

From God's Creation to God's Nation

Genesis 1:1 to Exodus 17:16



From God's Creation to God's Nation

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From God's Creation to God's Nation (Adult Sunday School Lesson Winter 2015)

January 26, 2015 / 0 Comments / in [Resources](#), [Sunday School](#) / by [Gabriel Morris](#)

From God's Creation to God's Nation, a Sunday School Lesson, taught by Ed Alsteadt, covering Genesis 1 through Exodus 17. It covers the first four dispensations found in the Bible, as well as the key characters that would eventually establish the Nation of Israel. It also reveals the great and eternal attributes of the God of the Bible.

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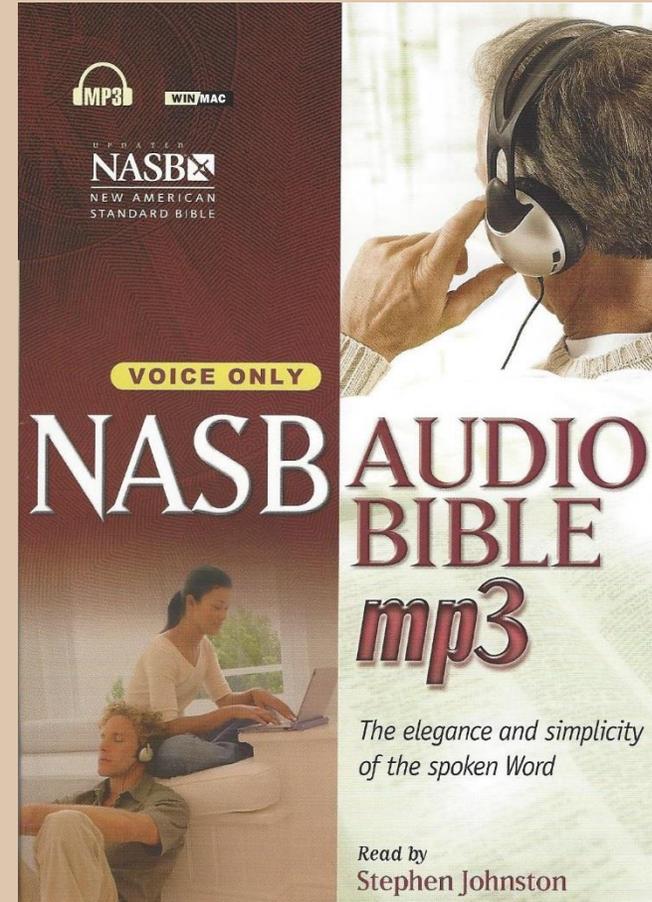
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Part One: Section One

GENESIS 2





From God's Creation to God's Nation

Part One: Section One

Two creation accounts?

The Ridiculous Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP Theory)

“In 1753 Jean Astruc, a French doctor, set forth the theory that Moses compiled Genesis from two documents. Those passages that used the name Jehovah for God came from one source, he wrote, and those using Elohim another. These supposed sources he labeled “J” and “E” respectively.

Later, liberal scholars developed the theory much further, eventually putting all their supposed sources much later than Moses. Other proposed documents were “D” (“Deuteronomic”) and “P” (“Priestly”). The Pentateuch was viewed as a patchwork of sources built up between the ninth and sixth centuries B.C. Popularly, the hypothesis became known as the “JEDP theory.”



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- **J, which uses the name YHWH for God, dates about the 9th century B.C. and comes from Judah;**
- **E uses the name Elohim, dates from the 8th century, and comes from the northern kingdom;**
- **D is Deuteronomy and is supposed to come from the time of Josiah, about 621 B.C.;**
- **P is the priestly element, which deals with matters of the priesthood and ritual, dating to the 5th century B.C. or later.**



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“Some may date portions of Genesis as late as the Hellenistic period. According to this theory, the various documents were blended together by editors, so that there was a JE, JED, and so on.”



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“Several things made the hypothesis attractive to nineteenth-century scholars. First of all it fitted in well with Darwin’s theory of evolution, which was being applied to many fields other than just to biology. Next, the anti-supernaturalistic spirit of the day found delight in trying to put the Bible down on a merely human level. Thirdly, the humanistic trends that replaced divine revelation with man’s efforts dovetailed with this theory.

