



Creation in the Old Testament

Introduction

The concept of Creation or of God as a sole Creator is the major theological theme in the Hebrew Bible and the foundation of the worldview of the biblical authors. Throughout the Bible we can very often find statements about the God who is the Creator of the world. However, the biblical authors usually did not reiterate the creation account of Genesis 1-2 but used the theme of creation to emphasize some other important theological ideas.



Psalm 104

1 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;

Psalm 104

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;

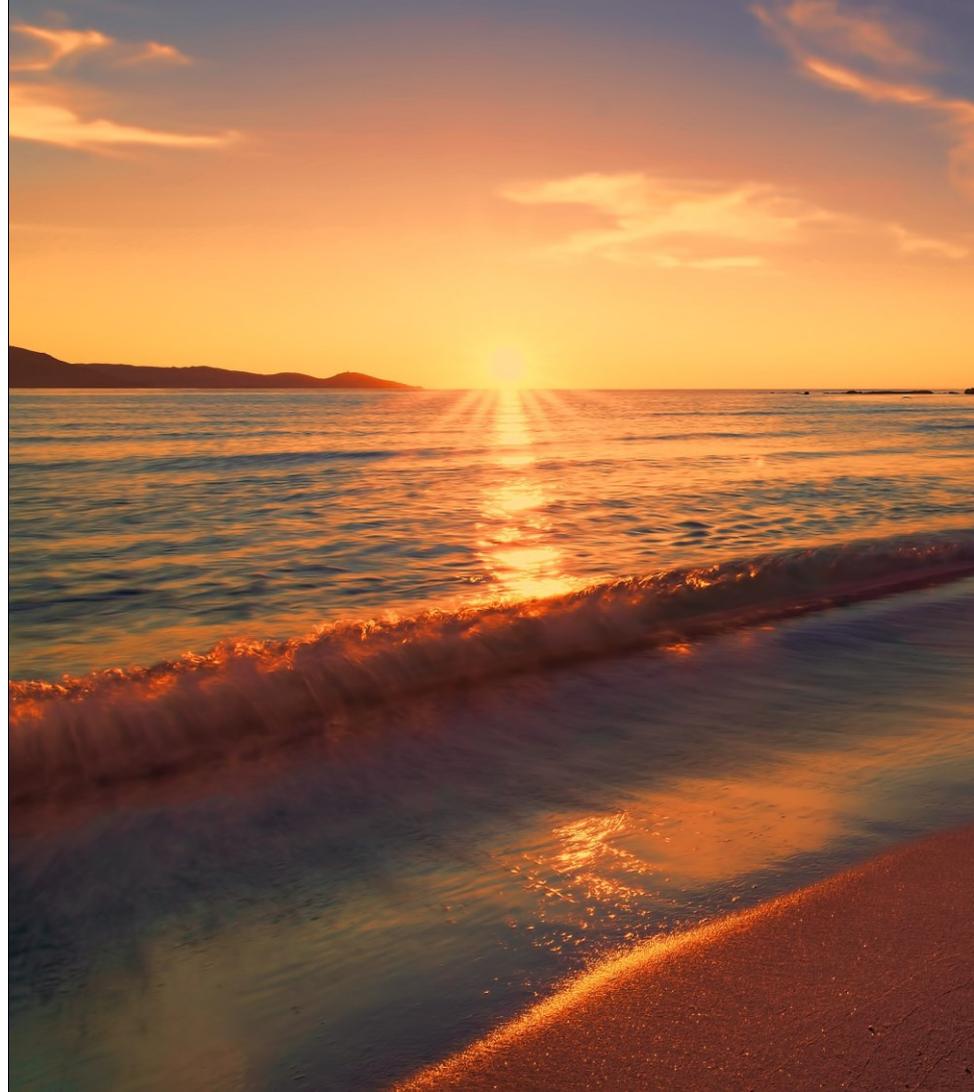
the waters stood above the mountains.

