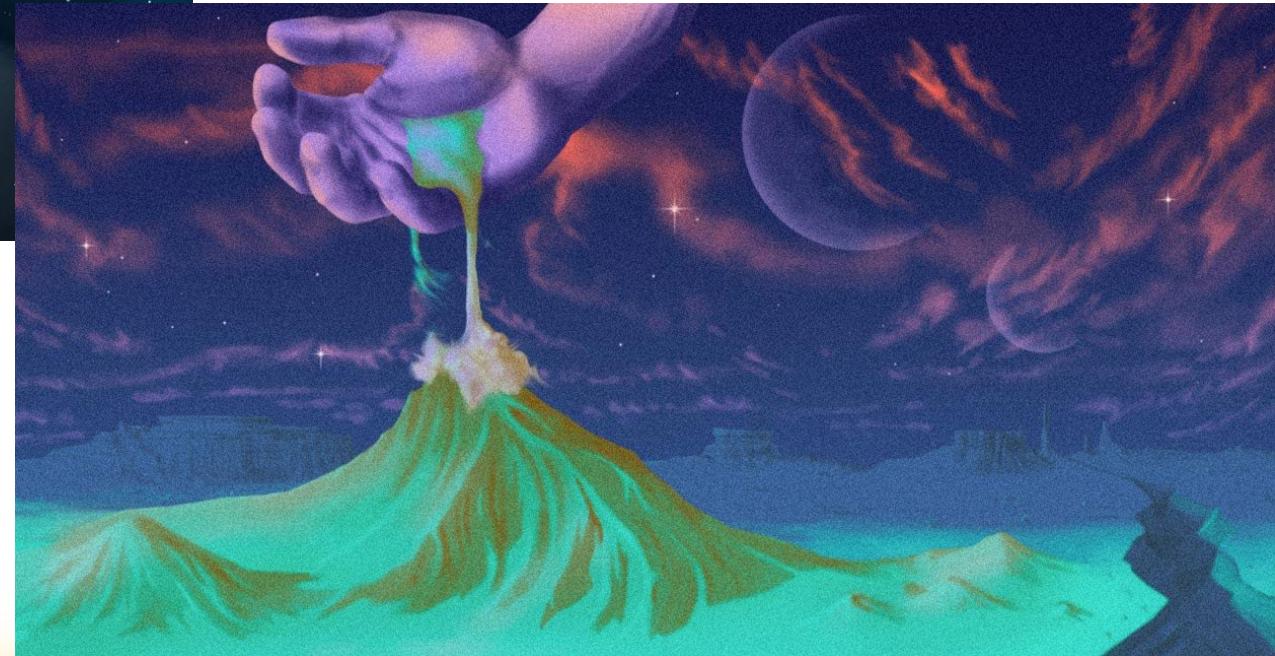
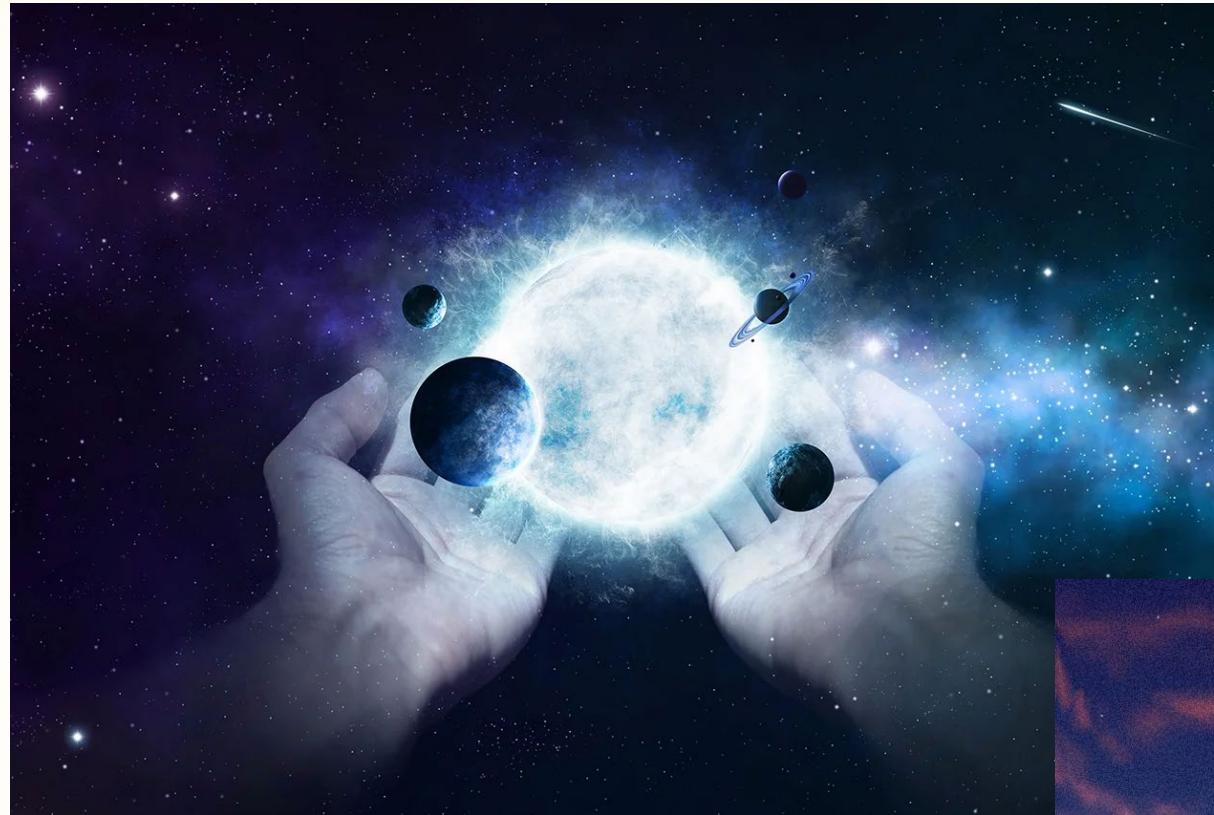
Symbiosis is a term we use in biology to indicate an interaction between two different organisms living together in a dependent and often beneficial relationship. Likewise, faith and science should live symbiotically in our hearts and in our minds as we search for truth in our lives.



