

GROWING Together

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THE WONDERS OF CREATION

A sphere amid the galaxies: this is our home, our world, part of God's universe. The Bible has many descriptions of God's creative activity. In reading them we learn how people in various times, from the ancient Hebrews to the early Christians, have understood the mystery and the wonder of our sphere.

The Earliest Story

Around the camp fires the ancient Hebrews share their stories. Almost 900 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, one story tells of a barren, waterless desert and God's gift of water out of which springs life. From the dust of the ground God forms a figure into which is breathed the breath of life. In the second chapter of the book called Genesis—beginnings—this creature becomes "a living soul" for whom God plants a beautiful garden. The creature has animals for companions but no equal and so the God of Understanding creates a partner.

A Later Story

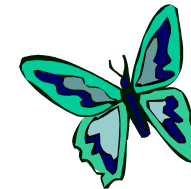
Some 400 years later the people of Judah returned from exile in Babylon. They wrote a great hymn (Genesis 1) for the seven day festival honouring both their earthly monarch and the almighty King of Heaven. The hymn tells this story. Over the face of the dark, watery deep comes the Spirit of the Creator-God, bringing divine light to pierce the darkness. Heaven and earth are separated by a great dome which we call "sky" and the waters on earth are gathered so that dry land and vegetation appear. The Creator places the sun so that its rays can reflect the light of God's presence during the day. The terrors of night-time darkness are tempered by the gentle light of the moon. The seas fill with living organisms; animals and birds share the earth. Finally, men and women come into being, formed in God's own image. "And God sees everything that is made and it is very good."

The Poets, Prophets and Apostles

Writing throughout many generations, the poets of Israel give us beautiful pictures of creation. "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have established ... what are humans that you are mindful of them." (Psalm 8) A magnificent description of creation is God's reply to the questioning Job. "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth ... when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38-41)

The gospel of John begins with the awesome wonder of creation and Christ's part in that mystery: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being through him was life, and the life was the light of all people... The Word became flesh and lived among us." (John 1) The apostle Paul also grasped this mystery, telling the Christians in Colossae that which lies at the heart of our faith – Christ is the image of the invisible God "for in him all things were created." (Colossians 1)

What is the mystery and wonder of creation for us today? We have seen earth from a spacecraft. Astronomers look into a universe they now calculate to be over 13 billion years old. Biologists look through microscopes to see life our ancestors could not even imagine. DNA, stem cells and dark matter add to our appreciation of God's creativity. Far from threatening our Christian faith, today's discoveries increase our wonder. How would we tell the story of creation today?



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