

A STUDY ON THE GENESIS MYTH

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Introduction

The book of Genesis chronicles the creation of the world—the universe and the earth. It reveals the plan within God's heart to have a people of his very own, set apart to worship him. Moses is credited to be the author the book of Genesis. It is said to have been written between 1450 B.C. and 1410 B.C.

Genesis is the book of beginnings. The word means "origins" or "beginnings." It sets the stage for the rest of the Bible, telling us God's plan for his creation. Genesis reveals the nature of God as Creator and Redeemer; the value of a human life - created in God's image and for his purpose; the terrible consequences of disobedience and sin - separating man from God; and the wonderful promise of salvation and forgiveness through the coming Messiah.

Key Characters in the Book of Genesis are Adam and Eve , Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob, Joseph.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Outline of the Book of Genesis

- Creation - Genesis 1:1-2:3
- Adam and Eve's Story - Genesis 2:4-5:32
- Noah's Story - Genesis 6:1-11:32
- Abraham's Story - Genesis 12:1-25:18
- Isaac's Story - Genesis 25:19-28:9
- Jacob's Story - Genesis 28:10-36:43
- Joseph's Story - Genesis 37:1-50:26

Genesis Myth

"I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

This is first in the Christian creed.

It is very simple: the Christian knows God as Creator and, therefore the truth about the origin of the world and himself by faith -- by faith only. Implied is that this knowledge of God as Creator is derived from Scripture, especially from the outstanding revelation of God as Creator in Genesis 1 and 2. For faith looks to, and is informed by, the inspired Word of God.

The foundation of the whole of Scripture and, therefore, also of all that the whole Scripture teaches is a myth, the Christian church is being told today, by her own ministers, theologians, and scholars. A myth is a story that explains an important aspect of human life and experience. Often the story is of a theological, spiritual, and religious nature. But a myth is a story that never happened. The storyteller casts the myth in the form of events, events that occurred on earth among men. Usually these events involved the gods and their relationships with men and women. But these mythical events have no reality in actual fact; they are unhistorical. If read or listened to for entertainment, the myth is fictitious. If taught as the factual explanation of a certain aspect of human life, the myth is a lie.

Many Reformed people in North America learned that Genesis 1 - 11 is regarded as a myth, in reputable and influential Reformed circles, with the publication of the book, *The Fourth Day*, in 1986. Since the author

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of the book was then a professor at Calvin College, the book and resulting controversy brought to light that the view of Genesis 1 - 11 as myth is held, taught, and tolerated at Calvin College.

Four years later, in 1990, a similar work came out of Calvin College. This was titled, *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation*. In a chapter entitled, "What Says the Scripture?" John H. Stek, at that time a professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, boldly asserted that Genesis 1 draws on heathen, Egyptian myths; is non-historical; is a "metaphorical narration"; and is, in short, a "storied rather than a historiographical account of creation."

A third installment of Calvin College's ongoing denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-11 followed in 1995. In his book, *The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence*, professor of geology Davis A. Young rejected the historicity of the account of the flood in Genesis 6-9. On the basis mainly of geology. Young declared that "there is no evidence whatsoever to indicate that human or animal populations were ever disrupted by a catastrophic global flood." The account of the flood in Genesis is Scripture's exaggerated-enormously exaggerated--description of some local flood or other once upon a time in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers: "The flood account uses hyperbolic language to describe an event that devastated or disrupted Mesopotamian civilization--that is to say, the whole world of the Semites."

But it would be a mistake to suppose that the mythologizing of Genesis 1 - 11 goes on only at the college of Howard Van Till and Davis Young and at the seminary of John Stek. It goes on almost everywhere in evangelical, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches. Rare is the church, seminary, or college where it is not found and tolerated, if not approved. Among the theologians, scholars, and teachers, it is the prevailing view. This means that in a very short time it will be the prevailing view of the people, if it is not already.

However, the framework hypothesis denies that Genesis 1:1-2:3 makes known what actually took place in the beginning. Rather, the very human, but inspired author told a story whose point is that God created the world in some unknown way and over the span of unknown time. (In fact, the defenders of the framework hypothesis will be found holding that God created the world exactly as evolutionary science decrees: by evolutionary process over billions of years.) The storyteller of Genesis, so runs the hypothesis, hung his story on the framework (utterly fictitious!) of six days of creation and one day of rest. There is nothing factual about the days with their evening and morning, including the seventh day: nothing factual about the order of the days; nothing factual about the individual acts of creation on each day, or about any of the details whatsoever. Presumably, the unreality of the passage would extend also to God's trinitarian conversation within Himself before the creation of man in Genesis 1:26. This is how one of the leading proponents of the theory, who also did much to popularize it among conservative Reformed people both in the Netherlands and in North America, described it.

In Genesis, the inspired author offers us a story of creation. It is not his intent, however, to present an exact report of what happened at creation. By speaking of the eightfold work of God he impresses the reader with the fact that all that exists has been created by God. This eightfold work he places in a framework: he distributes it over six days, to which he adds a seventh day as the day of rest. In this manner he gives expression to the fact that the work of creation is complete; also that at the conclusion of His work God can rest, take delight in the result; and also ... that in celebrating the Sabbath man must be God's imitator. The manner in which the works of creation have been distributed over six days is not arbitrary.