Jamie Haslam Jensen,  
Professor of Biology  
@BYU, Faith and Science:  
Symbiotic Pathways to  
Truth, BYU Devotional

2020

# Creation Narratives: What do we learn about God just from the narrative accounts in Genesis?



- First, we learn that there is one God, who moves about his work of bringing order out of chaos.
- Second, we learn that God has undisputed power over the elements. There is no conflict in this story. When God speaks, the elements obey. We learn that, unlike various view of the polytheistic cultures surrounding ancient Israel, God is not part of nature, but commands it.
- Third, we learn that God, in the beginning, declared all his creations to be good.
- Fourth, we learn that humanity is created in the image of God and given the task to multiply on the earth and to care for and have stewardship over all of God's creation.



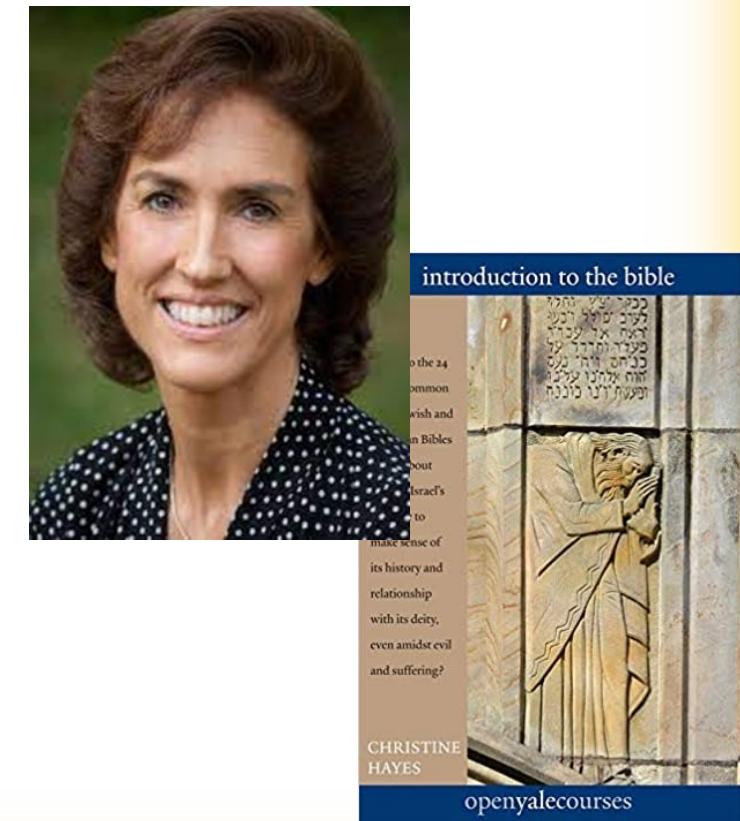
The biblical Creation stories were revolutionary in their time by defining God apart from nature, and in highlighting the exalted role assigned to the man and the woman.

# Thoughts from Dr. Hayes chapter on creation . . .

*Enuma Elish* was the great national epic of Babylon, recited during the all-important New Year Festival.

the worldview expressed in *Enuma Elish* might be described this way. **First the gods are amoral and limited.** They emerge from an indifferent primal realm (water) that is the source of all being and ultimate power. The gods age, mature, fight, and harm one another, and die. They are not wholly good, and they are not wholly evil. Their will is not absolute. **Second, humans are unimportant menials.** They are the slaves of the gods, who have little reciprocal interest in or concern for them. . . . **Third, the world is morally neutral,** which means that for humans it can be a difficult and hostile place. One's best bet is to serve the god of the day as best one can so as to earn his favor, but even that god has limited powers and abilities and may turn on his devotees if he so desires. (Hayes 33).

- The Divine: God is supreme and unlimited.
- Humans
- The World



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- **The Divine:** God is supreme and unlimited.
- **Humans:** Humans are created in the divine image. This implies that human life is unique, sacred, & deserving of special care & protection. Humans are not the menials of the gods. In fact, Genesis expresses the antithesis of this idea: It is the creator who cares for his creatures. The creator's first communication is concern for the physical needs of his creatures as well as their continued growth & welfare. . . . They are creatures of majesty & dignity, of central importance and value to the gods
- **The World**

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- **The Divine:** God is supreme and unlimited.
- **Humans:** Humans are created in the divine image . . . . They are creatures of majesty & dignity, of central importance and value to the gods
- **The World:** Genesis 1 creates in its reader a tremendous rush of optimism. The world is good; humans are important; they have purpose and dignity. The biblical writers reject the concept of an inherent primordial evil, a concept found in the literature of the ancient Near East. . . . In Genesis, creation is not the result of a struggle between antagonists. The biblical god imposes order or cosmos on the demythologized and inert elements of chaos.

# What do we learn about why God created the Earth?



Where do we receive our best answers to this question?