Psalm 104



| Verses | Days of Creation |
|--------|--|
| 1-2 | Day 1: Creation of light |
| 3-7 | Day 2: Creation of atmosphere |
| 8-18 | Day 3: Creation of dry land and the vegetation |
| 19-24 | Day 4: Creation of luminaries |
| 25-26 | Day 5: Creation of sea creatures |
| 27-30 | Day 6: God takes care of all living beings |

Some scholars (e.g. Richard Davidson) argue that the allusion to Sabbath can be found in the final verses of the Psalm.



Did God create wild animals predators from the very beginning?



- 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. (20-21)

Allusion to Flood



- About waters:
- “You set a boundary that they may not pass,
- so that they might not again cover the earth.”
- (Psalm 104:9 ESV)

Purpose of the Psalm

·Evidently, the psalmist presents the creation story from the perspective after the Fall. The purpose of the psalm is not to reiterate the story of Creation but to praise God for his wisdom that is seen in the created nature.



The creation is presented from the functional point of view



- springs give water to every animal (v. 11)
- grass for livestock (v. 14)
- plants for men (v. 14)
- bread to sustain people (v. 15)
- trees for birds to make their nests (v. 17)
- high mountains for the wild goats (v. 18)
- In such a way the psalmist praises God's wisdom that designed everything perfect.

God is presented here as the One who takes care of his creation



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

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

When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.” (Psalm 104:27–29 ESV)

Although here the metaphorical language is used it is clear that the psalmist does not portray God as the one who just idly rests. God is still busy with maintaining the existing order of things.



Kevin Smith

Creation in Prophets

Creation and judgment

The theme of Creation is especially prominent in the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible. In this corpus, the Creation motif is usually saturated with many other theological themes. For example, one of the contexts for the Creation theme is the context of judgment. Since God is the Creator of the world he has right to judge.



Creation and judgment

“He who made the Pleiades and Orion,
and turns deep darkness into the morning and darkens the day
into night,
who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the
surface of the earth,
the LORD is his name;
who makes destruction flash forth against the strong,
so that destruction comes upon the fortress.” (Amos 5:8–9 ESV)

Here the idea of judgment against the strong and against the fortress is described with the use of creation language.

Sin leads to the reversal of the creation order

The creation motif is used to demonstrate the consequences of sin. In general, sin is presented in the Bible as a rebellion against God and it breaks the order of things established by God in Creation.

The earth literally suffers because of the people's sin. For example, because of the sin of the first people the earth was cursed (Gen 3:17).



Sin leads to the reversal of the creation order

·Because of peoples' corruption God sent the Flood and the Flood is presented as a reversal of creation. If in Genesis 1, Creation involved separating and distinguishing various elements (e.g. water from above was separated from water on earth by the so-called firmament), but during the Flood, this order was turned around.



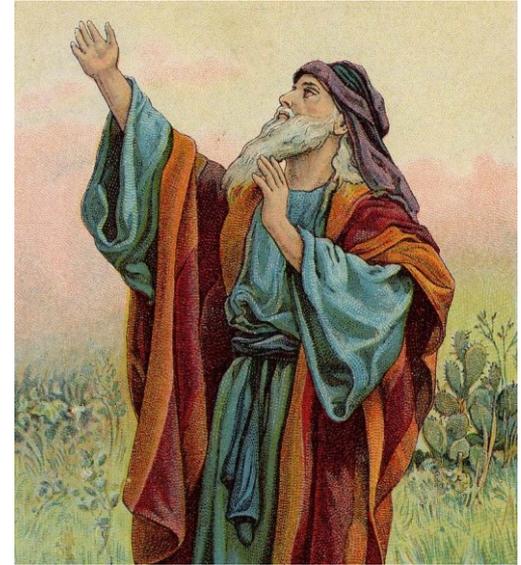
Sin leads to the reversal of the creation order

· Later on, the curses of the covenant (Lev 26, Deut 28) are also presented as a disturbance of the normal order of things, something that destroys the land.