In 1878 Julius Wellhausen popularized the documentary hypothesis in a clever and deceptively plausible way.” (See appendix 6; Wellhausen Theory by Herman Wouk)



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The Ridiculous Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP Theory)

“Serious problems with the theory include the following:

1. Lack of Manuscript Evidence

There is no manuscript evidence that any of the editorial work proposed in the “JEDP” theory ever occurred.

2. Conflicting and Subjective Fragmentation

Scholars divide the Pentateuch up into fragments quite differently, which exposes the extreme, personal viewpoints and lack of concrete, objective evidence for the theory.



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The Ridiculous Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP Theory)

“Serious problems with the theory include the following:

3. Archaeology

Archaeology has tended to support the writing, customs, religious knowledge, etc., of the Pentateuch as being very ancient, and definitely not from the much later period of composition proposed by the Wellhausen theory.

4. Linguistics

Supposedly “late” language forms and personal names found in the Pentateuch have been found in sources well before the time of Moses. An example is the recently unearthed “Ebla tablets,” which contain many Pentateuchal names.



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“Serious problems with the theory include the following:

5. Unity of the Pentateuch

Editorially, the five books of Moses hold together very well and exhibit a unity and coherence that is most difficult to reconcile with the alleged evolutionary “scissors and paste” origins of these books.



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The Ridiculous Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP Theory)

“Serious problems with the theory include the following:

6. Spiritual Bankruptcy

Finally, from a spiritual viewpoint, the documentary theories, even as modified by archaeology and other similar theories, are unworthy of the great and beautiful truths enshrined in these books. If these theories were true, the Pentateuch would be, in the words of Dr. Unger, “unauthentic, unhistorical, and unreliable, a fabrication of men, not the work of God.”



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Quotes from those who hold to the JEDP Theory

“Whether P himself or a later redactor combined the two Creation accounts remains open to debate. Whoever it was knew better than to expurgate or revise either version, recognizing that both are needed in their appropriate times. The interpretation of the two messages that has just been offered does not depend for its validity on the dating of the two sources. Such circumstances reoccur. The sober presentation of J is needed again, whenever life seems firmly under human control, as is the message of P, when the world seems to have gone completely out of control. A Hasidic teacher, Rabbi Bunam, summed up the need for both messages in this saying, ‘A man should carry two stones in his pocket. On one should be inscribed, ‘I am but dust and ashes.’ On the other, ‘For my sake was the world created.’ And he should use each stone as he needs it.”



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Quotes from those who hold to the JEDP Theory

“Like P, the J creation account begins with a temporal clause, this time one that describes the precreation state as a waterless, lifeless desert. There may be echoes here of the Canaanite myth of Baal’s struggle with a demonic adversary Mot (Death), as there are similar reminiscences of the combat myth of the creator-god Baal versus the Sea in 1:1-2 (→ Baal). The Israelite adaptation and reuse of the Canaanite myths of Baal versus the Sea in Genesis 1 and of Baal versus Death in his desert domain in Genesis 2 recall Yahweh’s victory over the sea (Exod. 14-15) and the desert (Exod. 16-17) in the creation of Israel.”



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Quotes from those who hold to the JEDP Theory

“The water from the earth transforms the desert into a garden filled with the bounty of the earth; in the center of the garden stand the tree of life, a common ancient Near Eastern motif, and the tree of knowledge (→ Tree of Life, The).

Yahweh's first act of creation in J is the creation of a man from the clay produced by the mixture of the water and dry earth of Gen. 2:6, enlivened by the divine breath (→ Adam; Adamah; Flesh and Spirit). The man's responsibility in Eden, whose abundance comes from Yahweh and not from any of the fertility gods of polytheism, is to cultivate the garden and to obey the divine prohibition of eating from the tree of knowledge (→ Eden). The naming of the animals by the human being (vv. 19-20) is J's way of indicating human dominion over the created world (as in 1:28-30); it recalls the divine name giving in Genesis 1.”



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Quotes from those who hold to the JEDP Theory

“The J creation account reaches its climax in the creation of woman as a helping counterpart to the man; the creation of woman from man does not imply subordination, any more than the creation of the man from the earth implies subordination. The subordination of woman to man is effected by the frustration of the divine intention of equality.”

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Two creation accounts?

