

The King of Creation

- ¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great!
You are clothed with splendor and majesty,
- ² covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the
heavens like a tent.
- ³ He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters; he makes the
clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind;
- ⁴ he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.
- ⁵ He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved.
- ⁶ You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood
above the mountains.
- ⁷ At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight.
- ⁸ The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you
appointed for them.
- ⁹ You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not
again cover the earth.
- ¹⁰ You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills;
- ¹¹ they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench
their thirst.
- ¹² Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the
branches.
- ¹³ From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is
satisfied with the fruit of your work.
- ¹⁴ You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to
cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth
- ¹⁵ and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine
and bread to strengthen man's heart.

- ¹⁶ The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
- ¹⁷ In them the birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees.
- ¹⁸ The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers.
- ¹⁹ He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting.
- ²⁰ You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about.
- ²¹ The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.
- ²² When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens.
- ²³ Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening.
- ²⁴ O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.
- ²⁵ Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great.
- ²⁶ There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.
- ²⁷ These all look to you, to give them their food in due season.
- ²⁸ When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.
- ²⁹ When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.
- ³⁰ When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.
- ³¹ May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works,
- ³² who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke!
- ³³ I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.
- ³⁴ May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD.

PSALM 101-103

Creator Creature Distinction

PERHAPS THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL doctrine of all Christian theology is something called the **Creator/creature distinction**. Herman Bavinck writes, “*The doctrine of creation, affirming the distinction between the Creator and his creature, is the starting point of true religion. There is no existence apart from God, and the Creator can only be known truly through revelation*” [emphasis original].¹ Van Til says that in Christian doctrine it is “**fundamental.**”² His student, John Frame, calls it, “**the most fundamental distinction in Scripture³ ... Of fundamental importance to Christian thinking and living.**”⁴

So, **what is the distinction?** Michael Horton calls it, “**The theological teaching that God and creation are qualitatively different.**”⁵ Not just quantitatively different, as if we both exist on a scale from one to one hundred. The scale is rather

¹ **Herman Bavinck**, John Bolt, and John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 406.

² **Cornelius Van Til**, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company: Phillipsburg, NJ, 1979).

³ **John M. Frame**, “Studies in Modern Theology: Modern Answers II.B.3.c.4.d,” in *The Collected Shorter Theological Writings* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), no pages given in the Logos edition.

⁴ **John M. Frame**, “Lectures, The Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 9. I.C.,” in *The Collected Shorter Theological Writings* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008).

⁵ **Michael Horton**, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 996.

from finite to infinity. Infinity is not a number; you can't count to it. Like infinity to a number, God is a different kind of thing from his creation altogether. “On different levels of existence.”⁶ “We do not share a common being or authority. He is the Lord, we are the servants. He is the controller, we are the controlled. We have no right to talk back to him. We must recognize above all that God really is God.”

There may be **no greater problem** in the Western world right now than the obliteration of this distinction (it has long been the problem of the East). Peter Jones calls losing this distinction a move from what he calls **two-ism** to **one-ism**. “In one-ism, you have a cosmos without a Creator, and thus all distinctions collapse and man is god.”⁷ Oneism is the worldview of everything from Buddhism to atheism, Hinduism to Mormonism, polytheism to pantheism.

How is this corruption working itself out in the culture practically speaking? Jones explains,

⁶ Frame, Q.9.

⁷ Peter Jones, “Beyond the Wicket Gate: One or Two?,” *Tabletalk Magazine*, January 2012: *The Apocalypse of John* (Sanford, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2012), 82 [82-83], available at Ligonier Ministries, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/one-or-two/>.

Oneism is everywhere. Multiculturalism allows no value judgments about culture. Interfaith sees no distinction between religions. Alternative sexualities reject the male/female distinction and seek to eliminate the idea of gender distinctions altogether ... Guilt is a psychological illness from which we must be healed. Liberal theology, appearing in certain evangelical movements, undermines the Creator/creature distinction, while the great stress on mysticism, in the same circles, does the same thing. Acts of mercy are confused with social justice.⁸

Obviously, these are all deeply incompatible with Christianity, and yet this *is* America circa. 2018.

Christianity's two-ism begins with God (One) and extends to the creation (two). It is seen everywhere from mundane opposites like heavy and light, new and old, clean and messy, sharp and dull, left and right, positive and negative, up and down, black and white, night and day.⁹

⁸ Peter Jones, "Truth Exchange: An Interview with Peter Jones," *Tabletalk* (Nov 2014), at Ligonier Ministries, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/truth-exchange/>.

⁹  **Going Deeper:** As we think about this idea of opposites, yin and yang may come to someone's mind. Imported from the East, this symbol has entrenched itself deep into the fabric of Western culture during the past 50 years, and it is important to learn how to think properly about biblically.

