

# Creation

Creation refers to all that was brought into existence by God. God is also the sustainer of his creation. The creative nature of God calls humans to engage in the creative act.

## Concept Summary

In Hebrew, the concept of creation is most often expressed with the verb אָשָׂא (*‘āśâ*, “to make”; [Gen 1:7](#)). Numerous passages describe God’s creative activity as “making” something, but the verb is also the common word for anyone making or doing anything (compare [Gen 13:4](#); [Exod 18:20](#)). By contrast, בָּרָא (*bārā’*, “to create”) is only used of God’s acts of creation. The verb יָצַר (*yāṣar*, “to form”; [Gen 2:7](#)) frequently refers to God forming or fashioning things like people ([Gen 2:7](#); [Isa 44:2](#)), animals ([Gen 2:8](#)), and mountains ([Amos 4:3](#)), but it may also be used for human craftsmanship ([Isa 44:9–12](#)). All of these Hebrew verbs are employed in the creation narrative of [Gen 1–3](#). The two most important NT words related to the act of creation are ποιέω (*poieō*, “to make”; [Heb 1:2](#)) and κτίζω (*ktizō*, “to create”; [Mark 13:19](#)).

## Theological Overview

The biblical view that all of creation is the sole product of Yahweh’s creative work is a fundamental claim for Yahweh’s sovereignty ([Isa 40:12–31](#)). God’s creation refers to everything he has created, from the divine realm (e.g., heaven

itself and angels), to space and the celestial bodies, to the ground of the earth, to the fish in the sea, to all living things on earth. Human beings are created (*bārā'*) in his image ([Gen 1:27](#)). The OT promises that God will create (*bārā'*) a new heaven and new earth ([Isa 65:17](#)), but many passages also depict God's ultimate redemption of the world in terms of a restoration of his creation back to its original pristine state ([Isa 35:1–10](#); [Ezek 47:1–12](#); [Rom 8:19–21](#)). Outside of [Genesis 1–3](#), creation language is prominent in OT poetry, especially Psalms ([Pss 29](#); [33](#); [74](#); [89](#); [104](#)), Isaiah ([Isa 35](#); [40–55](#)), Job ([Job 26](#), [38–41](#)), and Proverbs ([Prov 8:22–31](#)).

The NT concept of creation is similar to that of the OT, but with one notable development: The new creation ([κτίσις](#), *ktisis*) has dawned with the death and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus ([2 Cor 5:17](#); [Gal 6:15](#)). God's creation (*ktisis*) is awaiting liberation from its bondage and decay at the [second coming](#) of Christ ([Rom 8:19–22](#)). God in Jesus is doing a new thing with his creation (*ktisis*): He is renewing the universe ([κόσμος](#), *cosmos*) and humanity ([2 Cor 5:17](#)). Ultimately, Jesus, the first born over all creation (*ktisis*; [Col 1:15](#); [Rev 3:14](#)), will usher in the new heaven and new earth at his [second coming](#) ([Rev 21:1–3](#)), thereby restoring and renewing creation.

## Lexical Information

### Old Testament

[עָשָׂה](#) (*‘āsâ*). vb. to do or make. Refers to doing or making in general.

Most of the time this verb is used in a general sense of “doing,” “making,” or “performing” various works, actions,

or behaviors. However, it is also used to describe God's acts of creation. In the creation account in [Gen 1](#), God makes ('āśâ) the expanse that separates the waters ([Gen 1:7](#)), the “two great lights” ([Gen 1:16](#)), and the beasts of the earth ([Gen 1:25](#)). God also made ('āśâ) the serpent along with other wild animals ([Gen 3:1](#)). Other books describe God as making ('āśâ) the “heavens with all its hosts” ([Neh 9:6](#)), the fields and the dust of the earth ([Prov 8:26](#)), the sea ([Psa 95:5](#)), humans ([Deut 32:6](#); [Psa 100:3](#)) and, again, the “the heavens and the earth” (e.g., [2 Chr 2:12](#)).

The participle form of 'āśâ means “maker, one who makes”; God is the maker ('āśâ) of the “heavens and earth-” (e.g., [Psa 121:2](#)), the constellations in the sky ([Job 9:9](#)), and humans (e.g., [Prov 14:31](#); [Isa 17:7](#); [Job 32:22](#)). Humans are to worship the Maker ('āśâ; [Psa 95:6](#)).

**בָּרָא** (*bārā'*). vb. to create. *Used only of God creating, never of humans making things.*

This verb is used only of creative acts performed by God. It appears five times in the creation narrative of [Gen 1–2](#): God created (*bārā'*) the heavens and the earth ([Gen 1:1](#); [2:4](#)), the creatures of the sea ([Gen 1:21](#)), humankind in his image ([Gen 1:27](#)), and creation as a whole ([Gen 2:3](#)). It also appears in other books, especially Isaiah. Isaiah says that after the exile God will create (*bārā'*) a cloud of smoke during the day and a flame of fire by night over Mount Zion ([Isa 4:5](#)). God created (*bārā'*) the ends of the earth ([Isa 40:28](#)); the heavens and earth ([Isa 42:5](#); [45:18](#)); human beings in general ([Isa 45:12](#)) and Israel in particular ([Isa 43:1](#)); light and darkness ([Isa 45:7](#)); and righteousness and salvation ([Isa 45:8](#)). He promises to create (*bārā'*) the new heaven and new earth ([Isa 65:17](#)). Psalms also speaks of God creating (*bārā'*)

human beings (Psa 89:47); the heavens, angels, and lights of the sky (Psa 148:5); and north and south (Psa 89:12). David asks God to create (*bārā'*) a clean heart in him (Psa 51:10).

