

Stories of Creation



“We all share the same atoms and the same molecules. We’re all kin, we’re all interdependent – and that’s the basis of compassion, which was Jesus’ ultimate teaching.”

– Matthew Fox, *Living the Questions*

1st break:

The Bible’s stories of creation can’t possibly be God’s stories of creation. Explain.

2nd break:

How is Genesis 1 really an example of ancient theological propaganda?

What are some of the defining characteristics of the two stories?

What do the stories say about partnerships between creation, human beings, the Creator, etc.?

3rd break:

Why is it important to know that there are two different stories of creation in Genesis?

How does understanding myth as “living” or “dead” help you in reading these stories?

Nelson suggests that the story of the “forbidden fruit” is not about disobedience, but a failure to accept responsibility for one’s own actions. Explain.

What’s a more motivating factor in your spiritual life: the power of love or the fear of punishment for sin and guilt?

4th break:

What are some of the purposes of creation stories in general?

Rossing suggests that the false conflict between creation and evolution is distracting us from what we should really be spending our energies on. Explain.

What are some of the ways an awareness of the Divine in creation can contribute and not conflict with efforts to preserve our environment?

General Reflection:

What do you find most helpful or interesting from the material so far?

What are the implications for your personal spiritual journey? For Christianity as a whole?

Words of Wisdom

As you can see below, one of the most obvious differences between the two creation stories in Genesis is the order of events. The differing order excludes the possibilities of their a) describing the same events from different perspectives or b) their being sequential. They are simply different stories from different sources that were both important enough to the Jewish sense of identity to be included in Genesis.

Creation 1 (Priestly Source)

(from wet to dry)

Stage 1: light

**Stage 2: firmament separated
from water**

Stage 3: land

Stage 4: inhabitants of firmament

Stage 5: inhabitants of sea & air

Stage 6: inhabitants of earth

Stage 7: God rests

Creation 2 (Yahwist)

(from dry to wet)

Stage 1: a mist goes up

**Stage 2: farmer “ha adam”
created**

Stage 3: garden created

Stage 4: the one commandment

Stage 5: critters all created

Stage 6: woman created

Stage 7: everybody out!

For many, not seeing that these are two separate stories is simply a matter of having not read the stories since childhood Sunday School. Yet in some circles, belief in a literal seven-day Creation has become a litmus test for being a “true” Christian. The richness of the individual stories is lost if one tries to synthesize them or make their two divergent story lines consecutive.

Read Genesis 1 & 2, taking note of the different order of events, vocabulary, tone, and characters in each.

Bonus Reading for Potential “Jeopardy” Contestants:

Jewish folklore suggests that God created a woman who was brought before Adam like the other creatures. However, there was conflict between Adam and his “first wife.” In some stories, Adam didn’t even acknowledge her with a name, let alone calling her “mate.” In others (*Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 23a-b), she was created from the dirt as Adam’s equal and refused to be dominated by him. Either way, she was cast out of the garden. The tradition gave her the name Lilith and she eventually became the manifestation of the expression of “Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned...” She was portrayed as a she-demon, as the jealous queen of the underworld, and was said to be responsible for S.I.D.S., men straying from their wives, and any other circumstance that brought grief to families. In some traditions, she became identified as Satan’s lover and mother to demons.

Lilith fans: As Lilith was created independently from man and had to make her own way in the world, she became the heroine of choice not only of the feminist movement of the 1960s but as the namesake of the music tour of women rockers

in the 1990s, “The Lilith Fair.” An independent Jewish women’s magazine, “Lilith,” has been published since 1976. See www.lilithmag.com

TV Trivia: Keeping in mind that no self-respecting Jewish family would name their daughter Lilith (it would be like Christians naming their son “Lucifer”), the writers of “Cheers” had character Frasier Crane married to a Jewish woman named Lilith. Frasier being married to the queen of the underworld is an inside joke to those familiar with Jewish folklore that is totally lost on most Goyim (Gentiles).

Spirit Practice

Tending a garden is just one way to be in touch with a deeper appreciation of creation. Choose one or more of the following this week:

- Spend time in a garden with someone who can rarely get outside.
- Help someone begin composting or recycling.
- Contemplate how you perpetuate a hierarchical approach to life and work? How does that alter your view of each part of creation?
- How might a collaborative approach change your view?
- Consider other ways that might be helpful in appreciating creation.

Try it

Use the words to “Creations’s Dance” as a conversation starter in a discussion group or use it as a hymn or song in a creation-themed worship service or camp.

Creation’s Dance by Cynthia Langston Kirk
[can be sung to: Terra Beata: This is My Father’s World]

Lakes, rivers clap and sing, the rocks shout out their praise
All nature joins creation’s song, eternal gratitude
From Eden’s paradise, the Tree burst forth as spring
Wisdom, the flow’r, can teach and guide, the way to live rev’reently

In relationship we’re formed, for relationship we’re made
Dancing together creation’s tune, within the circle of love
In holy image made, shaped and blessed as God’s beloved
Precious the ties that bind us all, the Breath of Life divine.

These questions come your way about living Genesis
Do you believe that each soul’s depraved or witness all life as bless’d?
Do you perpetuate hierarchy’s use of power
Or do you welcome each one, each gift, the bold expressions of God?