**Moses 1:39 For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. . . . And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son (1:6).**



***Our purpose: To discover truth & align ourselves with it. And help as many others as we can.***

**Abraham 3:22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; 23 And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.**

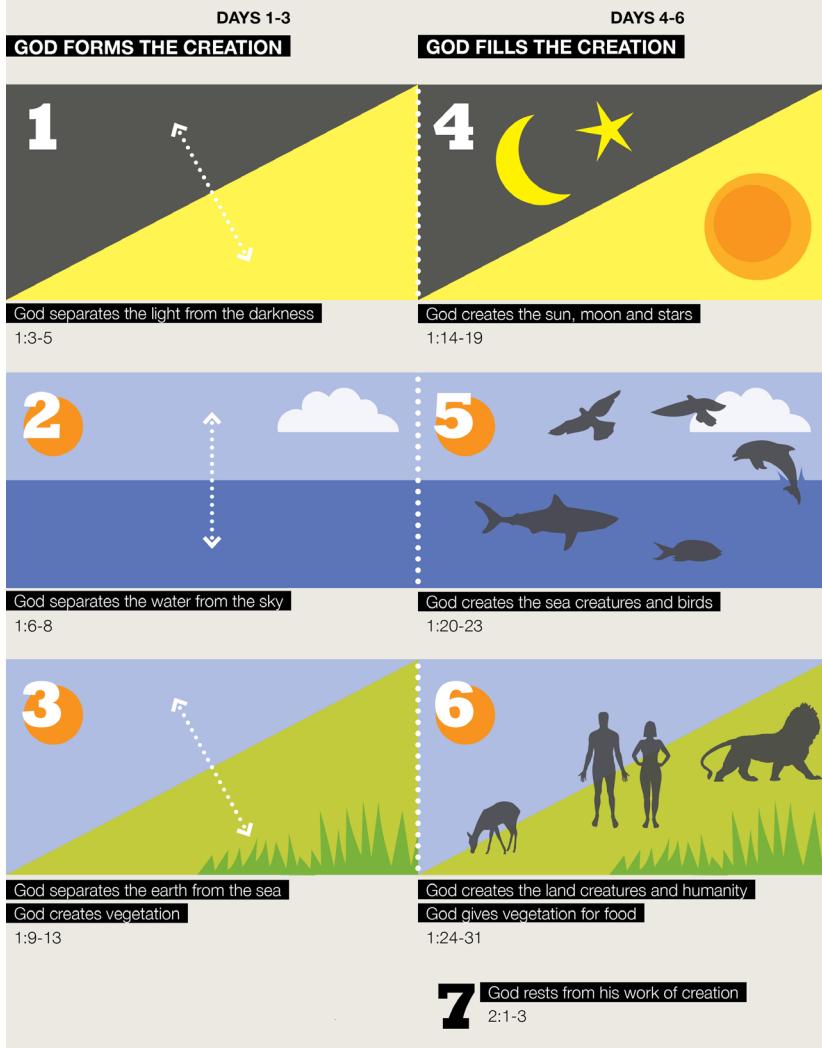
**24 And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;**

**25 And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;**

**26 And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.**

# CREATION GENESIS 1-2

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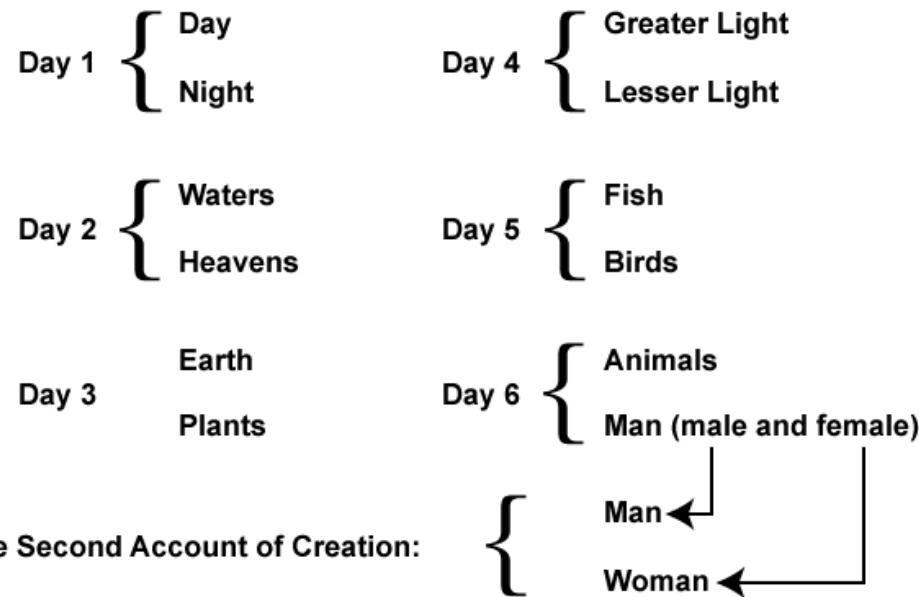


