

**HISTORY OR MYTH: SHOULD WE  
UNDERSTAND GOD'S ACTS IN THE BIBLE AS  
ACTUAL HISTORY OR MYTHICAL STORIES?**

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# **The Rejection of the Early History of Humanity in the Book of Genesis by Neo-Evangelical Biblical Scholars**

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Creation of Sun & Moon on day 1, though Light is mentioned days 1-3 (see Rev 21:22, 23 (The BOOKENDS of the Bible in Genesis and Revelation))

Direct creation of Adam and Eve and the Inbreathing of God

The Poetic Structure of the Days of Creation

The Similarity to Creation Stories in the Ancient Near East

Eve and Adam are Enticed by a Talking Serpent in the Garden

God walking in the Garden

The Stories of Cain, Abel, and Seth, with the marriage of Cain, but no mention of other people.

The Angels who mated with humans who produce the Nephilim

The Universal Flood

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## What About Other Events Found in the Remainder of the Old Testament Mythical or Historical?

The Visit of God in human form with Abraham

Opening of Sea with Moses, as well as numerous miraculous acts through him, plus the supernatural giving of the law

Burying of Moses (and Jude's statement regarding Michael and Satan)

Opening of Jordan for Joshua

Destruction of Jericho

The Victory against the prophets of Ba'al and Asherah on Mt. Carmel

The Carrying Away of Elijah in a Fiery Chariot

The Raising of the Dead by Elisha and Providing Food by a Miracle

The Preservation of the Three Hebrew Men in the Fiery Furnace and appearance of one like a god

The preservation of Daniel in the Lion's Den

Such events as above are considered to be the kinds of alleged happenings that are mythical and create legend over time.

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## Questions about the Existence of Adam and Eve

### **Adam and Eve Were Humans but not the First Humans.**

One writer, concerned that denying the facts of science on the age of the earth and early human life may turn people from the Bible, argues that Adam and Eve actually existed, but they were not the first. Scientific dating demonstrates that humans existed much before the biblical Adam and Eve were created by God. One reason that the story of Adam and Eve was written in the Bible around 1500 B.C. is the earlier tale of Inaana and Dumuzi, written about 2000 B.C. [1] He also comments that the story of Moses may be based on a work written around 2,000 years earlier.

This author says that civilization arose in Mesopotamia about 5,000 years ago. He argues that Sumerian and Akkadian records predate the Bible, so that these take precedence over the Bible, , and specifically written thousands of years

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earlier. He believes that these mythical accounts influenced the writing of the Creation Account in Genesis. He avers that humans had populated the planet many years earlier. He believes that the flood was not global but the reason it was considered this way in the text is because they did not have an understanding of the size of the earth but viewed it as were they lived. In reality, the existence of Adam and Eve in the Garden was their experience while a harsher life was experienced by a large part of humanity that had evolved outside the garden.

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**Are Supernatural Events Found in  
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or Actual Historical Events, Even  
the Person of Jesus the Messiah?**

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## **The Non-Mythological Nature of their Writing** *A Famous Myth-Writer Speaks Out*

*“All I am in private life is a literary critic and historian, that’s my job. And I am prepared to say on that basis if anyone thinks the Gospels are either legend or novels, then that person is simply showing his incompetence as a literary critic. I’ve read a great many novels and I know a fair amount about the legends that grew up among early people, and I know perfectly well the Gospels are not that kind of stuff” (C.S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, 209).*

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# **The Jesus of History or the Christ of Faith and the Demythologization of Jesus**

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## **Response** to Questions about the Existence of Adam and Eve (specific references to him and sometimes to Eve, the mother of all living).