These teach you that this is not that and hence reflect the distinction—you are not God. But there are much more important opposites like male and female, natural and supernatural, dead and alive, good and evil, order and chaos, law and gospel, heaven and hell. But you see, opposites are not possible in a world of *50 Shades of Grey* which blurs all distinctions together. A world that abhors the Creator/creature distinction will be hell-bent on obliterating as many of distinctions as it possibly can, in order to distance itself as far from the great moral distinction—right and wrong—as possible, in order to avoid the consequences of its actions.¹⁰ This ought to show you the practical significance of this vital doctrine.

In one respect, [yin-yang](#) (literally: bright-dark) is a way of talking about these same kinds of dualistic opposites, but from an Eastern religious worldview. That religion is [monism](#), the view that everything is One. The opposites are expressed in the larger black and white halves of the famous symbol (above). However, and this is the key component, the smaller opposite black and white dots teach that literally “in” every black there is white, and “in” every white there is black. This is how the religions of the East express opposite forces that are fundamental to the entire universe. If you ignore or are ignorant of the monistic bedrock, that might sound ok. For, like anything that sticks around, yin-yang has truth in it. That truth only works at what we would call the creation level. There are, of course, ways of seeing opposites perspectively such that you can also see a spectrum in things.

But when one understands that this dualism is actually rooted in monism, you understand that this means that there is no Creator and creature according to yin-yang. If that perspective at its fundamental core is oneism with no Creator/creature distinction, as is true of yin/yang, then it gets the point wrong at its most basic part. This is literally the opposite of a biblical understanding that “[God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all](#)” ([1Jn 1:5](#)).

¹⁰ Strangely, the Eastern conception is not where the radical blurring of sexual (male-female) two-ism is taking place. Somehow, their system is better able to withstand such tectonic

Creation and the Bible

In a lecture I was listening to by Peter Jones, he describes how there is “a darkly bizarre revolution taking place, virtually within one generation, intentionally intending to rebuild culture on very different basis than what we’ve known ... at its most profound level it is an attack on the creed that lays on the very foundation of Western Civilization. And what is that creed? It is The Apostle’s Creed: *I believe in God the Father, Almighty Maker of heaven and earth.*”¹¹ In other words, **creation**.

Creation is the focus of our Psalm today. Creation by God—the King. This Psalm implies from first to last the Creator/creature distinction. As such, it is one of those foundational places that we go in order to learn about it. “Create” (Latin *creationem*; French *creacion*) is obviously the underlying word in both sides of our distinction (**Creator/creature**).

convulsions of reality that whatever this new thing in the West is is shaking to the ground. But don’t let that fool you. This probably owes more to its continued honoring of tradition than anything else. There are other opposites that the Eastern world clearly denies.

¹¹ Peter Jones, “Speaking Binary Truth: Shining As Lights, Telling the Truth in the Pagan Utopia,” *truthxchange* (2014), at: <https://truthxchange.com/speaking-binary-truth-by-dr-peter-jones/>, around minute 3:00 and following.

We usually think about this topic biblically speaking from Genesis, especially chapter 1, but also chapter 2. In fact, this is such an obvious thing that many people do not realize that the Bible has several other significant places dedicated to talking about creation. For example: **Job 26:7-13, 38:1-11; Ps 74:12-17; 89:11-13; 90:2; 148; Prov 8:22-31; Jer 10:11-13; Amos 4:13, 9:6; Zech 12:1** (I've copied these texts to an appendix at the end of the sermon). Outside of Genesis 1, Psalm 124 is the longest of them all.

Scholars have identified at least **three different perspectives** through which these creation stories in the Bible are told. These are: creation by **divine power**, creation by **divine wisdom**, and creation by **divine presence**.¹² These are not entirely separate ideas from one another on two very important counts.

The first (which I've just mentioned) relates to the context into which we find Psalm 104 situated. We are coming very near the end of Book IV of the Psalter (Pss 90-106). These songs are all about **Yahweh as King**.

¹² See **Smith**, "Prelude: Creation in the Bible," in *Priestly Vision*, (I do not have page numbers for this book).

Now, Psalm 104 is in some ways a companion psalm to 103. Compare for example its beginning, “Bless the LORD, O my soul!” and 103’s repeated “Bless the LORD” language along with the language of angelic “ministers” used only in these two psalms (103:21 and 104:4).¹³ In some important ways, Psalm 104 is a very natural progression from Psalm 103. Psalm 103 ends, “Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion” (vs. 22). Psalm 104 is then an elaboration from creation standpoint on those works. “O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all...” (vs. 24; also vs. 31. *His “works” continue in 105 and 106 as Book IV ends, and return in the first psalm of Book V for good measure*).

