

Are there two Creation stories in Genesis?

Abstract: People claim that there are two separate creation stories in Genesis and that they contradict each other. This article attempts to show that there is really only one story about creation and while there is a second story, it is about the making of the Garden of Eden, and it's not an incorrect retelling of the creation story.

The story

We start with Genesis 1&2 and the creation story. Using the New King James Version.

Genesis 1

The Creation

⁽¹⁾ ¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was ⁽¹⁾ on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

⁶ Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." ⁷ Thus 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. ⁸ And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.

⁹ Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. ¹⁰ And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. ¹² And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ So the evening and the morning were the third day.

¹⁴ Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; ¹⁵ and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. ¹⁶ Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the

day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.
¹⁷God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth,¹⁸ and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.¹⁹ So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.
²⁰Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens."²¹ So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.²² And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds¹ multiply on the earth."²³ So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.
²⁴Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so.²⁵ And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.
²⁶Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
²⁹And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.³⁰ Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so.³¹ Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

¹ Note a very interesting fact. Evolutionary Theory claims the following sequence: Plants->Sea Creature/Reptiles->**Mammals/Land animals**->**Birds**.

However the Bible claims the following sequence:

Plants->Sea Creatures/Reptiles-> **Birds**->**Mammals/Land Animals**

Note the Mammals and Birds are swapped. Birds came last according to evolution.

I bet in the years to come that Evolutionary Theory will line up with the Biblical order and Birds will come after reptiles.

Genesis Chapter 2

The Garden of Eden

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. ² And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

^{4a} This is the history[generations] of the heavens and the earth when they were created,

So far, we have the first and only creation story. Note that it includes the creation of Eve, (presumably on Day 6², but it talks about Eve only in summary. The actual details of Eve's creation however will be presented in much detail later.

Look at the last line: *This is the history[generations] of the heavens and the earth when they were created.*

The “this” in that line is talking about the preceding narrative not what is to come. In other words it is really like saying: “Once upon a time there was a frog... (Then the story is told and finished...). Then they all lived happily ever after. And **this** is the story of the frog prince.” Nobody imagines that the story of the frog prince is *yet* to come. It was already told earlier in this self same narrative. So too in verse 4a, the author of Genesis is saying in essence: This, which you just heard, is the account of the heavens and the earth. This sort of language is not unusual for the Bible.

I also believe the people who made the verse separations (centuries after the Bible was written) made a mistake in how they partitioned this particular verse (and a few others) because by not partitioning them at this point they made people assume that both sentences relate to the same narrative. I've separated it as 4a and 4b. Remember we believe that the contents of the Bible are inspired, but the verse separations (and the translations) are not inspired.

So now in the passage Moses is going to tell us about the Garden of Eden, but just before he does that he wants to clarify something. This clarification is a little tidbit of information about how there was no rain and how the vegetation was irrigated. Because after this Moses is going to talk about a “garden” that was different from the rest of the earth.

The Garden of Eden

4b. in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,—

² Both the Garden of Eden and Eve were created on day 6 and this is just clarification of the detail of Day 6. I think this is the most likely case because on Day 7 God rested.

Note the way this sentence indicates that it's a return to the old story and an addition of detail to that story. Note also that the word "day" obviously doesn't imply a single day³ but really means "the days when God created the earth and the heavens". Similar to how one could say something like: In that day no man observed the laws of God but each did what they felt like. Thus indicating a period of time not a single day. So

4b In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, 5 before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; 6 but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

Notice a new sort of vegetation classification: *plant of the field and herb of the field*. We have not seen this type of vegetation before, up until now the "earth" brought forth grass and herbs but they were wild⁴. So the "field" here is not relating to some random expanse of land. It is talking about farms or gardens, things that need both cultivation by man and irrigation that is separate from the rain. Basically Moses is telling us here that no cultivated crops existed. No "Shrub of the field and plant of the field" i.e. no shrub (think tomato) of the farm or plant (think wheat) of the farm existed, but random undomesticated plants grew around where there were natural streams of irrigation. Note this passage is not telling us that God is creating this but is reminding us that these had not YET been created till now. Note too that work before the fall of man was enjoyable and pleasant to do. What the fall brought is weeds and thorns and drought and perhaps unfertile and hard ground and so on.

7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being..

Remember again this is all still part of the "background narrative", that is, part of the "in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,—".

So verse 7 is just putting us in perspective. Moses is telling us: Oh, after God created Adam, (and implied is: and before He created Eve... because later on he tells us about Eve being created) there were no cultivated or domesticated plants....

Now comes the actual story about the making of the Garden of Eden and of plants of the field.

³ How can we claim this? Simply because the Bible just narrated how the heavens and the earth were created over many days. Also I think there is good indication that the "day" used in the narrative for the 6 days do not need to be literal days as well. After all on day 7, God rested. The question then is: Is He still resting? If He is then Day 7 is a lot longer than 1 day. Or do you imagine that God rested 1 day and then got back to work?