1. The author Luke wrote one of the two genealogies in the New Testament. He moves in reverse order from what we see in Matthew, who covers the family tree of Jesus from Abraham until His birth. Luke, on the other hand, starts with Jesus as the supposed son of Joseph (son of Mary) and traces His lineage all the way back to Adam, the son of God (Luke 3:23-38). [See the *House Visual Study Bible (hvsb.app)* for further information on the “*toledot*” (family histories), that we know by the term genealogies]. Since Jesus is in the lineage of the entire human race back to Adam, He is the natural one who can redeem the human race. Since Adam has no physical lineage prior to him, it is natural to have him come from God, who created him. [2]
2. The second biblical implicitly referring Adam is also by Luke, who in Acts 17:26, recounting the sermon of Paul in Athens on the Areopagus that the “unknown” God of the Greeks is the one who made from one man (Adam)

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whom he does not provide for these biblically illiterate Greeks, but about whom he speaks is clear from Paul's writings in the New Testament (see Rom 5:12-21, 1 Cor 15:20-22, 44-49). Paul's statement excludes any other species or variation of humanity than the book of Genesis mentions in 1:26-28. This corresponds well to what was stated earlier regarding the Lucan genealogy that ends in Adam, the son of God. Now Jesus corresponds to Adam (similar to Rom 5:12ff) the first man and the man who will judge all humanity to Adam, the man Jesus the Messiah (Acts 17:31).

3. In order of occurrence, we now can see in Romans 5:12-21 that sin started with Adam (not thousands of human before Adam) and it was extended to all of humanity after him. There are no humans prior to Adam to which Jesus corresponds as the opposite, Adam, who brought sin on his posterity, and Jesus, and those who received His righteousness. Both Adam and Jesus are historical figures in the biblical text, not mythical persons whose tale refers to some more exalted story.

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4. In 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 the apostle Paul speaks of Adam, but also includes his wife Eve, the first woman, who was created, according to Genesis 2, to fulfill the man Adam. The woman was created flesh of his flesh, equal in humanity and personhood, but under the guidance of the man. There is no question that the apostle Paul believed these two persons to be historical persons rather than mythic individuals, like a parable, to convey a higher meaning. At the time of this creation there were only two humans on the earth.
5. Once again in 1 Corinthians Paul speaks of the man Adam, making a comparison between him and Messiah Jesus (1 Cor 15:21, 22). Paul states that death came from a man (Adam), so by a man (Christ), the resurrection of the dead (believers) occurs. Continuing his argument, even as everyone in Adam (the whole human race) died, a statement similar to Romans 5:12, so all in Christ (believers) will become alive (1 Cor 15:22).

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6. Paul includes Eve alongside Adam in 2 Corinthians 11:3. In this text he speaks of the instance in Genesis 3 that the woman, Eve, is deceived by the deceit of the serpent that approaches her in the garden. Paul is concerned that the Corinthian Christian might fall under the same temptation from Satan by which he deceived Eve. There is no doubt that the apostle considered this a historical event, whether some modern interpreters of the text understanding it as a mythical account. Satan is a person, as is Eve, or those at Corinth that he admonishes (note the “deception” in Gen 3 and the “cunning” in 2 Cor 11:3. Normally snakes do not talk, but when Satan was working through this snake, it could talk in the same way that the boy in the control of the demons spoke to Christ.

7. In 1 Timothy 2:11-14, the apostle Paul turns his hearers to perceive that Adam was not deceived, but the woman (more vulnerable and possibly not well taught by Adam) was deceived. The text in Genesis seems to indicate that she

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had not been well taught by the man. In giving guidance to the Ephesian congregation, there is no indication that he views the event about which he speaks as historical and not some mythic statement from which he draws an inference. When one teaches a lesson, such as the Good Samaritan story, the characters, events, setting, etc. are not historical figures, but their historicity is not pertinent to the lesson. Such is not the case with Paul's teaching in this passage. Even as is true with Adam, in previous texts, the historical event actually has factual impact upon humanity.

8. The last example is the reference to Adam by the half-brother of Jesus, called Jude. When warning about false teachers he remind his hearers that the man Enoch was the seventh of Adam, referring to the family history passed down through the Jewish people, speaking of the coming of the Lord with thousands of his saints. There is little question that Jude accepted the historicity of Enoch, the genealogy and the event.