“From the earliest days of the Documentary Theory, a principal line of argument resorted to for proving the existence of Diverse Sources in the Pentateuch has been the asserted existence of doublets and parallel accounts. The two creation accounts, the differing strands in the flood narrative, the three namings of Isaac, and the like, have assertedly resulted from a clumsy combination of diverse traditions of the same event. Some later editor or redactor has allegedly gathered these all together in such a way as to leave many of the discrepancies still in the text, making possible a scientific disassembling of the parts by a discerning critic. This type of analytic dissection has its principal appeal to those who are already committed to the theory of multiple authorship. Those who come to the text with an open mind fail to note any such divergences as they read it through.”



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“There is, however, an element of recapitulation involved here, for the creation of the human race is related all over again (cf. Gen. 2:7 and 1:26–27). But actually this technique of recapitulation was widely practiced in ancient Semitic literature. The author would first introduce his account with a short statement summarizing the whole transaction, and then he would follow it up with a more detailed and circumstantial account when dealing with matters of special importance. To the author of Gen. 1–2, the human race was obviously the crowning, or climactic, product of creation, and it was only to be expected that he would devote a more extensive treatment to Adam after he had placed him in his historical setting (the sixth creative day).”



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Two creation accounts?

“It is often claimed that Genesis 1 and 2 contain two different creation-narratives. In point of fact, however, the strictly complementary nature of the ‘two’ accounts is plain enough: Genesis 1 mentions the creation of man as the last of a series, and without any details, whereas in Genesis 2 man is the centre of interest and more specific details are given about him and his setting. There is no incompatible duplication here at all. Failure to recognize the complementary nature of the subject-distinction between a skeleton outline of all creation on the one hand, and the concentration in detail on man and his immediate environment on the other, borders on obscurantism.”



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Two creation accounts?

“Only two lines of evidence have been urged in favour of a double narrative: a differing style and theological conception in Genesis 1 and 2, and a supposedly different order of creation in each narrative. The stylistic differences are meaningless, and reflect the differences in detailed subject-matter, while the supposed contrast of a transcendent God in Genesis 1 with, naive anthropomorphisms in Genesis 2 is vastly overdrawn and, frankly, illusory. The same may be said of the order of events. In Genesis 2:19, there is no explicit warrant in the text for assuming that the creation of animals here happened immediately before their naming (i.e., after man’s creation); this is eisegesis, not exegesis. The proper equivalent in English for the first verb in Genesis 2:19 is the pluperfect (‘...had formed...’). Thus the artificial difficulty over the order of events disappears.”



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Two creation accounts?

“Until recently, the doctrine known as the Theory of Documents was counted among the strongest edifices of science. Although it was still designated a 'theory' as at the time of its formulation, it seemed as if this, its original character, had been entirely forgotten, and that a kindly fate had saved it from being mortal like other scientific hypotheses. There was not a scholar who doubted that the Torah was compiled in the period of the Second Temple from various documents or sources: one source was J [Jahwist], which used the name YHWH from the beginning of the story of Creation; another source was E [Elohist], according to which the Tetragrammaton was first revealed to Moses, and hence it employed the designation 'Elohim in all the narratives preceding the revelation of God to Moses on Mount Horeb; a third was P [Priestly Code], which emanated from priestly circles and also refrained from mentioning the name YHWH before the generation of Moses; there was still a fourth source D, which comprises the main part of the Book of Deuteronomy.”



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“Those who opposed the theory and suggested in its stead different solutions of the problem under discussion, found no support for their proposals; each one of them remained isolated and failed to induce any of the other investigators to forsake the successful view favoured by fortune in order to follow him. Possibly this was due to the fact that many of the opponents did not use correct scientific methods, and that even those whose scientific approach was beyond cavil did not succeed in advancing acceptable interpretations of their own. Be this as it may, the documentary hypothesis enjoyed a position of absolute domination in the scientific world.”

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Two creation accounts?

“The arguments in favour of the differentiation of various documents in the Book of Genesis, which constitute, as we have explained, the pillars supporting the entire structure of the documentary theory, are five, to wit:

- a) the use of different names for the Deity; ◀**
- b) variations of language and style;**
- c) contradictions and divergences of view;**
- d) duplications and repetitions; ◀**
- e) signs of composite structure in the sections.**

These five pillars we shall examine in the coming lectures. We shall see if they rest on a firm foundation, if they are hewn from hard rock, and if they are strong enough to bear the weight of the structure. As a result of our investigation, we shall be able to decide whether the building can still be considered solid and sound, or whether, on the contrary, it is something that is irretrievably doomed.”