⁴ Actually it is also possible that that this vegetation existed but was not domesticated.

⁸ *The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.*

So now we note that this is NOT a new creation story at all. Moses is specifically talking about the Garden ONLY. Obviously the “earth” could not be a “Garden eastward in Eden.” (How can you go east of the earth? The “east” refers to a part of the earth and obviously if it’s a part of the earth, it is not the whole earth). So again obviously this narrative about to be made is **not** going to be talking about the entire earth. It’s talking about a specific garden in the east and this garden could have been planted anytime (but it is most probably after the creation of man, since the indication seems that man had already been formed when the garden was planted).

The rest of this narrative then tells us either what God did at the time he planted the garden in the east⁵.

⁹ *And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

These are obviously new trees, different from the ones mentioned (it is immaterial if they were the same species or not, they are new instances of trees). It would be foolish and illogical to even suggest that this is a retelling of the creation of the vegetation that happened on “day 3” in Chapter 1 verse 11. Moreover in day 3 there was no mention of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And we also see that he mentions trees that are pleasant to the sight and good for food.

Back to the narrative now:

¹⁰ *Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.*

¹¹ *The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.*

¹² *And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there.*

¹³ *The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush.*

¹⁴ *The name of the third river is Hiddekel;^[2] it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.*

Again as we see this is not a new creation story. This is just simple detail about the Garden of Eden and how it was irrigated and where it was geographically. Obviously this doesn’t apply to the entire earth, unless we imagine that Assyria covered the earth.

⁵ Or it could indicate that he did it a bit later, either case is acceptable and immaterial to our current topic

¹⁵Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

As you can see the man was already alive at this point, meaning he was already created. More evidence that this story is about a new garden and not of the creation of the earth or of man or of everything else.

¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

¹⁸And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

*¹⁹Out of the ground the LORD **God formed** every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.*

Note that in the NIV in vs. 19 it says that the LORD God *HAD* formed every beast. But in the NASB and KJV the word HAD is missing.

*¹⁹ Now the LORD **God had formed** out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. (NIV)*

If the word HAD is correctly translated then this indicates that God took animals from the rest of the earth and brought them before Adam. But what if the word HAD is not correctly translated, well rather than argue for the word HAD, we can easily see that this simply implies that God formed **more** beasts of the field and the air (probably because the original ones roaming the rest of the earth would not have had enough time to procreate in the last few days). Or it could also mean that the beasts of the field were different from the beasts of the wild e.g. goats, sheep, rabbits, etc.

^{19b} He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

Now comes the detail about the creation of Eve.

²¹And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its

place.²² Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

²³ And Adam said:

*"This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."*

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

²⁵ And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Conclusion:

As you can see there aren't two creation stories in Genesis. There is one creation story of the earth and one story about the new Garden of Eden and the creation of Eve.

Here's how it is in summary.

The summary of the Creation (The MMPV Mammen Mutilated Paraphrased Version)

The Creation

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. He then created the lights in the sky, etc. Then he created the fish, the birds and the animals and finally he created man. Then on the 7th day He rested. And this is the story of creation.

A brief explanation about plants of the field

By the way, in the days when God created man, there was no plants and herbs of the field because there was no rain to irrigate it and there was nobody to till the ground for these plants and herbs of the field. God then created Man.

God creates the Garden

God then created the Garden of Eden in the East for Adam and he put him there. And in that Garden out of the ground God made every tree grow that was pleasant to look at and that could be eaten. The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was also there in the middle of the garden of Eden. There were 4 rivers that flowed here.

God then asked Adam to take care of it. And it was fun to take care of, i.e. the work was rewarding and gave Adam great joy.

God told Adam he couldn't eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Then God said it's not good for Man to be alone, so he created some new animals (or brought the ones he HAD created) to Adam.

Eve is created

But Adam could not find anything compatible among the animals, thus teaching him a lesson, then once Adam realized this, God made Eve out of Adam's body. And Adam thought she was hot and leapt for joy.

As you can see it makes perfect sense and is quite coherent and nothing has had to be force fit to make sense and nothing contradicts each other.

Also I think it's rather ethnocentric and racist for people to claim that there are two stories of creation right next to each other in Genesis that contradict each other. Are we claiming that the early Israelis were dolts or idiots and couldn't see or couldn't realize that a contradiction in the "word" of God rendered it erroneous? And it took you, you sole intelligent amazing skeptic to realize the contradiction that had been hidden there for the last 10,000 years?

Note that there is also one interesting thing to consider: In Chapter 1 verse 27 the Bible says:

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

I would almost tend to think that this could be still talking about Adam ALONE. In otherwords when God first created Adam, Adam had both the male and female pieces within him, God then separated them when Eve was created. And man is thus reunited in marriage when the "two shall become one." But that is just speculation and not critical to the conclusion.

San Jose, CA

Originally argued in 1982 in response to an atheist.

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