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**Short Responses** to Rejections and  
Questions Above

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## Enter Rudolf Bultmann and Albert Schweitzer

**Rudolf Bultmann** declared that supernatural events recorded in the Bible, and particularly in the New Testament are examples of myths that needed to be set aside to discover the real Jesus of history. The word “demythologization” is a term that is associated with him, but I am unsure if he coined the word. Essentially it refers a call to take the myth out of the Bible, to find the Jesus who actually lived, and his true message. I find the Lutheran pastor and New Testament scholar to be an interesting person but find his acts at Easter to be disconcerting. He would declare from the pulpit that Jesus is alive, while in his scholarly world he believed his body decayed in the tomb.

Bultmann's primary emphasis was that modern science has set

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aside the pre-scientific world of miracles, so that our focus must be on the belief in Christ that do not depend on supernatural events within our current new world.

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**Albert Schweitzer** was a brilliant and versatile person, being a professor, a medical doctor, and a talented musician. When out of the classroom, he spent years in Africa caring for poor people who were sick. He, like Bultmann, had difficulty with a physically risen Jesus, but unlike Bultmann didn't have Jesus raised only spiritually, not like two evangelical scholars influenced by Bultmann. Schweitzer (in *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*) said that Jesus didn't die on the cross and was placed in the cold tomb. He came out of the tomb and presented himself as having been raised from the dead.

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## Did Jesus Really Do Miracles?

### **Responses** to Myth in the Life of Jesus and the Church

Bultmann's view:

Modern science has, says Bultmann, "destroyed the old creation stories, even that of the Old Testament."<sup>11</sup> But this is no problem for the modern Christian since these creation myths are not intended to advance a scientific or even rational explanation for the origin of the cosmos and humanity's place within it. Faith in God as Creator "is not a theory about some past occurrence such as might be depicted in mythological tales or cosmological speculation and natural scientific research; rather it is faith in man's present determination by God."<sup>12</sup>

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## Responses to Myth in the Bible

Responses to those who advocate mythology in the Bible and correctives to this. All of these are myth-like, but stories of the Bible relate to supernatural activities outside normal mythical verification, even if similarities to some pagan stories that pattern or even borrow from biblical history.

No Need for the Sun or Moon in Revelation 21:23 is a Bookend to Genesis 1:4  
God in a theophany in the garden (Gen 3) and before Abraham (Gen 18)

Talking snake (Gen 3:2-14) and talking mule in story of Balaam (Num 22:28-33 )

The burning bush before Moses (Exod 3) and His afterglow.

Words of Peter and Jude regarding sons of God and daughter of men in Gen 6  
1 Pet 3 on flood of Noah

Large fish and Jonah spoken of by Jesus (Matt 12:39-41)

*Mythos* that does not undercut the historical nature of the text, but instead accentuates it (such as parables,

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## **Did Jesus Really Do Miracles?**

### **Responses to Myth in the Life of Jesus and the Church**

Jesus' clear allusion to Adam and Eve, when teaching on divorce and remarriage

Jesus' words about Jonah

Jesus' words about Sodom and Gomorrah

Righteous Abel (Jesus or someone)

Jesus walked on the water, healed the sick, forgave sins, raised the dead (buried and unburied), raised himself from the grave, ascended in his body from earth to heaven, transfigured with Moses and Elijah, was tempted by Satan in physical locations, multiplied loaves and fishes, turned water into wine,

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What does the Bible say about embracing “fiction” rather than the truths of God.

Numerous places the authors warn about myths and other fictions.

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## What Kind of Literature Should We Consider Genesis 1 to Be?

1. A Purely Literal Historical Account
2. Literal or Figurative
3. Unique Presentation of Creation Unparalleled in the Ancient Near East.

“From a purely comparative approach of the literary structures, the language patterns, the syntax, the linguistic phenomena, the terminology, the sequential presentation of events in the creation account, Genesis 1 is not different from the rest of the book of Genesis or the Pentateuch for that matter. [1]

Compared to the hymns in the Bible, the creation account is not a hymn; compared to the parables in the Bible, the creation account is not a parable; compared to the poetry in the Bible, the creation account is not a poem; compared to cultic liturgy, the creation account is not a cultic liturgy. Compared to various kinds of literary forms, the creation account is not a metaphor, a story, a parable, poetry, or the like.