But what *kind* of a Person’s works are these? As we just saw, it is one who has **dominion**. That kind of a person is the **King**. This, of course, also fits the “king” centered nature of this entire book (IV). And it also ties the three creation perspectives together. As someone has said, “**Power, wisdom, and presence ... are all attributes associated with kings ... various creation accounts present God as a warrior-**

¹³ Also, Midrash Telillim reads them as one continual composition, with the five “Bless the LORD O my soul’s” (103:1, 2, 22; 104:1, 35) being directly related to the five books of Moses. Wallace, 69.

king, as a wise ruler, or as the great monarchic presence in his palace or builder of his sanctuary space.”¹⁴ So the King idea binds these words together.

The **second** is through these three words themselves: power, wisdom, and presence (face). Each of these words are used to describe the Lord Jesus Christ. The first two of these are found in one first. “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1Co 1:24). “God ... has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6).

As such, it makes great sense to learn about **Jesus’ role at creation** according to the NT. “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). “Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1Co 8:6). “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things were created through him and for him” (Col 1:16). “In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he

¹⁴ Smith, *ibid.*

appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world” (Heb 1:2). What is important as we now go to the Psalm is to understand that among the few creation accounts in the Bible that contain all three perspectives, at the top of the list is Psalm 104.

Psalm 104

Like Genesis 1, Psalm 104 can be broken down into the number seven. As there are seven days of creation, so also there are seven parts of Psalm 104. It even follows the same order as Genesis 1 (see especially the two middle outlines below).

Mark S. Smith. <i>The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1</i> (Kindle Locations 414-415).	Smith, <i>Priestly Vision</i> (Kindle Locations 446-448). Kindle Edition.	John Day, <i>Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan</i>, 101.	Hans-Joachim Kraus, <i>A Continental Commentary: Psalms 60–150</i>, 298.
Ps 104:1-4 Opening Invocation of the Creator of the Heavens	Ps 104:2-4; Gen 1:6-8 God as Creator presented with respect to the cosmic waters.	Ps 104:1-4; Gen 1:1-5 Creation of heaven and earth	Ps 104:1–4 Praise of the God who is above all worlds
Ps 104:5-9 Praise of the World’s Creator	Ps 104:5-9; Gen 1:9-10 God establishes the earth with respect to the waters and establishes bounds for them.	Ps 104:5-9; Gen 1:6-10 Waters pushed back	Ps 104:5–9 Conquest of the primeval flood and founding of the earth
Ps 104:10-13	Ps 104:10-13; Gen 1:6-10	Ps 104:10-13; Gen 1:6-10 Waters put to beneficial use	Ps 104:10–12 Springs and brooks

Praise of the Creator of Waters on Earth	With the cosmic waters under control, they provide sources for springs.		
Ps 104:14-18 Praise of the Creator of Food	Ps 104:14-18, Gen 1:11-12 Vegetation is produced and feeds living creatures.	Ps 104:14-18; Gen 1:11-12 Creation of vegetation	Ps 104:13–18 Refreshment proceeds from Yahweh’s rains to all lands
Ps 104: 19-23 Praise of the Creator of Seasons and Days	Ps 104:19-23, Gen 1:14-18 The moon and sun are created to marks times and seasons.	Ps 104:19-23; Gen 1:14-18 Creation of luminaries	Ps 104:19–24 Night and daybreak
Ps 104:24-26 Praise of the Creator of the Seas	Ps 104:24-26, Gen 1:20-22 In the remnant of watery chaos live the sea creatures.	Ps 104:24-26; Gen 1:20-22 Creation of sea creatures	Ps 104:25–26 The sea
Ps 104: 27-35 Creature’s Dependence on the Creator	Ps 104:27-30, Gen 1:24-30 Humanity’s place in creation is shown.	Ps 104:27-30; Gen 1:24-31 Creation of living creatures	Ps 104:27–30 All life depends on Yahweh; (vv. 31–35 - hymnic conclusion).

Creation day	Psalm 104 verses
Day 1	2a: light
Day 2	2b–4: the “expanse” divides the waters
Day 3	5–13: land and water distinct 14–18: vegetation and trees
Day 4	19–24: light-bearers as time-keepers
Day 5	25–26: sea creatures
Day 6	21–24: land animals and man 27–30: food for all creatures
Day 7	31-34: The LORD rejoices in his works ¹⁵

It is **the purpose** of Psalm 104 that distinguishes it from Genesis 1. In some ways, we might be able to say that Psalm 104 is for the corporate worship of God as part of the Bible’s

¹⁵ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1070. I have added Day 7 myself.

great Hymnbook, while Genesis 1 serves a different purpose of introducing us to the theology and narrative of the Bible. There is truth to this, but it needs to be remembered that Genesis 1 is itself highly stylized, artistic literature on a level my mind can't even comprehend, so much so that some have argued that it was itself part of Israel's liturgy.¹⁶

I think the main differences lay elsewhere. Genesis 1 is a calculated but rather impersonal way of telling about creation. It is about God's sovereign power to create, to form and to fill exactly as he wants, with basically no effort save speaking. On the other hand, [Psalm 84 is intensely personal](#). Its point is to tell the story of creation in such a way as to make you say, "[God did this all ... for me?](#)" This in turn gives you the right view of the Creator and creature and shows you what your response is supposed to be. It is to that end that its Kingly power, wisdom, and face must be received.

