

# Did God Create Stars Out of Nothing?

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Most of us learned long ago that God:

- Created the heavens and the earth out of nothing at the beginning of time (Day 1).<sup>1</sup>
- Formed these into the sky, seas, and dry land (Days 2+3).<sup>2</sup>
- Created Adam from the dust of the ground (Day 6).<sup>3</sup>
- Created Eve from one of Adam's ribs (Day 6).<sup>4</sup>

These truths are often taught in grade school Bible history books,<sup>5</sup> and pastors occasionally mention them in sermons, so these details are familiar to most of us.

Less well known is that God reveals He did NOT create wild animals and birds out of nothing. God created them from existing material, the ground. Genesis 2:19 reads, "God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird."

Genesis chapter 1 is an overview of the six creation days. Genesis chapter 2 gives additional details and focuses on people, the crown of God's creation. Both chapters mention that God created birds, wild animals, and people. The more detailed chapter 2 clearly states that birds, wild animals, and people were created from existing material. They were not created directly from nothing. The overview in chapter 1 is less clear about this.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:1-2, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters."

Comment: Since the heavens and the earth were created at the beginning of time, they must have been created from nothing.

Hebrews 11:3, "By faith we understand that the universe was created by God's command, so that what is seen has been made from things that are not visible."

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:6-10, "Then God said, 'Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water.' So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. God called the expanse 'sky.' Evening came and then morning: the second day. Then God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land 'earth,' and He called the gathering of the water 'seas.' And God saw that it was good."

<sup>2</sup> Peter 3:3-6, "First, be aware of this: Scoffers will come in the last days to scoff, living according to their own desires, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? Ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation." They willfully ignore this: Long ago the heavens and the earth were brought about from water and through water by the word of God. Through these waters the world of that time perished when it was flooded."

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 2:7, "Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being."

Psalms 103:14, "For He knows what we are made of, remembering that we are dust."

Ecclesiastes 3:20, "All are going to the same place; all come from dust, and all return to dust."

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 2:21-23, "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. Then the Lord God made the rib He had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called 'woman,' for she was taken from man."

<sup>5</sup> Example 1: James A. Henning and Mary Schmal, *Christlight Old Testament Cycle Set One Teacher's Guide Grades 5+6* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 1999), 9, 16, 17.

Example 2: Board For Parish Education WELS, *Primary Bible History* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 1982), 9-13.

Let's examine the words God uses to describe His creative acts starting with His words describing the creation of people. Note that Genesis chapter 1 often gives a more general description, while Genesis chapter 2 reveals additional details to us.

## People

Genesis 1:26-27 reads,

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth." So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female.

Genesis 2:7 reads,

Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

Genesis 2:21-23 reads,

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. Then the Lord God made the rib He had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called "woman," for she was taken from man.

So these three phrases describe the same act of creating Adam:

- "Let Us make man."
- "He created them male and female."
- "God formed the man out of the dust from the ground."

And these three phrases describe the same act of creating Eve:

- "Let Us make man."
- "He created them male and female."
- "God made the rib He had taken from the man into a woman."

## Birds

Genesis 1:20-21 reads,

Then God said, "...Let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ...He also created every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 2:19 reads,

God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird.

So these three phrases describe the same act of creating birds:

- “Let birds fly.”
- “He also created every winged bird.”
- “God formed out of the ground.”

### Wild Animals

God created land animals on Day 6. Jeske mentions how three groups of land animals are included, when he comments on Genesis 1:24-25,

The sixth day of the creation week was a busy day and a blessed one, for it brought the climax of God’s creative activity. God first created the land animals, which Moses lists under these three categories: livestock (which can be tamed and domesticated), animals that live and move close to the ground (reptiles, insects, worms), and wild animals (those with freedom of movement). This classification is not necessarily intended to be exhaustive; it simply emphasizes certain characteristics. Genesis 2:19 informs us that God used the earth as his material for creating the animals. Once again the Creator expressed his approval of this new phase of his creation.<sup>6</sup>

Genesis 1:24-25 reads,

Then God said, “Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth [*wildlife or wild animals: literally “animal of the earth” in Hebrew*] according to their kinds.” And it was so. So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 2:19 reads,

God formed out of the ground every wild animal [*wild animal: literally “animal of the field” in Hebrew*] and every bird.

So these three phrases describe the same act of creating wild animals:

- “Let the earth produce.”
- “God made.”
- “God formed out of the ground.”

### Other Land Animals

In Genesis 2:19 (above) we saw that God made wild animals out of the ground, but in Genesis 1:24 that same creative act is described as, “Let the earth produce.” In Genesis 1:24 God uses that single command, “Let the earth produce,” to create wild animals and also to create “livestock and creatures that crawl.” Since the command applied to wild animals means that they were formed from the ground, it is most likely that that same command applied to other land animals meant that they too were formed from ground. Jeske agrees with this conclusion, as can be seen from his *People’s Bible* quote above, and from another quote later in this article.

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<sup>6</sup> J. C. Jeske, *Genesis*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 2001), 22.