Message of the prophets

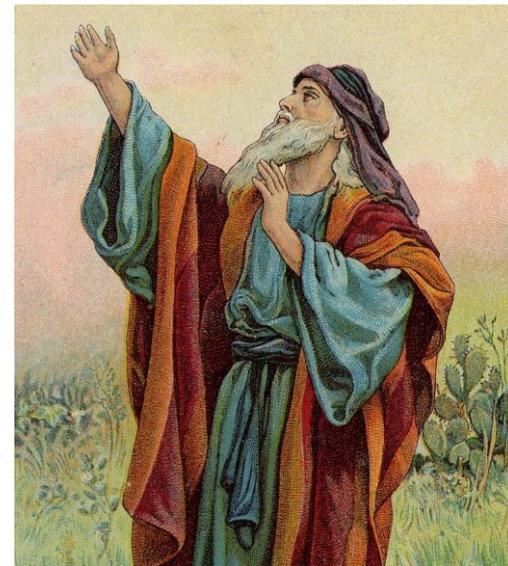
This motif of the reversal of Creation is especially prominent in the writings of prophets. As a rule, prophets were sent when people rebelled against God and broke the covenant; so, one of the main purposes of the prophets was to return people to God. One of the most important subgenres of the prophetic literature is the so-called “covenant lawsuit.” Prophets started a litigation with the people on behalf of God and the curses of the covenant was one of the most important parts of this litigation.



Message of the prophets



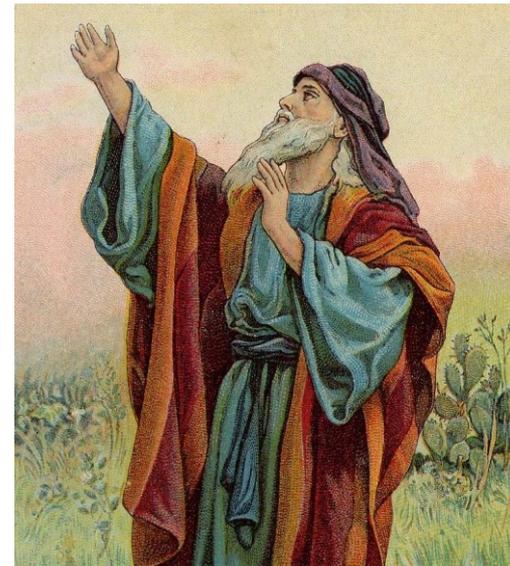
- Because of human wickedness it does not rain (Jer 2:12; 3:3; 5:24-25; 14:4),
- the land is made desolate (Jer 12:10-11; see 23:10),
- the animals and birds are swept away (Jer 12:4; see 4:25; 9:10; 14:5-7; Hos 4:3).



Reversal of the creation order



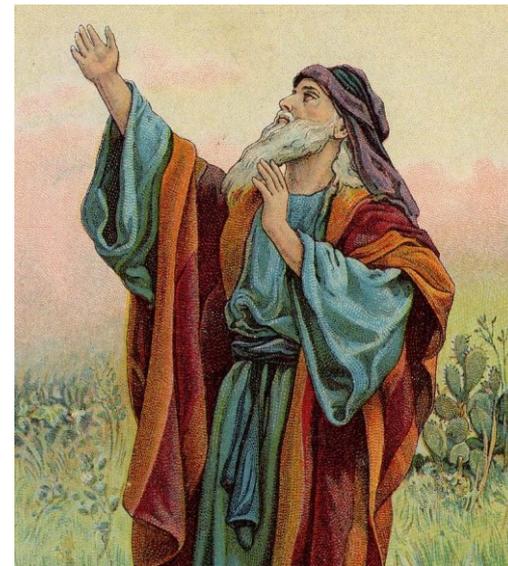
- “I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void [תֵהוּ וְבִהוּ]; and to the heavens, and they had no light.
- I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro.
- I looked, and behold, there was no man, and all the birds of the air had fled.
- I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger.” (Jeremiah 4:23–26 ESV)



Reversal of the creation order



- “I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth,” declares the LORD.
- “I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the rubble with the wicked. I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth,” declares the LORD.” (Zephaniah 1:2–3 ESV)



New Creation

The reversal of Creation requires another important theme—the New Creation. This theme is especially prominent in the book of Isaiah. Thus, Isaiah portrays the exodus from the Babylonian exile as a journey through the desert that became a blossoming garden



New Creation

· “The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;
it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.”

· Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

· then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.
For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

· the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;” (Isaiah 35:1-2; 5-7 ESV)

This picture
is an
allusion to
the Garden
of Eden

New Creation



- “No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.
- They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
- They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

New Creation



- They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them.
- Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.
- The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,"" (Isaiah 65:20–25 ESV)

- “For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain.” (Isaiah 66:22 ESV)

·However, we shall not understand those verses as speaking about the eschatological New Heaven and New Earth.

·Isaiah is speaking there about the restoration of the new nation.



No curses of the covenant

“No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

← “loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, **for he is your life and length of days**, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”
(Deuteronomy 30:20 ESV)

← “You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall ravish her. **You shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but you shall not enjoy its fruit.**” (Deuteronomy 28:30 ESV)

No enmity



The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,"" (Isaiah 65:25 ESV)

· "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

· The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

· The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra," (Isaiah 11:6–8 ESV)

Historical background



- Before the fall of Samaria for about 100 years Judah and Israel were enemies.
- The king of Israel Jehoash defeated Amaziah, the king of Judah and even took some precious items from Jerusalem Temple.
- Since that time, the Southern Kingdom most probably was a vassal state of Israel.
- Pekah, the king of Israel together with Rezin, the king of Syria, even besieged Jerusalem during the reign of Ahaz.

No enmity



“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

“The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, and those who harass Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.”
(Isaiah 11:13 ESV)

·herefore, the metaphor of the New Creation in Isaiah is not about the eschatological creation of new heaven and new earth but about the creation of new nation.

·However, the NT authors (Peter and John) apply the metaphor of new heaven and new earth to the eschatological realities.



New heart metaphor



“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.” (Ezekiel 36:26–28 ESV)

