

God (2)

“He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel.” Psalm 103:7 (NIV)

1. The Acts of God - Creation

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1)

Key issues:

- (i) The universe is finite, but God is infinite, above all (Ephesians 4:6)
- (ii) The universe had a beginning, but God is eternal.
 - He calls all things into existence, from non-existence (*ex nihilo*). Genesis 1, 2; Psalm 90:2; 102:25; Isaiah 40:26; Jeremiah 10:12; Amos 4:13; Matthew 19:4; John 1:3; Romans 1:25; 1 Corinthians 11:9; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11; 10:6
- (iii) There was no compelling force for God to create. He did it according to His will and purpose - Acts 17:24; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11; 10:6
 - for His pleasure - Revelation 4:11
 - to reflect His perfection and goodness - Genesis 1
 - to declare His righteousness - Psalm 50; 97
 - to reflect His glory - Psalm 8; 19:1; Ephesians 1 (Romans 1 shows us how man has refocused on the actual works of creation, rather than the Creator)
- (iv) The creation of man and woman was a special creative act. God made Adam the overseer of all things.
- (v) The Bible does not attempt to “prove” creation. It is not a book about science.

There are debates about whether, how and over what period of time God created. The teaching of the Bible is that He was/is the creator, the source of all life.

There is a separation between God and creation, however the Bible teaches that the creation is good, unlike dualism which teaches that God is good and the material universe is evil.

God’s hand is continually at work in the human story. He sustains the creation He made. The New Testament shows us that he did/does this through Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17; Acts 17:25

Concepts of Creation.

Proponents	Summary of Position
Creation myths	Numerous cultures have myths about the origin of the universe and the beginning of human history. A useful summary can be found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creation_myth

Atheism	<p>The universe is material, independent of the act of any being.</p> <p>"Nearly all peoples have developed their own creation myth, and the Genesis story is just the one that happened to have been adopted by one particular tribe of Middle Eastern herders. It has no more special status than the belief of a particular West African tribe that the world was created from the excrement of ants" (Atheist Richard Dawkins, <i>The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design</i>, 1986, p. 316).</p>
Plato	The cosmos is supremely beautiful and good. "God" arranged matter that had pre-existed from eternity.
Parsees (Zoroastrianists)	Dualism - the universe is an arena in which two incompatibles (good and evil) struggle for mastery. Originated in Persia.
Pantheism	God is one with the universe, which is a physical manifestation of his animating deity.
Panentheism	God is everything in the universe, but is greater than the universe.
Big Bang Theory	The universe originated billions of years ago from the explosion of a single mass of material that became condensed in the galaxies.
Nebular Hypothesis	The solar system began as a hot, rotating, gaseous spheroid that subsequently cooled and shrank.
Planetismal Hypothesis	The earth began when an exploding bold of gas, shooting from the sun, combined with a passing star.
Steady state theory	The universe has always existed. It has been steadily expanding, with hydrogen being created continuously.
Gnosticism	<p>Gnosticism was a form of dualism, which made a sharp distinction between the "good" spiritual world and the "evil" physical / material world. It flourished in the first centuries AD. It was characterized by its adherents believing in "gnosis" (lit. knowledge, or special knowledge of God), revealed to them so that they could attain salvation.</p> <p>Gnostics believed that a "good" God could not touch an "evil" world, so He sent Jesus, through a series of "emanations" less holy than Himself.</p>
Manichaeism	<p>Named after Mani ("Apostle of God", c. 216-276AD), who drew on Christian, Buddhist and Zoroastrian beliefs.</p> <p>The belief was dualistic; it saw the world as a struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, God and matter.</p>

The ancient Greeks focused on what exists and how (= mechanics, process); the Bible focuses on who created and why (= design, purpose).

When did Creation Occur?

Bishop James Ussher (1581-1656; Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland between 1625-1656) added up the known genealogies of the Bible and estimated the world was created around 23 October 4004 BC (*Annales veteris testamenti, a prima mundi origine deducti*, or *Annals of the Old Testament*, deduced from the first origins of the world", 1650).

The Bible neither makes nor supports such claims. Some of the genealogies are incomplete or overlap. Also, we do not know how long Adam and Eve lived in Eden before they sinned.

Remember, Genesis is not a complete history book *per se* (even though it catalogues real events). It does not draw chronologies together systematically.

