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## Is “Mother Earth” God?

The Bishop of Reading is in the newspapers and on the internet this month (October 2020) for having issued a piece of rather confused theology compared to what the Bible actually says. This document shows what the Bible actually tells us, which is itself positive and a good thing in its own right.



Amongst the most well known words in the Bible are the first words of John’s gospel:

*<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

This quotation tells us directly that “The word was God” and that All things were made by him. All things includes the whole earth.

It also tells us that “*without him was not any thing made that was made.*”, so that means that everything in the earth, on the earth and of the earth was made by him.

In the koine greek of the New testament there is no actual word order, instead it is the word endings that tells us how the word applies in modern English.

The phrase in koine greek is:

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος.

**Καὶ** .... is the greek word for “and”, so if we separate out the phrases the one we want to look at is .... **Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος**

**ὁ** .... means “the” (as opposed to “a”) but the word “the” / **ὁ** ... is used for any word that ends in the letters **ος**. Of course there are two words in the sentence which end with the letters .... **ος** and so the word **ὁ** has to, and does, apply to both of them.

**Λόγος**..... means “word” and the word **Θεὸς**.... means God. So it is “The God” was (ἦν) “The word”. If it was trying to say “a god” then it would say **ἦν Θεὸν** ... which would then give it the right word ending but it does not say that, it says, instead, “The God”.



*This fragment of John's gospel is in the library at Manchester University. It is written on both sides showing that it is a copy, and not the original. The fragments is known as P52, the Rylands fragment, and it is dated between 117AD and 138AD, making it the oldest surviving copy of any portion of the New Testament.*

This also is not the only place where we are told exactly this. St Paul also wrote about the world and creation in the letter to the Colossians.

Colossians chapter 1 says at verse 15:

*<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; <sup>16</sup> for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

So we do not just have the author of John's gospel telling us that God created the earth from nothing, we also have St Paul telling us the same thing. St Paul makes quite clear to us that God and Christ created not simply what we see on the earth but everything we do not see as well. Things "*visible and invisible*".

These famous words match the very beginning of Genesis, the beginning of the Bible, and the words assert that Christ was there all the time, and that Christ was a full part of God, and Christ formed the earth.

At 1 Genesis, in the first four verses, it says:

*<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. <sup>3</sup> And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.*

Some translations use the word "void" instead of "empty" because the Hebrew has the claim that there was nothing, nothing at all before God created the earth. This opening passage tells us that God created the earth where it tells us that *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*.

The earth was "*formless*" meaning it did not have any substance – it didn't exist before God *said* .... So God creates by commanding or speaking.

...but here is the really funny thing:

Genesis was written somewhere between 6000 BC and 4000 BC and, whilst we could debate the words used by such ancient people, we have just discovered through the Big-bang theory, in 2000 AD, that the world really was created out of nothing!

Big-bang theory tells us that before the earth, or even all the planets and stars in the universe existed, there was nothing .... Nothing at all! The funny thing is we have only just discovered what the Bible has told us all along.

The idea that there was absolutely nothing is very hard for us to understand even now. One could realistically ask that if there was “matter” then where is the “anti-matter?”, because surely everything has an equal and opposite. Yet scientists not only talk about anti-matter but point to things such as black-holes in space that consume all matter entering them, and so science shows that there really is anti-matter. When matter meets anti-matter then the result is zero, nothing. One cancels the other out completely.

So the Bible clearly tells us that God formed the earth, not the other way around. Therefore concepts such as “mother earth” are fake, God created the world instead ... from nothing!

However, even though God created the earth, God also requires us to take care of the earth and be “stewards” of it.

After God created humankind as male and female, then God blesses them, saying

*“Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” What does it mean for humans to subdue the earth and have dominion over other creatures?*

Taken from Genesis chapter 1 verses 27 to 31.

As Rabbi Yonatan Neril says:

One of the central precepts of Rabbinic Judaism is that the Written Torah (the first 5 books of the Bible) must be understood within the context of the 2,300 year-old rabbinic tradition (including the Midrash and other works) that interprets it. While on the surface the words of this verse appear to give people license to degrade and subdue the earth, the Oral tradition makes clear that a wholly different message is being conveyed.

In part of the Midrash it makes clear that part of human righteousness involves being stewards of the earth. The Midrash says that G-d showed Adam around the Garden of Eden and said, “Look at my works! See how beautiful they are — how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair it.”

So we are to care for the earth and to look after it. We cannot thoughtlessly destroy it.

So God created the earth (*not the other way round*).

God created human beings, both male and females equally, and God requires that we look after, and care for, the earth.

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