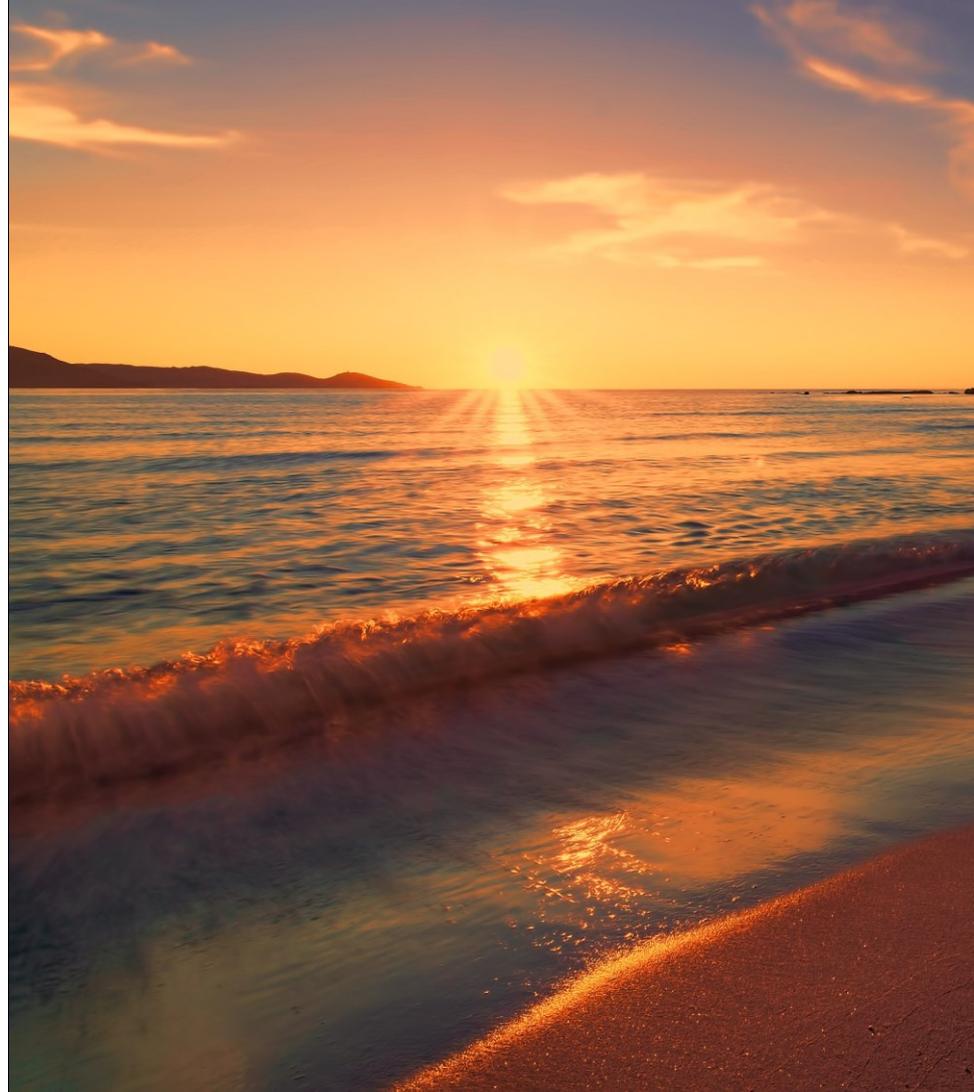
In the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel the metaphor of creation/giving of new heart is used with the same purpose.

Creation and Salvation

· In the book of Isaiah, the themes of Creation and salvation are intertwined, sparking scholarly debate about their relationship.

· Some scholars question whether the theme of Creation stands as an independent doctrine in Isaiah or if it is a subsidiary theme subordinate to the overarching theme of salvation.

· What is worthy of special attention is the question of why Isaiah connects these two themes together.



Creation and Salvation



· “For thus says **the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it** (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): “I am the LORD, and there is no other.

· ...

· Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you survivors of the nations! They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save.

· Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.

· **Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.**” (Isaiah 45:18–22 ESV)

Creation and Salvation

God can save people because he is their Creator. And for the people there is only one way to get salvation—to worship their Creator.

Furthermore, in the book of Isaiah, the salvation is a part of the creative work of God.



“

...in some places he [Isaiah] links creation and redemption so closely together that one is involved in the other. Yhwh's creative acts belong to the history of salvation, ... His redemptive acts are acts of creation...

·Bernard W. Anderson, “Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah, 185.



“

...whatever actions in history may be attributed to Yahweh, they are grounded in a theology of Yahweh as 'creator of the ends of the earth.' In this sense, a theology of creation is prior to and foundational for a theology of history."

·Thomas W. Mann



·Isaiah also links the creation language to the marriage and covenant imagery:

·"Your Maker is your husband" (54:5; cf. 62:3-5).

·It also emphasizes the connection between the concept of Creation and Salvation.





Kevin Smith

Book of Job

In the book of Job, the motif of Creation is prominently featured, particularly in the closing chapters where God poses a series of rhetorical questions to Job, like

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.”
(Job 38:4 ESV)

