

Is the Genesis Story of Creation True?

Some people believe the creation story in Genesis is literally and historically true. They believe the universe was created only several thousand years ago, in six, 24-hour “days.” However, there is another way to read this story. The story of creation found in Genesis could be a literary form similar to the parables of Jesus.

What was the truth conveyed in the parables of Jesus? Was it the plot and storyline? For example, was the Prodigal Son a real person and was Jesus describing actual events? Was there really a Good Samaritan who actually helped a beaten Jew?

The plot of the parables does not have to be literally and historically true in order for them to teach us something very important. The truths that Jesus conveyed by means of parables are found within the fictional plot.

For example, God’s love for each of us is the same as the unconditional love of the father towards his Prodigal Son. Like the Good Samaritan, we are also called to proactively show our

love for all, even those who are not like us or who are alienated from us.

Similarly, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), Genesis presents God’s work of creation “symbolically” (CCC 337, 375, 390). Just like a parable, the plot does not have to be literally and historically accurate in order for this story to convey profound religious truths (see CCC 109-110, 295-301, 337-349). Several of these religious truths are:

- 1) God created all things from nothing and everything God created is good.
- 2) God made the universe in an orderly and sequential fashion over a period of time. First, there was light and energy (the “Big Bang”). Then, the stars, planets, seas and lands were created.
- 3) Life was created in an ever increasing complexity. First plants, then sea animals, and then land animals. Finally, human beings were created.
- 4) Each human being, and all human beings together, are the supreme culmination of God’s creation and are created in God’s own image and likeness.
- 5) The created order is subject to humans, but not absolutely so. Humans must protect its future for their descendants.
- 6) God gave all humans a free will. Humans, unlike animals, can rationally consider and consciously choose in their decisions.
- 7) Humans, however, are limited in their judgment and knowledge.

8) From the very beginning, human beings have misused their free will and have surrendered to selfishness and sinned.

9) Sin brought, and continues to bring, hardship and suffering into the world and into our lives. We are called to use our free will in accord with God’s Will.

None of these religious truths conflict with what science reveals about the origin of the universe and life on earth. However, science cannot teach us about the purpose and meaning of life. Only theology can do that.

Could the Bible, which deals primarily with religious truth, be necessary to complement and complete what astronomy, geology, physics, and biology tell us about our origins? Many people think so.

For as it says in the Gospel of John: “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... For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

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