Some beliefs in the debate:

Six 24 hour days	"The evening and the morning..."
Progressive Creative	A previous creation was destroyed (through judgment or a natural catastrophe). There is a <i>gap</i> between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. According to the Gap Theory, an unspecified period of time passed between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, during which God created a "pre-Adamic" race who lived on the earth until God destroyed them in judgment. There is no Biblical support for this theory.
Day-Age	"Days" in Genesis were actually "ages" during which God created.
Progressive Creationism	The days of Genesis 1 and 2 were moments, ages of indeterminate length.
Alternative Day Age	The days of Genesis were 24 hours, however they were separated by vast geological ages, during which God's initial commands were carried out.
Eden only	The Genesis accounts had nothing to do with the rest of the earth, but simply records what God did in one place.
Overlapping Ages	God is eternal; therefore time does not mean to him what it means to us. Days in Genesis are not time periods but creative acts. Under this approach emphasis is not on the actual order of events in Genesis.
Revelation Day	The days of Genesis refer to days in Moses' life, when God revealed his account of creation to Moses. Not to the length of time taken to finish creation.

2. The Ways of God - Additional Titles

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

The names and titles of God describe His ways. The following are in addition to those included in the previous set of notes. They go a long way to describing what God is like, in particular in relation to His people.

God's acts are there for all to see. For many Christians, the focus of their lives is what God can do for them. Their faith, church attendance and lifestyle are motivated by needs. Like the Children of Israel, they know only the acts of God. Our Heavenly Father wants us to press in beyond just His acts for us, to discover His ways (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).

Great Mighty Awesome God: Deuteronomy 10:17	God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: Exodus 3:15; Acts 7:32
Father: Isaiah 64:8	Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Father Of Eternity, Prince Of Peace: Isaiah 9:6
Holy One Of Israel: Psalm 78:41	Holy One: Habakkuk 1:12
Light: Psalm 27:1	Upright One: Isaiah 26:7
Light To The Nations: Isaiah 42:6	Light Of Israel: Isaiah 10:17
Fortress: Psalm 91:2	Our Dwelling Place: Psalm 90:1
Tower Of Strength: Psalm 61:3	Stronghold: Psalm 18:2
Hiding Place: Psalm 32:7	Refuge: Psalm 46:1
Shield: Psalm 18:30	Strength: Psalm 46:1
Rock Of My Strength: Psalm 62:7	Rock: Habakkuk 1:12
Stone: Psalm 118:22	Rock Of Israel: 2 Samuel 23:3
Cornerstone: Psalm 118:22	My Portion In The Land Of The Living: Psalm 142:5

Portion Of My Inheritance: Psalm 16:5	My Cup: Psalm 16:5
Branch: Zechariah 6:12	Star: Numbers 24:17
Crown and Diadem: Isaiah 28:5	Potter: Isaiah 64:8
Tent Peg, Bow Of Battle: Zechariah 10:4	Husband: Isaiah 54:5
Maker: Psalm 49:2	Creator: Ecclesiastes 12:1
Creator Of Israel: Isaiah 43:15	Shepherd: Genesis 49:24
Shepherd Of Israel: Psalm 80:1	Messenger Of The Covenant: Malachi 3:1
Redeemer: Psalm 19:14	Redeemer of Israel: Isaiah 49:7
Deliverer: Psalm 144:2	My Loving-kindness: Psalm 144:2
Saviour: Isaiah 45:15	King: Isaiah 6:5
King Of Israel: Zephaniah 3:15	King Of Glory: Psalm 24:7
Lord Of All The Earth: Micah 4:13	Ancient of Days: Daniel 7:9
Most High: Deuteronomy 32:8	Covenant To The People: Isaiah 42:6
God The Father: Matthew 6:9; 2 Timothy 1:2	Father Of Our Lord Jesus The Messiah: Colossians 1:3
Father Of Lights: James 1:17	Father Of Glory: Ephesians 1:17
Father Of Spirits: Hebrews 12:9	Father of Mercies: 2 Corinthians 1:3
Abba: Romans 8:15	God Of Our Fathers: Acts 7:32
A Consuming Fire: Hebrews 12:29	God Of All Comfort: 2 Corinthians 1:3

God Of Peace: Hebrews 13:20	God Of Glory: Acts 7:2
Majesty: Hebrews 1:3	King Of The Nations: Revelation 15:3
Lawgiver And Judge: James 4:12	Eternal Immortal Invisible King: 1 Timothy 1:17
Sovereign: 1 Timothy 6:15	Creator: Romans 1:25, 1 Peter 4:19

Psalm 25:4, 9: “Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.”