With this in mind, notice how the song begins. There is no superscription (perhaps because of its close affinity to Ps 103). It just launches into its main point. "[Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great!](#)" ([Ps](#)

¹⁶ See my sermon "Temple Building: Genesis 1:3-2:4," especially n. 5.

104:1). He speaks only to himself. O my soul. I must bless the LORD, for he is very great. This is the heart of a true biblical knowledge and application. Because if worship isn't for *me*, then it is for no one. Have you ever heard of parents who wants their children to go to youth group, but themselves won't darken the door? What does this teach a child about worship? It teaches them that if it isn't for you, then it isn't for them. On the same front, if it isn't for you, then why should you even care if your kid gets some morals in a church you want nothing to do with? That's irrational, because it knows nothing of the God of his Psalm. Wait until you see why it wants to sing.

Sovereign: Creator of Heaven and Earth (Psalm 104:1-4)

It begins by singing about God as creator of heaven and earth. While it doesn't use the word "king," the images are certainly here. "You are clothed with splendor and majesty" (1). God has a glorious robe! What is his robe made of? "Covering yourself with light as with a garment" (2). God is bathed in pure light. Indeed, God is Light (John 1:5). And

yet, “God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen 1:3). This is how creation began. So also in Psalm 104.

Without even a period, the song continues, “... stretching out the heavens like a tent” (Ps 104:2). We’ve all gone camping, and the point of a tent is to be a shelter (and, in Israel, a place of worship). This is the point of the imagery here too. “He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters” (3). Oh! We see he is doing this to make *himself* a palace, a temple (this is also the main theme of Genesis 1’s creation story).

“He makes the clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind” (3). Now, the imagery of the Cloud-Rider, the Divine-Warrior of Heaven returns to the Psalms. This is a title given only to Yahweh in the OT (as opposed to Baal or Marduk or Zeus or other gods), and to Jesus in the NT. But this time, he is accompanied by the “wind.” This is the word *ruach*, which appears in Genesis 1:2 like a bird hovering over the waters. There it is best translated as Spirit. This is just as possible here too, especially considering that the “cloud” and “wings” images are right here, both images of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. Christ is riding as it were on the wings of the Spirit as he commands the beams of his chambers to be

driven deep into the cosmic waters of the primordial earth. We'll see more of why I put it like this **later**.

He is accompanied also by the angels. “**He makes his messengers (angels) winds, his ministers a flaming fire**” (Ps 104:4). This fascinating verse is quoted in Hebrews 1:7, and it is important as it contrasts Jesus to the angels (the LXX translates “messengers” as “angels”). The angels are created (he “makes” them), and that is clearly part of the emphasis in the Psalm as well. They came into being; they are not eternal, though they are here at the beginning of creation.¹⁷ Interestingly, they share the same basic physical composition as the Holy Spirit often chooses to take when he appears here, as both are associated with wind and fire.

It is a mysterious verse. Are angels working through those mediums in some kind of almost sacramental way? Perhaps. One thinks of the bowls of judgment in Revelation

¹⁷ **Going Deeper:** For sake of time, keeping its context as the beginning of creation in mind, it helps us understand the “us” in **Genesis 1:26**, “**Let us make man in our image.**” According to the order of the psalm, the angels are here at the very beginning. This “us” later in Genesis 1 is, in my view, God speaking to **the divine council** (the Son and Spirit are part of that council, so it is also Trinitarian)—the angels. It isn't that the angels are creating anything, but rather they are there watching (as **Job 38:7** says), and God is speaking to them, like we might say when someone in a group says, “Let's go for pizza.” They too are image bearers in that they have a kind of dominion and rule, just like man will (this is the explicit meaning of “image” in Genesis 1). Hence, the temptation of Satan to be, as the KJV translates it, “like *gods* [that is, like the sons of God, the angels], knowing good and evil,” (i.e. making ruling judgments about right and wrong). But God does all the creating, as if saying, “Let's get pizza, I'm buying.”

and how closely those are associated with natural phenomena and angels. But the idea is also certainly tied to [the temple](#), for they are ministers made of a fiery substance (at least, when they are in heaven) who serve the King of kings. This sheds light on a host of divine council passages like Isaiah 6 where Seraphim (fiery angels) minister before King Jesus in heaven.

Stability: Waters Rebuked (5-9)

From here, the song moves to [its second section](#) as it begins to talk more about the waters. “[He set the earth on its foundations](#) (recalling [vs. 3](#)), so that it should never be moved. You covered the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight. The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth” ([5-9](#)).