**God is a highly organized, powerful creator.**

He says: It is so, it is good.

The world is completely responsive to his commands.

## The First Account of Creation:



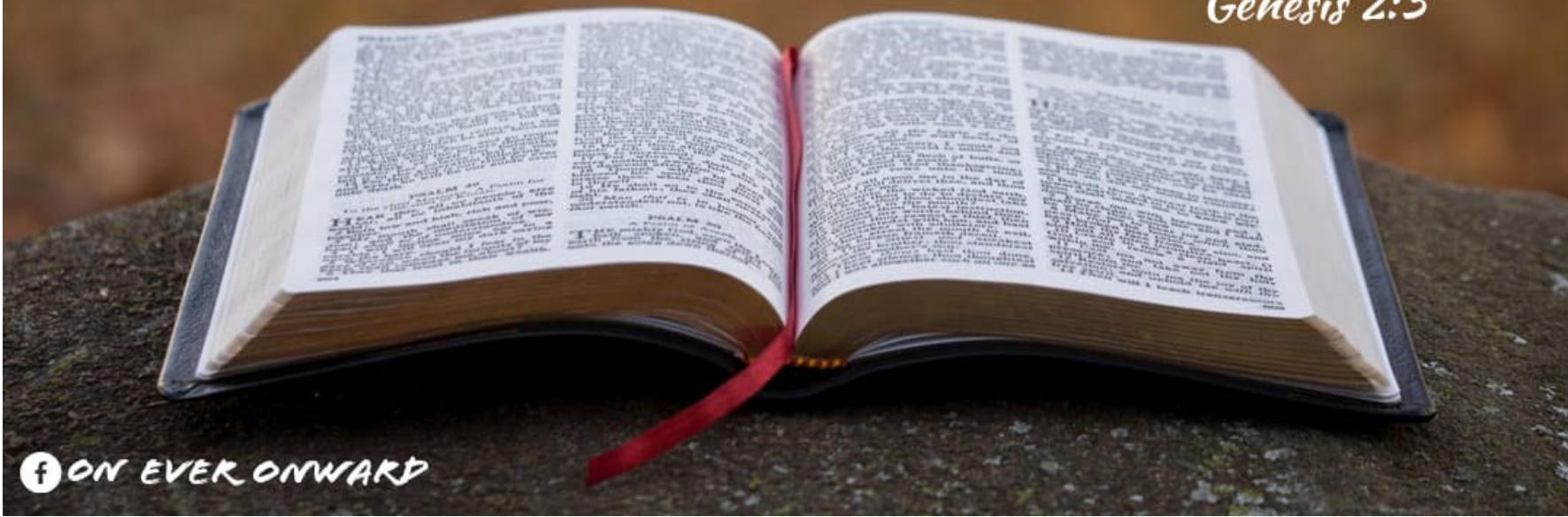
\*The opposite of structure is chaos, and it is thus appropriate that Genesis 1:1-2 describes primeval chaos—a world that is unformed and void, containing darkness and a mysterious wind.