**יצר** (*yāṣar*). vb. **to form, fashion.** *To form from clay, molten metal, or other materials.*

This verb is occasionally used for human actions, including fashioning (*yāṣar*) weapons (Isa 54:17) and idols (e.g., Isa 43:10). Several passages speak of a potter forming (*yāṣar*) vessels from clay as a metaphor for God creating people (e.g., Isa 45:9; 64:8). However, it is more often used of God forming things. It appears three times in the creation narrative, twice concerning the forming (*yāṣar*) of humans from the ground (Gen 2:7, 8) and once of the forming (*yāṣar*) of animals and birds (Gen 2:19). Isaiah speaks of the forming (*yāṣar*) of human beings for his glory (Isa 43:7), to praise him (Isa 43:21), and in the womb (Isa 44:2, 24; 49:5); no other god was formed (*yāṣar*) before Yahweh (Isa 43:10). Jeremiah says that Yahweh forms (*yāṣar*) “all things” (Jer 10:16; 51:19) and specifically the “earth” (Jer 33:2). In Amos, God is the one who forms (*yāṣar*) the mountains (Amos 4:13). In the Psalms he is the one who formed (*yāṣar*) the land (Psa 95:5). He is the one who even forms (*yāṣar*) the “spirit of man” (Zech 12:1).

**קָנָה** (*qānâ*). vb. **to acquire, create.** *Refers typically to acquiring something through purchase or labor. May refer to creating, not just acquiring, in certain contexts.*

This verb is most often used for acquiring property, goods, qualities, or other abstract concepts (e.g., wisdom and knowledge or understanding; Prov 4:5). However, in a few instances it means “to create.” Genesis refers twice to

God as the creator (*qānâ*) of the heavens and the earth ([Gen 14:19, 22](#)). In [Deuteronomy 32:6](#) Moses says that Yahweh, Israel’s Father, created (*qānâ*) them. David says that Yahweh created (*qānâ*) his “inward parts” ([Psa 139:13](#)). Proverbs says that Yahweh created (*qānâ*) Wisdom ([Prov 8:22](#)). It is not always clear which sense of the verb is intended, and in some of these passages it may mean “acquire” rather than “create.”

## New Testament

[ποίηω](#) (*poieō*). vb. **to make, do**. *Describes the act of making, producing, or creating.*

In the NT, this is a very general and frequent word for making and doing. It is only occasionally used for God’s act of creation. This sense appears mostly in four NT books: Acts, Romans, Hebrews, and Revelation. God created (*poieō*) the heavens and the earth (e.g., [Acts 4:24](#)); the author of Hebrews says that God made (*poieō*) the world through his Son ([Heb 1:2](#)) and that what God has created (*poieō*)—heaven and earth—will be shaken ([Heb 12:27](#)). God also made (*poieō*) humans ([Acts 17:26](#); [Rom 9:20](#)), male and female ([Mark 10:6](#); [Matt 19:4](#); compare [Gen 1:27](#)); Paul says that Jesus Christ has made (*poieō*) peace by creating ([κτίζω](#), *ktizō*) Jew and Gentile into “one new human being.”

[κτίζω](#) (*ktizō*). vb. **create or establish**. *To create something.*

In the NT, this word is only used of the creative acts of God. Two-thirds of the occurrences of *ktizō* are in Paul’s letters. God is the creator (*ktizō*; [Rom 1:25](#)), the one who creates (*ktizō*) human beings ([Eph 2:10](#)), male and female ([Matt 19:4](#); [1 Cor 11:9](#)), the new self ([Eph 4:24](#); [Col 3:10](#)), and all things in heaven and on earth ([Eph 3:9](#); [Col 1:16](#)).

κτίσις (*ktisis*). n. fem. **creation**. Usually refers to what is created; occasionally refers to the act of creation.

The noun *ktisis* is related to the verb κτίζω (*ktizō*, “to create”). It can refer to the act of creation but it more often refers to what was created; [Mark 13:19](#) explicitly identifies “the creation” (*ktisis*) with that “which God created (*ktizō*).” In [Romans 1](#) Paul begins his indictment against the ungodly, saying that since the creation (*ktisis*) of the world the invisible qualities of God have been made known to humankind ([Rom 1:20](#)). In [Romans 8:19–22](#) Paul speaks of the groaning creation (*ktisis*) awaiting its liberation. He closes chapter 8 with the famous declaration that nothing in all of creation (*ktisis*) will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ ([Rom 8:39](#)). Paul says that the gospel has been proclaimed to all creation (*ktisis*; [Col 1:23](#)), and that new creation (*ktisis*) has come in Christ ([2 Cor 5:17](#); [Gal 6:15](#)).

κόσμος (*kosmos*). n. masc. **the created world, the universe, all created things**. Refers to all that exists.

This word generally refers to all that exists. A minority of its uses in the NT explicitly connect it with the concept of creation. It often occurs in the phrases “from the foundation (καταβολή, *katabolē*) of the world (*kosmos*)”—i.e., “since the world was created” (e.g., [Luke 11:50](#); [Heb 4:3](#); [Rev 17:8](#))—and “before the foundation (*katabolē*) of the world (*kosmos*)”—i.e., “before the world was created” (e.g., [John 17:24](#); [Eph 1:4](#); [Rev 13:8](#)). The Gospel of Matthew also refers to “the beginning (ἀρχή, *archē*) of the world (*kosmos*)” ([Matt 24:21](#)). [Acts 17:24](#) says that God “made (ποιέω, *poieō*) the world (*kosmos*) and all the things in it,” and [Romans \(Rom 1:20\)](#) similarly identifies God as the creator of the world (*kosmos*).