*Vegetation, Fish, Sun, Moon, Stars*

*Were they created directly from nothing,  
or from previously created material?*

Vegetation

Was vegetation created directly from nothing, or from previously created material? In Genesis 1:11-12 we read, Then God said, “Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds.” And it was so. The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds.

We know from Genesis 2:19 that God formed wild animals “out of the ground,” but in Genesis 1:24 that same creative act is described as, “Let the earth produce,” *[The Hebrew verb the HCSB translates here as “let produce” can also mean “to come forth,” or “to bring out,” or “to proceed.”]*

In Genesis 1:11 quoted above, God uses similar wording to describe the creation of vegetation, “Let the earth produce,” *[This is a different Hebrew verb, which the HCSB translates here as “let produce.” It can also mean “to cause to sprout or shoot.”]*

Could we understand this to mean that God created vegetation from the ground (and therefore not directly from nothing)? I think so. God uses similar wording (“Let the earth produce”) for the creation of land animals and for the creation of vegetation. When applied to the act of creating, the plain meaning of either variation of “Let the earth produce,” is that some ground is formed into that being created. It would be a forced interpretation of the words to understand them to mean creation directly “from nothing.”

Fish

Were fish created directly from nothing, or from previously created material? In three verses of Genesis chapter 1, God describes His creation of water dwelling creatures and of flying creatures. *[In the Hebrew original, “living creatures” includes fish, crustaceans, marine mammals, crocodiles, and all other creatures living in rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans. The Hebrew translated here as “birds” includes birds, flying insects, and all other flying creatures.<sup>7</sup>] We read in Genesis 1:20-22,*

Then God said, “Let the water swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” So God created the large sea-creatures and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So God blessed them, “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

We know from Genesis 2:19 that God formed birds “out of the ground,” but here in Genesis 1:20 that same creative act is described as, “Let birds fly.” God uses the words, “Let the waters swarm” to describe the creation of fish.

<sup>7</sup> Carl J. Lawrenz and John C. Jeske, *A Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 2004), 67-68.

Could we understand this to mean that God made fish from water or mud (and therefore not directly from nothing)? I think this is most likely the case.

The words, “Let the earth produce” used for land animals and vegetation more clearly implies being formed from the ground. The phrase “Let birds fly,” does not in and of itself imply creation from ground. Yet we know from Gen 2:19 that God formed birds from the ground, so by using the phrase “Let birds fly,” God does not mean to imply a creation directly from nothing. To me, the phrase “Let the waters swarm” is very similar to the phrase, “Let birds fly.” The phrase, “Let the waters swarm,” does not in and of itself imply creation from water or ground, but I think in light of all that has been said previously in this article, one may conclude that God formed fish from water, or from the mud at the bottom of the oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers.

### Sun, Moon, and Stars

Now for the sun, moon, and stars. The historical account of their creation is recorded in Genesis 1:14-18,

Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for festivals and for days and years. They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to have dominion over the day and the lesser light to have dominion over the night—as well as the stars. God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness.

My previous line of reasoning regarding the creation of fish applies to the creation of the sun, moon, and stars as well. The phrase “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky” is very similar to the phrase, “Let birds fly above the earth,” and to the phrase, “Let the water swarm with living creatures.” To me, it seems reasonable to conclude that God may have formed the sun, moon, and stars from material created on Day 1. If one is willing to accept that God may have formed all living creatures and vegetation from previously created materials, then it is equally plausible that God also created the sun, moon, and stars from previously created materials.

Table 1.0 Summarizes Our Discussion.

<i>creation of</i>	<i>Genesis 1</i>	<i>Genesis 2</i>

Adam, Eve	“in His own image.” “He created them male and female.”	from “dust of the ground.” from one of Adam’s ribs.
Birds	“Let birds fly above the earth.” “He also created every winged bird.”	“out of the ground.”
Wild Animals	“Let the earth produce...”	“out of the ground.”
Livestock, Crawling Creatures	“Let the earth produce...”	xx
Vegetation	“Let the earth produce.” “The earth produced.”	xx
Fish	“Let the waters swarm with...” “So God created...”	xx
Sun, Moon	“Let there be light in the expanse of the sky.” “God made the two great lights.”	xx
Stars	“Let there be light in the expanse of the sky.” “God made ...the stars.”	xx

### Day 1: Creation Out Of Nothing

We can be certain that in six normal length days God created the universe and everything in it, including time, space, energy, and matter. We also know for certain that God created materials out of nothing on Day 1. Finally, we know for certain that God formed these Day 1 materials into the sky, sea, dry land, birds, wild animals, and people.

### Days 2-6: Creation Exclusively Using Day 1 Materials?

It may be that God formed EVERYTHING He created on Days 2-6 out of materials He created on Day 1. It seems to me that the words God chose to describe his creating acts imply this, but we cannot be certain. Maybe God created the stars or something else out of nothing during Days 2-6. It is not an article of faith whether God created the stars directly out of nothing, or whether He created the stars from materials created on Day 1. Keep this in mind when reading the quotes below. Many of these authors say that God created the stars from Day 1 materials. I am convinced that none of these authors intended to imply that as an article of faith. It would be nice if we would each make clear distinctions, unambiguously separating statements of faith from other claims. Statements of faith are certain, while other claims do not have that level of certainty.