*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

# Happy Sabbath

*Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on  
it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.*

*Genesis 2:3*



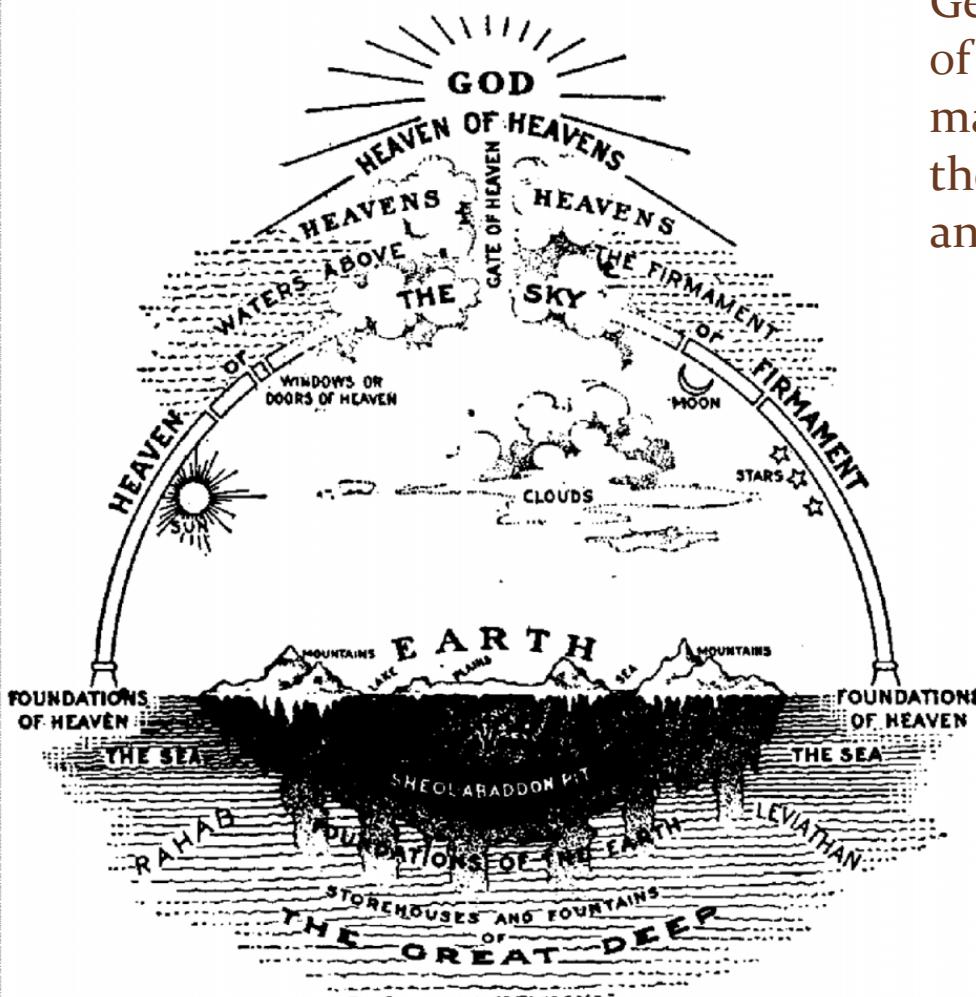
# Importance of Taking the Sacrament

- “No man goes away from this Church and becomes an apostate in a week, nor in a month. It is a slow process. The one thing that would make for the safety of every man and woman would be to appear at the sacrament table every Sabbath day. We would not get very far away in one week—not so far away that, by the process of self-investigation, we could not rectify the wrongs we have done...The road to the sacrament table is the path of safety for the Latter-day Saints.”
- “Through the ordinance of the sacrament we renew our baptismal covenant and can receive and retain a remission of our sins (see Mosiah 4:12, 26). In addition, we are reminded on a weekly basis of the promise that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. **As we then strive to keep ourselves clean and unspotted from the world, we become worthy vessels in whom the Spirit of the Lord can always dwell”** (Elder Bednar, Ensign, May 2006, 31).

—Elder Melvin J. Ballard, *Improvement Era*, October 1919, p. 1028.

\*If you are a Church member who attends meetings regularly, and if you live a normal life span, you will probably renew the sacrament covenant more than 3,000 times before you die.