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Two creation accounts? a) **the use of different names for the Deity**

“Before we undertake to solve this problem, we must first consider the character of the two Names. They are not of the same type. The designation 'Elohim was originally a common noun, an appellative, that was applied both to the One God of Israel and to the heathen gods (so, too, was the name 'El). On the other hand, the name YHWH is a proper noun, the specific name of Israel's God, the God whom the Israelites acknowledged as the Sovereign of the universe and as the Divinity who chose them as His people. Let me cite a parallel by way of illustration. A certain city may be called Jerusalem or simply city. The appellation city is common to her and to all other cities; the name Jerusalem belongs to her alone. When the ancestors of the Jewish people realized that there is but One God, and that only 'YHWH, He is 'Elohim' [1 Kings 18:39], then the common substantive 'Elohim also acquired for them the signification of a proper noun, and became synonymous with the name YHWH.”



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Two creation accounts? a) **the use of different names for the Deity**

“If Jerusalem had been the sole city in the world of those who spoke Hebrew, then of course the word city would have become a proper name, synonymous with Jerusalem. This was actually the case in the past, at the time when Jerusalem was the one important city in the country. But as a rule synonyms are not quite identical in meaning, and this is true in the present instance, too. The original connotation of the name 'Elohim, its use as an appellative, could not be completely forgotten. It was impossible for one who spoke or wrote Hebrew not to be aware that only the name YHWH expressed the particular personality of Israel's God; and on the other hand, he could not fail to be conscious of the fact that the deities of the Gentiles were also designated 'Elohim, and that only when all the nations would recognize, as did Israel, that 'YHWH, He is 'Elohim', 'would YHWH be One and His name One' [Zechariah, 14:9].”



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Two creation accounts? a) **the use of different names for the Deity**

“In the story of Creation, God appears as the Creator of the physical universe and as the Lord of the world, who has dominion over everything. All that exists was formed by His fiat alone, without direct contact between Him and nature. Hence, according to our rules, the Bible should use here the name 'Elohim; in point of fact, only 'Elohim occurs throughout the section.”



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Two creation accounts? a) **the use of different names for the Deity**

“In the story of the Garden of Eden, on the other hand, God is portrayed as the moral Ruler, for He imposes a certain injunction on man, symbolic of the ritual precepts that are subsequently to be given to Israel, and He requires an accounting from him for his actions. This apart, emphasis is laid here on His personal aspect, exemplified in His direct relations with man and the other creatures. For these reasons, the Tetragrammaton was required here; and this is precisely what we find (only in the words of the serpent, who represents the principle of evil, and in the speech of the woman when she converses with him, is this Name, out of reverence, not used). Although some details of the story show a certain connection with non-Israelite traditions, these are but details; the heart of the narrative is its moral content, and it is this that decides the choice of the Divine Name.”



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Two creation accounts? a) **the use of different names for the Deity**

“In this section, the Tetragrammaton is linked with 'Elohim in the compound expression YHWH 'Elohim. This fact is easily explicable on the basis that Scripture wishes to teach us that YHWH, who is mentioned here for the first time, is to be completely identified with 'Elohim mentioned in the preceding section; in other words that the God of the ethical world is none other than the God of the physical world, that the God of Israel is the God of the entire universe, that the names YHWH and 'Elohim point only to two different aspects of His activity, or to two different ways in which He reveals Himself to the children of men. Having imparted this teaching here, there is no need to reiterate it later; hence, in the subsequent chapters, the Bible uses either the Tetragrammaton or 'Elohim alone, according to the context.”



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Two creation accounts? a) **the use of different names for the Deity**

“We started with the first pillar, the variations in the use of the Divine Names, and a detailed study of the subject showed us that these changes depended on the primary signification of the Names and on the rules governing their use in life and literature, rules that applied to the entire body of Biblical literature and even to post-Biblical Hebrew writings, and are rooted in the literary traditions common to the peoples of the ancient East. Since we saw that these factors fully solved the problem of the changing of the Divine Names—leaving nothing unexplained—on the basis of principles that are radically different from those of the documentary theory, we came to the conclusion that the first pillar is void of substance.”