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One recent study of the literary form of Genesis 1-11 done on the basis of current comparative Near Eastern literature has concluded that "we are dealing with the genera of historical narrative-prose, interspersed with some lists, sources, sayings, and poetical lines." This is a fairly good description of the content of Genesis 1.

A detailed study of the literary form of Genesis 1 has concluded that we are dealing with the literary genre of "prose-genealogy." Even Gunkel noted long ago that Genesis is "prose." He noted also that it is "more artistic in its composition and has some sort of rhythmical construction." The non-poetic nature of Genesis 1 shows that its intention is to take it in its plain sense as a straightforward and accurate record of creative events.

Looking at the information provided in Genesis 1 from a perspective of comparison with other ancient Near Eastern literature, it must be concluded that "Genesis 1 has no parallel anywhere in the ancient world outside the Bible." Genesis 1 is the most cohesive and profound record produced in the ancient world of "how" and "when" and by "whom" and "in what manner" the world was made. There is no parallel to it from

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### The Cosmology of Genesis 1 in Relation to ANE Parallels

“Our examination of crucial terms and motifs in the cosmology of Gn I in comparison with ancient Near Eastern analogues indicates that the author of Gn I exhibits in a number of critical instances a sharply antimythical polemic. With a great many safeguards he employs certain terms and motifs, partly taken from his ideologically incompatible predecessors and partly chosen in contrast to comparable concepts in ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies, and fills them in his own usage with new meaning consonant with his aim and world-view. Gn cosmology as presented in Gn I: 1-2:4a appears thus basically different from the mythological cosmologies of the ancient Near East. It represents not only a “complete break” with the ancient Near Eastern mythological cosmologies but represents a parting of the spiritual ways which meant an undermining of the

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## The Antimythical, Polemical Nature of Genesis 1

1. The creation account militates against an identification of Creator with His creation. As Otto Procksch says in his explanation of creation as a wonder: “This first word of the Bible expresses the basic relationship of God and the universe that is present in creation. The term for creation (bara) denies any relationship of God and cosmos through nature. **God has not emerged** from the cosmos as is suggested in the mythology of many peoples of the world, of which we need to think only of Egypt, Babylon, and Greece. Nor, as is suggested infrequently, has the world gushed forth from God through emanation, as Gnosticism maintains. Rather, God and cosmos are essentially distinct, underivable From one another, God is not the world and the world is not God; though certainly God does work in the world—omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, available in it.”[1]

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### 2. Supposed Mythical Parallels

תְּהוֹם *tehom* Deep, from which all life sprang as in other Semitic accounts. No evidence in Gen 1:2 that the term is anything more than inanimate. Clearly different *from* the Creator.

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תנינים *taninim* Mythical sea monster as found in Ba'al-Anath cycle. Anat III:

What enemy rises up against Baal

What adversary against Him who mounteth the clouds?

Have I not slain Sea (yam), beloved of El?

Have I not annihilated River (Nahasr), the great god?

Have I not muzzled the Dragon (Tannia), holding her in a muzzle?

I have slain the Crooked Serpent (Lotan-Leviathan),

The foul-fanged with Seven Heads.

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“In order to recognize even more clearly :the special purpose of the singling out of the *tannin* in Gen. 1: 21, a number of points require our attention. (1) The *tanninim* of vs. 21 are mere creatures *in* the water. They lack any mythical power; :hey do not possess qualities different from the other created water creatures. (2) In vs. 21 the term *bara* is employed for the first time since the opening in vs. 1. It is hardly accidental that this term appears in connection with the creation of the *tanninim*. Since *bara* is not used in connection with the creation of the land animals (vs. 25), it appears that this verb has been chosen at this juncture in order to emphasize that the *tanninim* creatures were created by God in an effortless creative act. A polemic emphasis becomes transparent: the *tanninim* are aquatic creatures which were "created" by God; they are not pre-existent rivals of the Creator which needed to be conquered as in Canaanite mythology. (3) The juxtaposition of the *tanninim* in vs. 21 with the swarming aquatic creatures suggests that *tannin* is a generic designation for *large* water creatures in contrast to the *small* water creatures mentioned next. The distinction between *large*