**THE ANCIENT HEBREW CONCEPTION  
OF THE UNIVERSE**

TO ILLUSTRATE THE ACCOUNT OF CREATION AND THE FLOOD

Genesis 1:6-8 And God said, Let there be a **firmament** in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the **firmament**, and divided the waters which were under the **firmament** from the waters which were above the **firmament**: and it was so. And God called the **firmament** Heaven.

In ancient Near Eastern cosmology, which was shared generally among the Israelites, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Hittites, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Egyptians, pretty much everyone we have texts from, tells us that this is what the ancient Middle Eastern people believed about the cosmology. You had a flat earth with a solid dome above it. There were waters above and below that. And this was their conception of the universe. The firmament literally referred to that solid dome, which restrained the cosmic waters. That's kind of an inverse snow-globe model; instead of this flat thing with the dome to keep the water in, God makes space within the watery cosmos, space for humans to live. So the inside of the dome has air and the outside is all cosmic waters.

## What the creation accounts may teach us about revelation:

We should conceptualize revelation as a mediated human-divine composite process that incorporates human knowledge and assumptions of a particular time-period and culture and time and place. Simply put—we need to understand revelation as a human-divine collaboration.

Why?

*2 Nephi 31:3 For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding.*



# How can texts be divinely inspired and bear the marks of the time and place in which they were written?

- How are the human features of Scripture (language, characteristic forms of discourse, imagery, and so forth) related to the divine aspects (to the claim that it is divinely inspired)? Do you see these two things as being mutually exclusive or as working hand in hand with each other? Why?

*D&C 1:24 “these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding”*

As the Lord has spoken to prophets in many different times and places, and in many different languages, He has understood the need to adapt how He communicates to suit their needs. This applies not only to their verbal language, education level, or mode of expression, but also historical circumstances and cultural background. “Each prophet was a product of his own culture, and the manner in which the divine was manifested to the prophets was largely defined by ... their culture.”<sup>13</sup>

To ancient Israelite prophets, revelation came in ways consistent with “a shared cultural language among neighboring ancient Near Eastern cultures.”<sup>14</sup> Early Book of Mormon prophets shared in this cultural language, and received similar visions. As Book of Mormon peoples adapted to their New World environment, the Lord adapted His manner of communication to their new cultural understanding.

When the Lord called a prophet again in the 19th century, He once again spoke to him “in [his] weakness, after the manner of [his] language, that [he] might come to understanding” (*Doctrine and Covenants 1:24*). This does not just apply to the sometimes rough and ungrammatical language in the early revelations came in. It shaped everything about how God communicated with Joseph Smith, from the kind of visions he had, to his use of a seer stone, to the theological vocabulary in his revelations.

Prophets today no longer use seer stones, but that doesn’t mean they don’t continue to receive revelation. While still an Apostle, Elder Spencer W. Kimball taught members in Germany, “Always expecting the spectacular, many will miss entirely the constant flow of revealed communication.” Modern Latter-day Saints believe in continuing revelation, collectively and individually, and cultural context continues to influence the manner in which divine manifestations are received by individuals entrenched within the various cultures that comprise the worldwide church.

Moses 2:1 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I reveal unto you concerning this heaven, and this earth; write the words which I speak. I am the Beginning and the End, the Almighty God; by mine Only Begotten I created these things; yea, in the beginning I created the heaven, and the earth upon which thou standest.



# Major difference in the Moses account vs the Genesis account

## “And I, God, said:” vs “God said”

3 And I, God, said: Let there be light; and there was light.

4 And I, God, saw the light; and that light was good. And I, God, divided the light from the darkness.

5 And I, God, called the light Day; and the darkness, I called Night; and **this I did by the word of my power**, and it was done as I spake; and the evening and the morning were the first day.

\*John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

What is the impact of the first-hand account?