The point of these verses is to show how [God brings stability](#) to the chaos that was the original created waters. “[So that it should never be moved.](#)” The language sounds

very much like Noah's Flood, and it may very well be. However, the Bible actually describes that Flood as a creation event—a new creation. God is starting over, bringing things back to the way they were in Genesis 1:2. So, God's returning the earth in Noah's days back to a habitable place reminds us very much of his forming the earth at the beginning, while adding this idea of stability.

The word for “[the deep](#)” comes up here. This is the word found, again, in Genesis 1:2 (*tehom*). Throughout the ANE, the deep was [a place of chaos](#) to be feared. Unless the god conquered it, he had no right to rule. But there is no battle in this story. The Living God merely covers it as with a garment, and it becomes gentle and unable to bring evil chaos against his will. He merely speaks (rebukes) with his thundering voice, and the waters that had risen above the mountains flee. Notice then the emphasis on [God's Word](#) at creation here, just like Genesis 1.

Satisfy: Waters Put to Good Use (10-13)

But this isn't Genesis 1. Again, the Psalms purpose is different. From here, the thought seems more like Genesis 2

than Genesis 1. The point becomes, **what will God do with those waters?** “**You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills**” (10). You might recall the “**mist**” that God brought upon the land in **Genesis 2:6**. This unique word (found elsewhere only in **Job 36:27**, another creation story), is translated as a “**fountain**” by the LXX. This is very much like the “spring” idea here.

But why did God do this? “**They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches. From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work**” (11-13). The point is very simple. God gives these waters in order to **satisfy**.

Whom does he satisfy? The beasts, the birds, the boulders, the bluffs. God cares about his creation. Not even rocks are left unattended. Of course, those rocks are also there to collect the waters to cause them to flow to just the right places, to bring rain upon the land so that the crops and the plants and all living creatures will be happy and remain alive. This is all perfectly ordered, not the result of blind luck or dumb chance. It is the LORD who causes these

things to be and controls them as he wishes. Because he is above his creation, yet is intimately involved in it.

Sustenance: The Creation of Vegetation (14-18)

The use of water in this way makes for a natural transition to the next section. Following the order of Genesis 1 still, we come to **plants and vegetation**. “**You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth**” (14). What is their purpose? **To give sustenance** to the living creatures! But this time, it is also for you. As grass is for the beasts of the field (livestock here, which were also for food), so the plants are given to man that he might work and tend to God’s garden and bring forth food from the ground.

But it isn’t just food. **It is also pleasure**. In a verse that gives some people trouble because of their background, “**... and wine to gladden the heart of man**” (15). Where does wine come from? The fruit of the vine, a plant. That’s why it is mentioned here. The idea here is obviously not a life given to drunkenness, which is the abuse of God’s gift and

therefore sin. It is, however, for his happiness, and the self-evident reason is because of the alcohol.

He gives “oil to make his face shine” (15). I was watching a clip of a 110 year old man from Phoenix who was giving his five food tips for living a long life. One of them was olive oil on the face and feet (“so you won’t rust,” he said). Turns out, it is incredibly good for you. It has that added benefit of making your face glow or shine. But why is it mentioned here? Again, where do olives come from? Vegetation. It is showing the multiple good uses that God gives them to man.

It then shifts to bread, “And bread to strengthen man’s heart” (15). Or did it shift? Not really. Where does bread come from? Wheat. Plants are to the main staple of humanity’s diet since time began. Their purpose for being created is primarily to be food for living creatures, and for you.

As the section concludes, the Psalmist moves to the trees, bigger plants if you will. “The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. In them the birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees. The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers” (16-18). The birds

rest in the trees, making them their home, just as the wild creatures make their home in the high mountains. God made both for the purpose of making earth habitable for life. This place is no accident. Imagine earth with no trees. There would be no life. The same is actually true of the mountains, as they are the major weather generators of the planet. But here, they provide shelter for God's creatures.

Shine: The Creation of Heavenly Lights (19-23)

The fifth section of the song talks about the heavenly luminaries. I think it is interesting that he has already talked about the angels, which are sometimes called “stars.” In this way, the focus really is on the actual lights in the sky. “He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows it's time for setting” (19). The moon and sun were always deified in the ancient world. Not here. Instead, they are viewed from the perspective of life on earth. God put them there for your sake, not their own. Jewish calendars were based on the moon cycles, hence the reference to seasons and the moon. With the sun, it rises and sets at just the time God made it do so. Obviously, this is not meant to be a scientific

observation, as if the sun literally goes down. Rather, it is from the perspective of the observer, and its point is that it does what the LORD wants it to do. It has **its own God appointed “time.”** It does his bidding. It is not some rogue out there doing its own thing. The seasons and setting of the sun are truly remarkable things. Every year for thousands of years it is exactly the same. How does this happen? How did God do it? No one knows. But he did it for you.