3. The Trinity

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:26, 27, NIV)

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19, 20, NIV)

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)

“In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.”

Christians believe God exists in three persons:

God the Father
God the Son
God the Holy Spirit

What Biblical Basis?

The doctrine of the Trinity has been used in the Christian community since the 2nd Century. It is not mentioned explicitly in the Bible.

God is One

Exodus 9:14; Deuteronomy 4:35; Isaiah 43:10; 44:6

God is also Three in One.

The following Scriptures infer the Trinity:

Matthew 3:13-17; 28:9; John 14:15-23; Acts 2:32; 2 Corinthians 13:14;
Ephesians 1:1-4; 3:16-19; 1 John 5:7

The clearest teaching about the Trinity appears in John 14 and 16.

Father: sends the Son; sends the Spirit through the Son

Son: came from the Father, the Only Begotten of the Father (this does not imply “created”, as some cults teach); during his earthly ministry, submitted to the Father; did nothing without the Father (John 5:19); is now seated at the right hand of the Father (1 Peter 3:22 - implies equality).

Holy Spirit: sanctifies, administers the church, empowers Christians for witness

Each testifies of the other:

The Father testified about the Son (Matthew 3:17)
The Son testified about the Father (John 5:19)
The Son testified about the Spirit (John 14:26)
The Spirit testified about the Son (John 15:26).

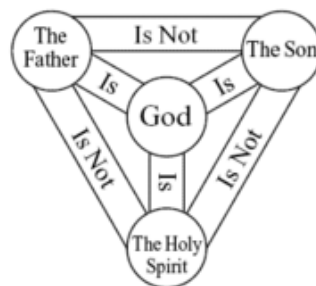
The three persons of the Godhead honour one another:

John 15:26; 16:13-15; 17:1; 8; 18, 23

The Messiah Has Divine Titles in the Old Testament

Jeremiah 23:5, 6; Isaiah 9:6

The New Testament describes Jesus as “God blessed for ever” (Romans 9:5). Thomas recognized Jesus as Lord and God (John 20:28).



Problems with denial of the Trinity:

- denial of the deity of Jesus Christ
- denial of the personality of the Holy Spirit
- confusion over the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Some Characteristics/Acts the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Have in Common

Characteristic/Act	Father	Son	Holy Spirit
Divine	Throughout OT and NT	John 1:1-4, 14, 18; Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:15, 2:19; Hebrews 1:2-6, 8-10	Mark 3:29; John 15:26; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 2:10, 6:19
Mentioned in OT	Isaiah 63:16 (Father, Redeemer); Malachi 2:10	Son of Jehovah (Psalm 45:6, 7, 12); Proverbs 30:4	Genesis 1:2; Isaiah 11:2, 3, 48:16; 61:1; 63:10
Divine titles	Exodus 20:2	John 20:28	Acts 5:3, 4
Teacher	Isaiah 54:13; 48:17	Luke 21:15; Galatians 1:12	John 14:26; 1 John 2:20, 27
Baptism in the name of	Matthew 28:19	Matthew 28:19	Matthew 28:19
Eternal	Romans 16:26	Revelation 22:13	Hebrews 9:14
Holy	Revelation 4:8; 15:4	Acts 3:14	1 John 2:20, 27
True	John 7:28	Revelation 3:7	1 John 5:6
Omnipotent	Genesis 17:1; Jeremiah 32:17	Revelation 1:8; Hebrews 1:3; Ephesians 1:20-22	Romans 15:19; Luke 1:35
Omniscient	Acts 15:18	John 1:47-51; 21:17	1 Corinthians 2:10, 11
Called Jehovah	Deuteronomy 6:4	Jeremiah 23:5, 6; John 8:58	Ezekiel 8:1, 3
Lord	Romans 10:12	Luke 2:11	2 Corinthians 3:18
God of Israel	Matthew 15:31	Luke 1:16, 17	2 Samuel 23:2, 3
Lawgiver	Romans 7:25	Galatians 6:2	Romans 8:2; James 4:12
Omnipresent	Jeremiah 23:24;	Ephesians 1:23	Psalms 139:7, 8
Source of Life	Deuteronomy 30:20	Colossians 3:4	Romans 8:10, 11
Maker of Mankind	Psalms 100:3	John 1:3	Job 33:4
Raised Jesus Christ from the dead	1 Corinthians 6:14	John 2:19; 10:18	1 Peter 3:18
Commissions servants	2 Corinthians 3:5	1 Timothy 1:12; Ephesians 4:11-13	Acts 20:28
Sanctifies the People of God	Jude 1	Hebrews 2:11	1 Peter 1:2; Romans 15:16
Performs spiritual operations	1 Corinthians 12:6	Colossians 1:29	1 Corinthians 12:11