Genesis 1:26 **And God said**, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Moses 2:26 **And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning:** Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; **and it was so.** **And I, God, said:** Let them have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 **And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him;** male and female created I them. 28 **And I, God, blessed them, and said unto them:** Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Abraham 4:26 **And the Gods took counsel among themselves and said:** Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness; and we will give them dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 **So the Gods went down** to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them. 28 **And the Gods said:** We will bless them. And the Gods said: We will cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Abraham 4:1 And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.

The natural antecedent of the Gods described here is

Abraham 3:22-24 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; **and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;** And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born. And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;



How does it change the creation narrative to think about it as the Nobel and Great ones involved in creating the earth rather than Heavenly Father or perhaps Heavenly Father and Jesus creating the earth?

# Creation Accounts

- Seeming doublet in 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–25, sometimes complementary, often contradictory
  - Exposition: Moses 3:5 is a way to understand the two accounts working together in a more cohesive manner. Possible that all were together at one point and then different groups preserving different parts and then eventually they are brought back together but missing parts???
  - Exegesis: Taken by themselves, *Genesis 1–2 show signs of the same story used to emphasize different points* (or Moses' original may have been misunderstood and subsequently used in two new ways)
- First Account (1:1–2:4a): uses the generic name *Elohim* (God); stresses priestly themes such as order, repetition, division, and the Sabbath
  - *Represents P's reworking of the original material?*
- Second Account (2:4b–25): uses the name *YHWH* (but paired with *Elohim* for “LORD God”); focuses on humanity, beginnings of relationships/society, morality/sin
  - *Represents J?* (perhaps with R trying to smooth over the differences by using both divine titles)

# Genesis 1 VS Genesis 2-3

## Priestly Traditions (1:1-2:3)

## Yahwist Tradition (2:4-3:24)

The style is different. The first account is formally structured and somewhat abstract, the second is less repetitious, is more dramatic and spontaneous, and employs frequent plays on words.

- “*the heavens and the earth*” vs “*the earth and the heavens*”
- “*male and female*” vs “*the man and his wife*”
- “*To create*” vs “*to make*” and “*to form*”
- *God as Elohim* vs *God as the LORD in lieu of Yahweh*

Genesis 1 God is remote, even transcendent, and he creates effortlessly, by his word alone.

Genesis 2 God is described in vividly anthropomorphic language, as if he were human. He is depicted as a potter who shapes the first human (Gen 2:7), he plants a garden in Eden (Gen 2:8), he takes a walk in the late afternoon (Gen 3:8), he makes clothes for the man and his wife (Gen 3:21)

**Major Themes of Creation narrative:** divinely established order of the cosmos, the observance of the Sabbath, the importance of strict obedience to divine commands, and the experience of exile.

# The Second Account of Creation in Genesis (2:4b–25)

- Man created from the dust (2:4b–7)
  - Wordplay: “And the LORD God **formed man** [adam] **of the dust of the ground** [adamah].” (Genesis 2:7)
- Garden prepared (2:8–17)
  - A place where man can be with God, **rivers of life-giving water** flow out of it, it is the site of **the Tree of Life** (a feminine image of life and fertility in the ancient Near East)
  - Tree of knowledge of good and evil: 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.
    - Exposition: the Book of Mormon teaches that “death” is as much spiritual death or *separation from God*
- The search for a companion (2:18–20)
  - *Adam names the animals*
- Woman, a fitting companion, created (2:21–25)
  - Adam names her “Woman” ('ishah) and renames himself Man ('ish)
    - Exposition “The story of the rib, of course, is figurative.” (Spencer W. Kimball, “The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood,” *Ensign* (March 1976, 71).

# Genesis 1 vs Genesis 2-3

## Priestly Traditions (1:1-2:3)

- <sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”
- <sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
- <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

**Does it matter if man and woman were created at the same time or if man was created first?**

## Yahwist Tradition (2:4-3:24)

- But for Adam no suitable helper was found. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.
- <sup>23</sup> The man said,
- “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.”
- <sup>24</sup> That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.