

# What do we believe about ... Creation?

**Creation**  
Genesis 1  
belief gracious  
universe humans  
ancient myth nature  
garden scientific  
the world growth  
progression redemption act  
peace biblical  
plants love earth  
story animals  
Day of Rest



# *What do we believe about* **Creation?**

## **How did things come to exist?**

Throughout the centuries, people have wondered why is there something rather than nothing? In our day, it is common to contrast belief in creation with what seem to be ‘scientific’ reasons why the universe came into being. Some dismiss the

‘why do these things exist?’

Christian belief that God created the universe because they believe it has been superseded by modern scientific knowledge. Others see the stories of creation in the Bible as ancient myths

that are still able to speak to us today. There is, then, a distinction that can be made between ‘how did things come to exist?’ and ‘why do these things exist?’ Science has little, if any interest in the second question. With the whole Christian Church, the United Reformed Church believes that the Bible offers many insights into answering it.

## **Creation accounts in the Bible**

The first story of creation in Genesis 1 may be one ancient creation myth among many others, but it is also quite distinct from them. The biblical account gives a sophisticated description of the process of creation out of nothing by a gracious and loving God.

This creation account establishes an order but also shows progression. The story reveals God’s freedom in creating everything and that God’s approval of what had been made.



There is reference to the Spirit of God hovering over the waters, revealing that God was overseeing everything while also, through the Spirit, being directly involved with the creation. God creates the world in such a way that it is fully created, yet also has opportunity for replenishment, rejuvenation, growth and development: 'the earth puts forth vegetation' and the plants and animals are 'to be fruitful and multiply'. The account ends with a Day of Rest which represents God's blessing of creation as well as anticipating God's redemption of it. Even in the act of creation, then, God directs everything towards peace and wholeness when it is properly orientated in worship. And rest is confirmed as important.

The second account of creation, found in Genesis 2, emphasizes the creation of human beings. The Lord forms human beings from the earth and then creates plants and animals and designs a garden where the humans live. Genesis 1 and 2 offer different

accounts of creation. Rather than recounting the opening moments of the universe, they reveal truth about the nature of God and the nature of humankind as well as the relationship between the Creator and the creation.

In the story of the representative first people found in Genesis 2, we learn that God is Creator and human beings are creatures, made from the earth therefore part of creation and utterly different from God. And yet, the two earth creatures,

‘they are also made  
in the image of God’  
(Genesis 1:26-27)

according to Genesis 1, they are also made in the image of God (vv.26-27). They are to use their intelligence and skill in ‘tilling and keeping’ the

world. However, an outside force of evil leads them to overstep the boundary of God’s generous provision, breaking their relationship with God, with each other, and so they are not able to become all God intended them to be, they will die. Nature is bound up in this disorder and decay. Yet there is also a hint that God continues to love human beings and the whole creation, and will renew and restore everything.

## The glory of creation

Yet the Christian belief in creation does not only come from the two creation stories in Genesis. There are other passages, such as Psalm 33, 104 and 139, which show that creation is a divine act, established once and for all. Job 38-41 reveals the absolute sovereignty of God over the created order. The Christian doctrine of creation comes from reading the Bible as a whole, which gives a Trinitarian view of God as Creator.



The understanding that creation occurred through the agency of God's Word (John 1) establishes that God and creation are distinct, but creation continues to depend on God to be sustained and maintained, while looking also to the completion of its purpose in the future.

The New Testament reveals that all things were created by Christ and are held together in him. Through the incarnate one, Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal God relates to time. This is important because creation is currently bound to time and therefore subject to decay and death. However, there is a promise that it will once again become what it was always intended to be. In the meantime, God continues to care for and



sustain creation through the Spirit, making real the redemption which Christ won and giving hope of renewal beyond its weaknesses. Indeed, Christ was raised from the dead as the first fruits of the redemption of creation (Romans 8).

‘Caring for creation, artistic endeavour, scientific research – all are gifts of the creator Spirit’

The fact that God chooses to be involved in the world in order to overcome evil, decay and death gives the Christian affirmation of

the world as it is now. Caring for creation, artistic endeavour, scientific research – all are gifts of the creator Spirit enabling human participation in God’s project of creation reaching toward its fulfilment and restoration in God.

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**This is one in a series of booklets about the United Reformed Church. The booklets can be read and downloaded at [www.urc.org.uk/believe](http://www.urc.org.uk/believe)**



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Produced by the Communications Team of the United Reformed Church on behalf of its Faith and Order Committee.

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