“You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens. Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening” (20-23). The focus here on **darkness** is an image of evil. That’s when the beasts creep about. But Isaiah tells us God “formed the light and created darkness, makes good and evil; the Lord does all these things” (Isa 45:7). What is darkness though? Is it not **the absence of light**? It isn’t a black sun that rises when the white sun goes down. It is simply a lack of the very thing that God himself is clothed with as King. But in his kindness and grace, God makes the sun to rise again, so off man goes to his work, while the dangerous beasts now go to sleep.

Superiority: The Creation of Great Sea Creatures (24-26)

A slight break appears, though it serves as an introduction to [section six](#). “Oh LORD, how manifold are your works! In Wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures” (24). Earlier I talked about Christ is riding on the wings of the Spirit as he commands the beams of his chambers to be driven deep into the cosmic waters of the primordial earth. Here is one of the reasons I did so. This is the language of Wisdom now. It recalls the creation story of Proverbs 8. This is Wisdom speaking:

²² The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.

²³ Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.

²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth,

²⁶ before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world.

²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,

²⁸ when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep,

²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth,

³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always,

³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.

(Prov 8:22-31)

Do you hear how Wisdom is like a craftsman, a master workman carrying out his duties for the LORD? It is places like these that caused the Apostles to see Jesus here, for he is the Wisdom of God. It is by Wisdom, through Wisdom, that the LORD (the Father here) is creating. And this also shows that creation is the exact opposite of an accident. No. **Creation is the wise purposing of God.** It takes a fool to deny what is so patently obvious.

But there's something else. "Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it" (25-26). Wisdom is set off in contrast to the great Leviathan. Before thinking about this, just notice how the order continues to follow Genesis 1. We are talking now about the creation of the sea creatures.

What is leviathan? In the ANE, he was the great Chaos Monster that had to be destroyed by the creating god. The Scripture thinks of him in a couple of ways. First, like the deep, he also represents chaos and the fear of man. Job 41 is all about how great this monster is, and how no one is able to do anything to him. He's like Moby Dick. But in other places, he becomes personified with the very devil himself. He is called the Dragon (Isa 27:1), the same term Revelation uses for Satan (12:9; 20:2).

He is a fascinating study, but we can only say a couple things here. First, in the Psalm, he is nothing but God's pet. As great and horrible a creature as this is, as impossible as it is for men to tame him, he is God's plaything. Second, he is contrasted with Wisdom here. Wisdom created him.

Therefore, Wisdom overpowers him. In a curious story that you might not think is related (**Matt 14:26**), Jesus walks on the chaotic waters of the deep as he comes to his terrified disciples. As some have argued, the image is very much like Jesus riding out on the back of his pet: Leviathan. Jesus is his Superior. Then he calms the sea and chaos is destroyed by nothing but Word.

Salvation: Humanities Place in Creation (27-35)

The song comes to an end in its seventh perfect section by contemplating, as Genesis 1 does, the beasts and man as the climactic highlight of creation. “**These all look to you, to give them their food in due season**” (27), the verse reflects on some of the things just said. “**When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things**” (28). This is about **God’s power** over creation. For he is truly OVER creation, far above it. If God doesn’t give food or seasons, everything ends. No created thing can live apart from his grace.

“**When you hide your face, they are dismayed**” (29). We’ve just seen Wisdom and Power, now **the Face** appears.

This, too, is Christ. He is the Face of God to creation. He is how creation knows about God. He is what creation looks at to understand God.

Therefore, think about what it means for **God to hide the Face**. It is God turning his back on someone, not giving them the gracious presence of Christ. This causes creatures to become **dismayed**. It brings about anger and much sin in men, much like the removing of the sun in the evening brings about darkness. But God isn't positively creating this dismay. It is the natural result of his kind presence leaving a person. And why does he do it?

“**When you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust**” (29). We have to think contextually still. Why do men die? This is what Genesis 3 is all about. As a **consequence of sin**. Therefore, the second half of the verse teaches you why God hides his face. It is for the same reason that he takes away our breath. Sin. This is judgment that rightly falls upon all men, because all sinned (**Rom 5:12-14**). Hence, it isn't from positive evil that God hides his face; it is an act of divine judgment.

However, that isn't the end of the story. It never is in God's word. “**When you send forth your Spirit, they are**

created, and you renew the face of the ground” (30). Notice three things here. First, God’s face is parallel to the face of the ground. Second, man’s breath (*ruach*) is parallel to Spirit (*ruach*). Third, out of death comes new life. It is a wonderful little piece of poetic beauty.

God hides face

Men are dismayed

God takes away ruach (breath)

Men die and return to dust

God sends Ruach (Spirit)

Men are created

God renews the face of the ground.

It is teaching that you need not die forever. You need not be cast away from the good presence of the LORD. For in Christ, in Wisdom, by the Face, through the Power of God, there is hope and newness of life to be found. This is what the Scripture calls **eternal life**.