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and *small* water creatures in Gen. 1: 21a finds its support in Ps. 104: 25, 26 which knows "living things in the sea both *large* and *small*." In short, the choice of the term *tannin* in connection with the term *bara* emphasizing God's effortless creation of the large aquatic creatures appears as a deliberate attempt to contradict the notion of creation in terms of a struggle as contained in the pagan battle myth. It appears inescapable to recognize here again a conscious polemic against the battle myth." [1]

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### 3. Purpose of the Creation of Man

“The similarities and differences between the purpose of man’s creation in Sumero-Akkadian mythology and Gen. 1: 26-28 affords another point which requires our attention. Sumerian mythology is in complete accord with the Babylonian Atrahasis Epic and Enuma Elish in depicting the need of the creation of man to result from the attempt to relieve the gods from laboring for their sustenance. This mythological picture, which views the creation of man as an afterthought to provide the gods with food and to satisfy their physical needs, is contradicted in Gen. 1. The first chapter to the Bible depicts man as the "pinnacle of creation.” Man is not made as a kind of afterthought in order to take care of the needs of the gods. He appears as the only one "blessed" by God (1:28); he is "the ruler of the animal and vegetable kingdoms.” All seed-bearing plants and fruit trees are his for food (1: 29). Here the divine concern and the divine care for man's physical needs come to expression in antithesis to man's purpose to care for the physical needs of the gods in Sumero-Akkadian mythology. It is

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obvious that when it comes to defining the purpose of man's creation, Gen. 1 combats pagan mythological notions while, at the same time, the man-centered orientation of Gen. 1 and man's glory and freedom to rule the earth for his own needs is conveyed. We may suggest that the different idea with regard to the purpose of the creation of man in Gen. 1 rests upon the Hebrew anthropology and understanding of reality.”

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# The Historical Jesus and the Christ of Faith

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# Response to the View that Historical Accounts are Myths Teaching Inerrant Truths

**16**Every **Scripture** is God-breathed [**not every truth understood** by an interpreter] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, **17** that each person who belongs to God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

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# The Jesus of History

# WAS JESUS AN HISTORICAL PERSON?

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1. His genealogy is traced back to through David, and last of all presumably would have to be Joseph, according to Matthew's account. Luke traces him but to Adam, having stated that he examined carefully the events regarding Jesus, his genealogy tracing Jesus through Seth, Adam, to God, would be unacceptable history, but instead a myth. Apparently, Luke believed that the people mentioned at the first of Genesis were not mythical figures.  
\* The problem is that many in his genealogy are suspect as historical persons by the mythic view.
2. The text represents Jesus as being born of a virgin and Jesus coming from God.  
\*Being impregnated by a god was not an uncommon mythical statement found in Graeco-Roman culture and viewed as myths by scholars of the first century, and even today.
3. The various ways in which Jesus is clear seen as a historical person, that few biblical scholars deny, are his various teaching, acts of compassion, and clearly him being resisted by the upper crust of Jewish leadership, and final death at the hands of the Roman governor, viewed by many as a renegade, but uncharacteristically by Pontius Pilate, viewed in the gospels as more benevolent.

# BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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# MIRACLES OF JESUS

# The Healing of the Centurion's Servant

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# RESURRECTION OF JESUS

# WAS JESUS GOD?

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1. Jesus declares Himself to be God, that He is one with the Father, that He can forgive sins, that He will come again to bring judgment again as the divine Son of Man. These are the kinds of ideas and actions that myth and legend are made from.
2. When such claims are joined with written accounts that have him performing miraculous deeds, similar to those of Old Testament.
3. the kind of stuff that myth and legend are made from.
4. Jesus declared himself in divine terms, such as being one with the Father, being the I AM, having come from God, and being the Son of Man, viewed in the day as a divine title. He also forgave people's sins and performed miracles, all of which must be accepted as truth if one considers the historical events given in the text are true and not mythical and exaggerations.