### WELS Authors Speak

WELS authors are not unanimous on some of what we have discussed. Let's look at several authors, starting with Professor Carl J. Lawrenz, who taught Old Testament at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary from 1944 – 1982, and who served as president of the seminary during most of that time. Did God create the sun, moon, and stars out of nothing, or from material He created out of nothing on Day 1? Lawrenz feels this question is unanswered in Scripture. He writes in his commentary on Genesis 1-11,

In the opening verse of Genesis, we heard how in the beginning God created heaven and earth. In verse 2 we were given a description of what the earth was like after this initial creative act. We are not given a similar description of the heavens. We have already noted that God's creative acts during the first three creation days consisted in modifying the earth's initial characteristics. What about God's fiat on the fourth day: "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens..."? Did this divine command merely reconstruct heavenly bodies already created in the rough at the beginning so that they might now serve the earth in various ways as lights? Or were they wholly new creations? We will need to leave these questions unanswered. God simply did not see fit to tell us anything about the relation of the light bearers made on the fourth day to the substance and form of the heavens created at the beginning.<sup>8</sup>

Other authors suggest God created from nothing only on Day 1, then used that raw material in His work of creation on Days 2-6.

John C. Jeske taught Old Testament at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary from 1970-1995. Jeske comments on Genesis 1:1 in *The People's Bible*,

The expression "the heavens and the earth" denotes the universe in its initial state. For his own reasons, God did not see fit to make his creation in its completed form. By an act of his will, God created all of the components that would later constitute the universe as we know it, including matter, energy, space, and time. On the first day, God created all of his raw materials, just as a home builder assembles all the building materials at a site before assembling them into a house.<sup>9</sup>

Cleone Weigand, who served on the LSI Board of Directors and wrote several meditations for the LSI Journal, writes in *The People's Bible Teachings* book on creation,

By means of his word, God created the "original stuff," all matter, all energy. Then God proceeded to make the specific features and creatures. ...It certainly appears that God did not choose to create more stuff as he went along. He chose, rather, to form the new features and creatures from that huge bundle of matter/energy he created on the first day.<sup>10</sup>

George Lillegard comments about Genesis 1:2, 14-19, 24,

Everything was in a chaotic state, without life and without light. The elements out of which the universe was made were all there, but not yet arranged and compounded into the innumerable forms in which they appeared in due course. ...We read next that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." He brooded over it, as it were, imparting His power of motion and His living energy to the chaotic mass, making it thus capable of becoming whatever He might command, so that out of the same limited number of elements an endless variety of substances and material could come. ...On the fourth day God divided the light into the sun, moon, and stars. ...At the beginning of the sixth day God created out of the earth

<sup>8</sup> Lawrenz and Jeske, 61. According to the preface, Lawrenz wrote on the first 4 chapters of Genesis, Jeske wrote the rest.

<sup>9</sup> Jeske, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Cleone H. Weigand, *Creation – God Made All things* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 2000), 45.

the animals and creeping things upon the earth, in every case by merely speaking the words that these things should be.<sup>11</sup>

Werner H. Franzmann served as the first full-time editor at Northwestern Publishing House from 1956-1968 where he began and edited *Meditations*, and edited the *Northwestern Lutheran* (later renamed *Forward In Christ*). He writes in his *Bible History Commentary*,

[Gen 1:1, Day 1] What came from the omnipotent hand of God at the very beginning were “the heavens and earth.” Today we would say “the universe.”<sup>12</sup>

[Gen 1:11-12, Day 3] Good caused the vegetation to appear, not from seed, but from the ground devoid of seed, because none at yet existed.<sup>13</sup>

[Gen 1:14-16, Day 4] The sun, moon, and stars were already there. But they were not doing the work the Creator had in mind –for the benefit of man, the future resident of the earth.<sup>14</sup>

[Gen 1:24-25, Day 6] As we study the words God spoke to accomplish the first part of his work on the sixth day. As God there commanded, “Let the land produce vegetation, etc.,” so here he ordered, “let the land produce living creatures, etc.” But again we must point out that God’s method here was just as miraculous as when he created without an agent. Just as much of his omnipotent power was in the word by which he caused the sterile earth to bring forth the living creatures.<sup>15</sup>

**In Scripture God reveals everything we need to know about our salvation, and fewer details about other matters. Did God create stars directly from nothing? God does not answer this question, so we do not know. Praise God for what He reveals and for what He keeps hidden.**

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<sup>11</sup> George Oliver Lillegard, *From Eden To Egypt -Genesis: The Book Of Beginnings* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 1956), 11, 15, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Werner H. Franzmann, *Bible History Commentary –Old Testament* (Milwaukee: WELS Board for Parish Education, 1980), 13.

<sup>13</sup> Franzmann, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Franzmann, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Franzmann, 23.