How does this come to a person? First, **it comes through the Word of God** speaking things that are not into being. This is why it says they are “**created**.” The new birth is a new

creation, and it can happen only because God's Word works to make it come about. It fits perfectly with a song about creation. It is the climactic, greatest work of God's creation, to bring someone to newness of life.

Second, [it comes by hearing the gospel](#). The gospel is the means by which new life is granted, for it is the power of God unto salvation. That is, when you hear about the Power and Wisdom and Face of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, you learn that God is speaking to you about his plan of salvation. Jesus was sent to earth, he came to earth of his own volition, to become a man, frail, needy, hungry, thirsty, able to die, so that he might identify with you as man. But more, so that he might be able to die for your sins so that through repenting of them and trusting in him by faith alone, you could have eternal life.

You have now seen these things today. Through the song you have come to learn about the Creator/creature distinction through [Sovereign](#) God who created the [stability](#) into a creation which was made for you, who [satisfies](#) and [sustains](#) all life through water, food and drink, plants and the earth. You have seen the [shining](#) wonder of the King of Glory who has made this place his temple, and will also make

you his temple if you would believe in him. You have heard of his **superiority** over evil and the devil. And you have been offered **salvation**, the new creation by the Spirit of God that comes so that you will not die the Second Death. Therefore, as much as this word has gone out, may God be pleased to bring a new creation about through its proclamation.

The end of the Psalm is a **doxology** that begins, “**May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works, who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke! (Psalm 104:31-34)**.” It is easy to see this as the poetic equivalent of the LORD God seeing his work on the first six days and saying, “**It is very good,**” as he takes his Royal sabbath rest on the seventh day. As we saw with Psalm 95, you can enter that rest as the Psalmist does again here at the end if you will sing. “**I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my dedication be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD”**“**May my dedication be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD”**” (Psalm 104:31-34). For these things were done for you. Therefore, bless the LORD, O my soul, for the LORD God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is very great.

Appendix:

OT Texts about Creation

Pentateuch/Genesis

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.

⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."

⁷ And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so.

⁸ And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.

¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so.

¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years,

¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so.

¹⁶ And God made the two great lights-- the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night-- and the stars.

¹⁷ And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,

¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens."

²¹ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²² And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds-- livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so.

²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them."

(Gen 1:1-2:1)

⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵ When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up-- for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground,

⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground--

⁷ then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.

¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.

¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush.

¹⁴ And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates."

(Gen 2:4-14)

Wisdom Books

⁷ He stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth on nothing.

⁸ He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not split open under them.

⁹ He covers the face of the full moon and spreads over it his cloud.

¹⁰ He has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary between light and darkness.

¹¹ The pillars of heaven tremble and are astounded at his rebuke.

¹² By his power he stilled the sea; by his understanding he shattered Rahab.

¹³ By his wind the heavens were made fair; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.

¹⁴ Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?"

(Job 26:7-14)

¹ "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

² "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

³ Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.

⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵ Who determined its measurements-- surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶ On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone,

⁷ when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

⁸ "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb,

⁹ when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band,
¹⁰ and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors,
¹¹ and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'?

(Job 38:1-11)

¹² Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

¹³ You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters.

¹⁴ You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

¹⁵ You split open springs and brooks; you dried up ever-flowing streams.

¹⁶ Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun.

¹⁷ You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and winter."

(Ps 74:12-17)

⁹ You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.

¹⁰ You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.

¹¹ The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it, you have founded them.

¹² The north and the south, you have created them; Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your name.

¹³ You have a mighty arm; strong is your hand, high your right hand."

(Ps 89:9-13)

² Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."
(Ps 90:2)

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great!
You are clothed with splendor and majesty,

² covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent.

³ He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters; he makes the clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind;

⁴ he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.

⁵ He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved.

⁶ You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.

⁷ At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight.

⁸ The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them.

⁹ You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.

¹⁰ You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills;

¹¹ they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

¹² Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches.

¹³ From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

¹⁴ You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth

¹⁵ and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.

¹⁶ The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

¹⁷ In them the birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees.

¹⁸ The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers.

¹⁹ He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting.

²⁰ You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about.

²¹ The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.

²² When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens.

²³ Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening.

²⁴ O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

²⁵ Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great.

²⁶ There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.

²⁷ These all look to you, to give them their food in due season.

²⁸ When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

²⁹ When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

³⁰ When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

³¹ May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works,

³² who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke!"

(Ps 104:1-32)

¹ "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

² Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!

³ Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!

⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created.

⁶ And he established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.

⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps,

⁸ fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word!

⁹ Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!

¹⁰ Beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds!

¹¹ Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

¹² Young men and maidens together, old men and children!

¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven.

¹⁴ He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints, for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the LORD!"

(Ps 148:1-14)

²² The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.

²³ Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.