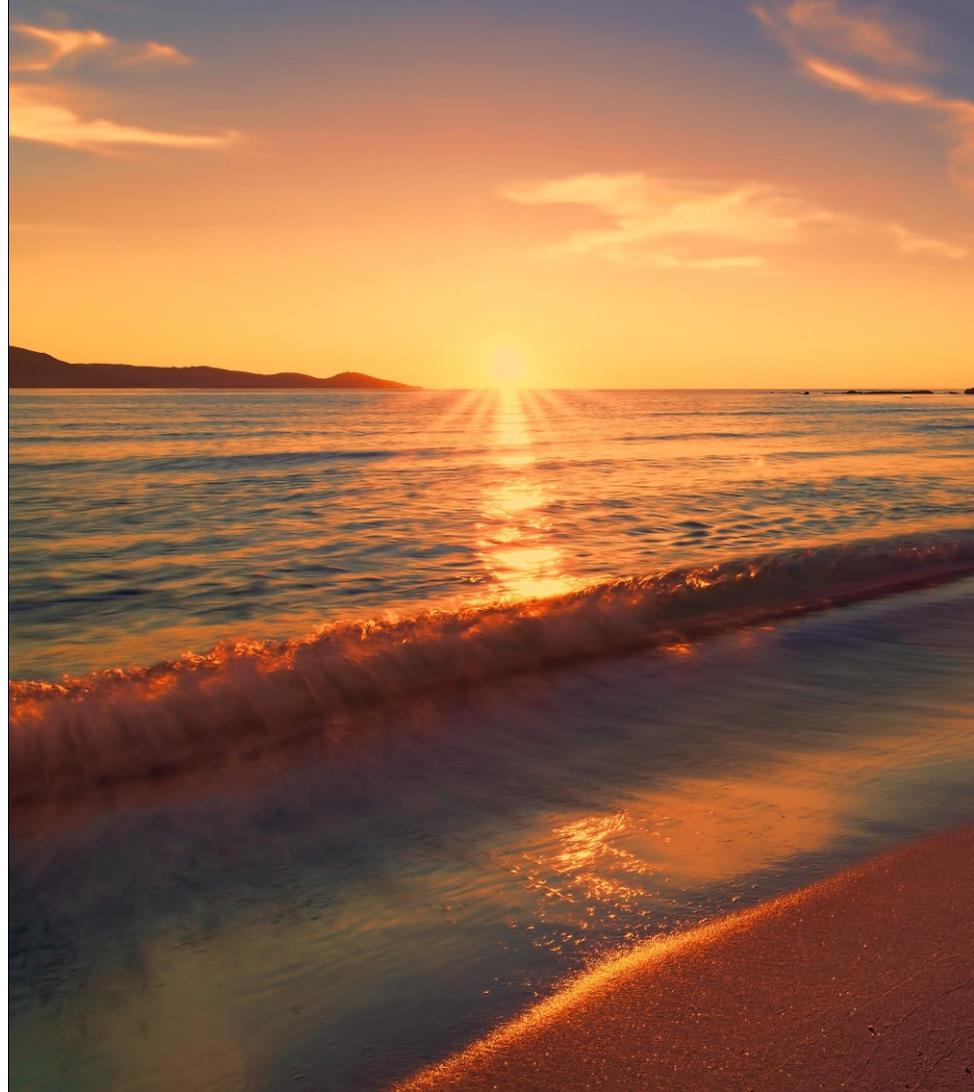


·These questions have an important meaning. They show how powerful and great God is in creating everything, and they also show that humans have limits in their wisdom. God wants to make it clear that only He can create, and He has unmatched wisdom and authority.

·When God talks about the amazing things in nature and how the universe works, it makes Job realize how small he is and how much he doesn't know compared to God.



·“Shall the axe boast over him
who hews with it,
or the saw magnify itself
against him who wields it?
As if a rod should wield him
who lifts it,
or as if a staff should lift him
who is not wood!”
·(Isaiah 10:15 ESV)



The questions asked by God in the book of Job hold significant relevance for contemporary readers. In a world where scientific advancements and technological achievements have expanded our understanding of the universe, we can still find ourselves humbled by the vastness and complexity of God's creation. Despite our progress, we are reminded that our knowledge is limited, and there are mysteries that surpass our comprehension.



·By engaging Job in this dialogue, God demonstrates His care for His creation, including Job himself. The very act of questioning implies that God is interested in Job's thoughts and concerns, and it shows that Job is not forgotten or abandoned in his suffering.

