

The LORD God, the Creator

God, the Creator, is the first subject introduced in Genesis. Genesis 1:1 presents God's existence without any backstory. Three simple words introduce God – "in the beginning." We are immediately told that God is the responsible agent for the creation of the heavens and the earth. The Hebrew word for God in Genesis 1:1 is Elohim and used 2000x in the OT. The word Elohim is a plural masculine noun, yet the verb "created" is in its singular form in Hebrew. Are these two words "God created" providing the reader the first hint at the triune nature of God? Is this the reason God says let "us" make man in "our" image in v. 26, but in v. 27, man is made in "his" image? Is the Spirit of God in 1:2 the Holy Spirit? Later the reader will meet the "angel of the LORD," who is God (Gen 16, 22:11-15). Is this the Son of God?

Genesis provides no hints as to God's origin, but it reveals much about God's character, nature, and attributes. We know nothing of where He came from or how He came to exist. But He exists. God promises to reward those who believe He exists and seek to know Him (Heb 11:6). In Genesis 2:4, the God who created the heavens and the earth is the LORD God. The Hebrew behind the English word LORD (notice the small caps) is YHWH, pronounced Yahweh or Jehovah. Yahweh is used over 6500x in the Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh) and points to His present-tense existence. It is literally "to be." When Moses asks God for His name, "I am that I am," is what God tells him. And this is what God's proper name Yahweh is built upon (Exo 3:14). He is the self-existing One. Because of the reverence associated with the proper name of God – YHWH, Jews would address the LORD as Lord. Again, notice the small caps v. lowercase. This Hebrew word is 'ādōnāy, translated Lord (master). It was used by Jews to address YHWH without saying Yahweh.

Yahweh is the supreme Being who spoke creation into existence – with words like "let there be light," and there was light. Who can do that? This is a level of power that is incomprehensible. He is omnipotent (all-powerful). He doesn't modify preexisting matter like an ice sculptor who starts with a block of ice and creates something beautiful – He makes His own block of ice and then crafts it into something beautiful. He doesn't get a piece of clay and turn it into a bowl. He made the clay and the bowl. He "calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom 4:17).

Next, we see God communicates, as He called the light "day." He directs humans to be "fruitful and multiply." He prohibits eating from a particular tree in chapter 2. He calls out to Adam and Eve, asking, "Where are you?" in chapter 3. He isn't asking a question because He doesn't know the answer. He asks because questions often start conversations like the one He had with Cain in chapter 4. Bergen writes in the CSB Study Bible, "He is the subject [God] of the first verb [created] in the Bible (in fact, He is the subject of more verbs than any other character) and performs a wider variety of activities than any other being in the Bible"¹ Throughout Genesis, God never ceases to be the main character in the story, actively involved in what is happening. In Genesis 18, God and Abraham are the main characters, fully engaged in negotiating for the lives of residents of Sodom. God exists, communicates, and has chosen to preserve this communication in the Bible.

In Genesis, the reader sees God issuing judgments (curses) (Gen 3:14-17) and making and keeping promises (Gen 3:15). This is of great significance because both the decisions and promises continue throughout the rest of the Bible. In Genesis 6, God declares that He will destroy the world. In chapter 18, Abraham says that God is the just judge. These promises are sometimes called covenants – like the covenant God made with Noah or the one He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These promises are so significant that God subsequently refers to Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exo 3:6). God's love for humanity is seen in His refusal to abandon the human race despite man's disobedience, sin, rebellion, unbelief, and outright wickedness. He fulfills these promises often in spite of man.

Finally, throughout Genesis, God is described in anthropomorphic ways. God is given human characteristics, emotions, and behaviors. This happens first with the word "formed" and when God "breathed" into Adam's nostrils the breath of life (2:7). God doesn't have hands to form and lungs to breathe like a human. In chapter 3, God is heard walking in the Garden, yet God is spirit (John 4:24). He doesn't walk. He is omnipresent. In chapter six, God sees wickedness and has regret and is grieved. In chapter 11, Yahweh comes down to see the city. These descriptions are the only way mere mortals can grasp an incomprehensible God. Yahweh Elohim is God Most High (14:18-22), God Almighty (17:1), and the Everlasting God (21:33). Even with all these anthropomorphic descriptions, comprehending an infinite God is impossible.

¹ Robert D. Bergen, "Genesis," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 5.