²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth,

²⁶ before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world.

²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,

²⁸ when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep,

²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth,

³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always,

³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.

(Prov 8:22-31)

Prophets

⁷ I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.

(Isa 45:7)

¹¹ Thus shall you say to them: "The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.

¹² It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.

¹³ When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, and he brings forth the wind from his storehouses."

(Jer 10:11-13)

¹³ For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth-- the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name!

(Amos 4:13)

⁵ The Lord GOD of hosts, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell in it mourn, and all of it rises like the Nile, and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt;

⁶ who builds his upper chambers in the heavens and founds his vault upon the earth; who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the surface of the earth-- the LORD is his name.

(Amos 9:5-6)

¹ The oracle of the word of the LORD concerning Israel: Thus declares the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him:

(Zech 12:1)

Appendix: Psalm 104 and the Hymn to the Sun God

Many scholars have noted that close relationship found between Psalm 104 and the Egyptian Pharaoh Ankenaton's Hymn to the Sun. Someone sums it up this way: The references to lions creeping about at night (vv 20–21 ; cf. lines 17–20), man's daytime activities (vv 22–23 ; cf. lines 27–29), the contentment of animals and birds (vv 11–14 ; cf. lines 30–36), activities of creatures and ships of the sea (vv 25–26 ; cf. lines 37–40), the adulation of the creator by creation (v 24 ; cf. lines 58–60), the dependence of man upon God (v 27 ; cf. lines 66–67), waters and mountains (vv 6, 10 ; cf. lines 66–67), and finally the life giving character of the divine being (vv 29–30 ; cf. lines 108–9), all seem to indicate some kind of literary relationship.¹⁸

As I was looking up the hymn, which I have in my Logos library, I stumbled across a couple of others that were not the right one, but which were so close to Psalm 104 I thought it must have been the one they were talking about. In other words, several hymns from Egypt to Canaan resemble this song. How are we to think about such resemblances?

The first thing is to be honest with ourselves. The Bible actually has quite a few places that do this. Even Genesis 1 is similar to stories told by the Babylonians in some respects, and Genesis 2 reminds us of the Garden of the Hesperides of the Greeks. But this bothers some people to the point that they get quite upset if you bring it up to them. It does as much good to ignore these things as it does to be really sick but refuse to go to the doctor because you are afraid of what he might

¹⁸ David G. Barker, "The Waters of the Earth: An Egegetical Study of Psalm 104:1-9," *Grace Theological Journal* 7:1 (Spring, 1986): 60 [57-81].

tell you. No. The Bible is not something we need to be afraid of, even at points like this.

I believe some people have such an allergic reaction to this in part because of the way such resemblances have sometimes been argued by Liberals. It is not uncommon to read Liberal scholarship say things like Israel borrowed *their* stories, because *their* stories were older. The point then could become that this isn't really God's word, but it is the word of the pagans that has been "sanctified" by religious zealots in Israel.

Here are a couple of things to think about as you work your own way through these sometimes difficult issues. First, assume that Israel did borrow them from others. So what? How is the Bible using those stories and how are they different from the pagans? This is the much more important question. We almost always find the pagans deifying natural objects, but then also worshiping them—even as is seen in the Hymn to the Sun. Israel certainly may see a connection between the angels/sons of God and natural objects like wind or water or the sun or moon, but it never worships those things. In fact, in perhaps every single instance what we find the Bible doing is putting those things into their proper relationship to the LORD. He is their Creator too! Therefore, worship him all his angels!

Other times, Israel is clearly doing this to mock the nations. It is polemical in nature. Brian Godawa calls this subversion. Take the story of someone else and use it to your own purposes. This can be a very effective tool, as can be seen by modern Hollywood movies about the Bible, which are usually just pagan takes of the biblical story, reinvented to literally subvert biblical teaching in favor of some pagan worldview. And it works! People end up thinking that Hollywood is telling the Biblical story, even while they fail to recognize that they are taking in paganism in the name of Christianity. There are reasons why paganism is reasserting itself in the West in these last days, and it is in no small measure due to the influence of our entertainment media.

Second, it is much more probable to me that the entire world shared the same stories, because they were originally known to everyone going as far back perhaps to Noah who would have got them from others before the Flood. Just because Israel didn't write them down as early as the Egyptians doesn't mean anything. Their own oral traditions could be far older, but there is no way to prove that either way. Why is it so difficult to think that the pagans were doing the very thing they do today, ripping off the true story, spinning it to their own perverted advantages? Scripture tells us that God in fact left the entire world in darkness and they have been groping around ever since hoping they might reach out and find God. But he gave them over, so their natural thing for them to do is to worship the creation rather than the Creator.

The point is, there are plenty of explanations that make logical sense of such overlaps in stories. We should not be afraid of such things. Rather, we should learn to be honest about them, and be prepared to give an answer to them as we are commanded to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.