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Two creation accounts? b) **variations of language and style**

“We then approached the second pillar, the inequalities of language and style, of which we examined the most important examples. As a result of this investigation we found that these linguistic disparities, in so far as they really existed, could be explained with the utmost simplicity by reference to the general rules of the language, its grammatical structure, its lexical usages, and its literary conventions—general rules that applied equally to every Hebrew writer and every Hebrew book. We thus saw that in this respect, too, there was no question of different documents, and that the second pillar was only an empty delusion.”



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Two creation accounts? c) **contradictions and divergences of view**

“Thereafter, we probed the third pillar, the differences in the subject-matter of the sections. We made a study of some of the most significant and typical instances of these divergences, and we learnt that where there were actual discrepancies between the sections, they were not of a kind that could not be found in a homogeneous work. On the contrary, such incongruities were inevitable in a multi-faceted book like the one before us, which contains materials of varied origin and character, and consequently presents its themes from different viewpoints. Hence we concluded that the third pillar was also incapable of withstanding criticism.”



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Two creation accounts? d) **duplications and repetitions**

“Anyone who reads the Book of Genesis cannot fail to notice that many stories occur twice, and a few even three times. Upon closer study he will also see that the duplications and triplications are of two kinds. Sometimes the parallel sections appertain—or are considered to do so—entirely to one subject, which is depicted in each of them in a different form and with variation of detail. Such, for instance (it is the classic example that is constantly quoted), are the first section of the Book of Genesis—the story of the creation of the world—and the beginning of the second section—on the Garden of Eden—which is also regarded as a second account of the story of Creation. These examples may be termed 'Duplications'. At other times, the parallel sections are concerned with events that are unrelated to each other but yet are so similar in their principal motifs, that one may conjecture that they are simply divergent developments of a single narrative. Such passages, in which the Bible reverts to given themes on different occasions, may be called 'Repetitions'.”



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Two creation accounts? d) **duplications and repetitions**

“The classic instance of repetition—it is usually the first to be quoted—is that of the narratives that describe the experiences of the Matriarchs in the palaces of foreign kings: Sarah in Egypt (Gen. xii 10–20); Sarah, again, in Gerar (Gen. xx); Rebekah, likewise in Gerar (Gen. xxvi 7–11). The occurrence of duplications and repetitions is considered to be one of the most conclusive proofs in favour of the ruling documentary theory. It is held to demonstrate clearly that the redactor had before him various sources that told the same story in different ways, or presented different versions of an ancient tradition; he accordingly extracted from each of them what he found ready to hand and incorporated the whole material into his compilation, without concerning himself with the fact that in doing so he was repeating one theme two or three times, or was recapitulating a single event in two or three conflicting forms.”



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Two creation accounts? d) **duplications and repetitions**

“In connection with the Pentateuchal narratives, the significance of these repetitions is distinctly referred to in Joseph’s statement to Pharaoh, when he interpreted his dream: And the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass (Gen. 41:32). The Torah itself tells us here explicitly what the reiterations signify, and testifies that it is accustomed to repeat its teachings when it desires to inform us that a matter is established by God and that He will shortly bring it to pass. This is a case, then, of intentional recapitulation, and not something that happened by chance in the course of the work of some later redactor.”



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Two creation accounts? d) **duplications and repetitions**

“After this, we proceeded to the fourth pillar, the duplications and repetitions. We considered classical illustrations of each of these categories, and we clearly saw, as a result of our study, that underlying both of them was a specific intention, which was reflected not only in the final redaction of the sections but was evident even in their original composition. We consequently decided that the fourth pillar was not stronger than the preceding three.”



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Two creation accounts? e) **signs of composite structure in the sections**

“Finally, we turned our attention to the fifth pillar, the composite sections. For the purpose of investigating the conventional theory regarding the division of these sections, we examined in detail one of the most characteristic examples of this analysis, and we realized that this hypothesis relied on evidence that in truth did not point to a composite text; on the contrary, exact study revealed unmistakable and conclusive indications of a close connection between the parts of the section that were considered to belong to different sources. From all this, we judged the last pillar to be likewise without foundation.”



“The more I reflect upon the matter, the more convinced I am that if there is meaning to the universe, the key to that meaning is to be found in the birth and death of Jesus Christ, the Second [Last] Adam, because the physical world itself was required in order that these two unique events could take place. And these unique events were required that God might by a process of Redemption show forth His love toward an order of beings whose very existence was made dependent upon the creation of just such a physical world.”

Arthur C. Custance