Alternative Views of the Trinity

Proponents	Summary of Position
Tritheism	<p>Father, Son and Spirit are three gods.</p> <p>Mormonism teaches that “There are three gods ... separate in personality, united in purpose... The doctrine of plurality of gods is prominent in the Bible”. Mormons claim Jesus was Jehovah, the firstborn of Elohim, that he was a created spirit being, the brother of Lucifer.</p> <p>A Muslim variation is a belief (reflected in the Koran) that Christians worship God the Father, Jesus and Mary.</p>
Sabellianism	<p>Emerged in the 3rd Century, in part to cope with debate about whether Christianity involved three gods. Taught that God manifested Himself in different ways at different times, but that He was still only one in essence.</p>
Arianism	<p>Emerged c. 325 AD. Arius taught that the Father-Son-Spirit relationship was a relationship of subordination, ie the Father is Higher than Jesus; the Spirit is at the bottom of the hierarchy. The deity of Jesus was of a second nature (inferior). Denied the eternal Sonship of Jesus. Denied Jesus was co-equal with the Father. Taught that the Son was willed into existence by the Father and the Spirit was brought into existence by the Son.</p>
Unitarianism	<p>Teaches that the Godhead is a single person, but less than fully God.</p>
Other Cults	<p>Denial of the Trinity; denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that Jesus was the first son God created and the Holy Spirit is the “force” of God - Christian Science teaches that the Holy Spirit is simply “Divine Science” - Armstrongism (Worldwide Church of God) rejects the Trinity outright. “God is a family not a limited Trinity.” Regard the Holy Spirit as the “germ” by which we are begotten - Unification (Moonies) believe Jesus was no different from us, except that He was without original sin; and that the Holy Spirit is a female spirit, cleansing people of sin in order to restore them

Discussion - What Do God's Titles Imply for Daily Life?

Great Mighty Awesome God:	
Father:	
Holy One Of Israel:	
Light:	
Light To The Nations:	
Fortress:	
Tower Of Strength:	
Hiding Place:	
Shield:	
Rock Of My Strength:	
Stone:	
Cornerstone:	
Portion Of My Inheritance:	
Branch:	
Crown and Diadem:	
Maker:	

Creator Of Israel:	
Shepherd Of Israel:	
Redeemer:	
Deliverer:	
Saviour:	
King Of Israel:	
Lord Of All The Earth:	
Most High:	
Father:	
Father Of Lights:	
Father Of Spirits:	
A Consuming Fire:	
God Of Peace:	
Majesty:	
Lawgiver & Judge:	
Sovereign:	
God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob:	
Holy One:	

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Father Of Eternity, Prince Of Peace:	
Upright One:	
Light Of Israel:	
Our Dwelling Place:	
Stronghold:	
Refuge:	
Strength:	
Rock:	
Rock Of Israel:	
My Portion In The Land Of The Living:	
My Cup:	
Star:	
Potter:	
Husband:	
Creator:	
Shepherd:	
Messenger Of The Covenant:	

Redeemer of Israel:	
My Loving-kindness:	
King:	
King Of Glory:	
Ancient of Days:	
Covenant To The People:	
Father Of Our Lord Jesus The Messiah:	
Father Of Glory:	
Father of Mercies:	
God Of Our Fathers:	
God Of All Comfort:	
God Of Glory:	
King Of The Nations:	
Eternal Immortal Invisible King:	
Creator:	