

The Lord Is a Great God and a Great King Above All Gods

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A number of Bible verses, predominantly in the Psalms, compare the revealed God of the Bible to various gods worshiped in the ancient Near East. Many of us may gloss right over them. We mentally file away such passages as descriptions of primitive, superstitious people who worshiped anything and everything, much like the Greeks the Apostle Paul addressed on Mars Hill who wanted to make sure they had all the bases covered by not neglecting any god in worship for fear of incurring divine wrath. Sadly, we often miss the point of these passages, which is not meant to simply convey men's superstitions but is intended to reveal the sovereignty of our God over all creation and to discredit the gods of other peoples as impotent and worthless.

Indeed, one of the many challenges directed at biblical creationists is “if we teach about your God, why not teach about the many other gods in the world?” That is, what really separates the God of the Bible from the gods of this world?

After God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians at the Red Sea, Moses wrote, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exodus 15:11). One of the reasons the Lord sent the plagues upon Egypt before the Exodus was to judge the false gods of Egypt: “For the Egyptians buried all their firstborn, which the LORD had smitten among them: upon their gods also the LORD executed judgments” (Numbers 33:4). The psalmist wrote, “For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens” (Psalm 96:4–5).

The emphasis of these, and numerous other biblical passages, is that when we compare other gods to the Lord, we can see how bankrupt they are in majesty and power to the revealed Creator God of the Bible. Although there are many lines of comparison that we could use, we'll choose just four particular areas: creative acts, motives, morality, and eternity.

Creative Acts

The first thing the writers of Scripture stressed in these passages is the creative acts of God. Our God is the creator of all things, and He created all things for His pleasure. At the conclusion of the sixth day of creation, Moses records God's thoughts: “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Genesis 1:31). In heaven, the twenty-four elders say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11). And speaking of Christ as part of the Godhead, the apostle Paul writes, “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16–17). John tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1–3). Clearly our God is an omnipotent God.

Let us consider some of the gods of various mythologies to see how their creative works are recorded. The Egyptians have three different sets (mythos) of creation accounts. In the Heliopolis mythos, in the beginning there was only primeval water named Nun. Out of this water arose the god Atum who created a mound of earth to stand on. Atum sneezed out the air god, Shu, and spat out the moisture goddess, Tefnut. The offspring of these two were the sky goddess, Nut, and the earth god, Geb. The offspring of Nut and Geb were the original pantheon of four Egyptian gods. Each god or goddess was then responsible for different creative acts or attributes. In the Hermopolis mythos, a giant cosmic egg ascended out of the primeval water and gave birth to the sun god, Ra, who then produced the other gods. In the Memphis mythos, the god Ptah was the primeval water who formed himself into dry land and gave birth to the Egyptian pantheon, to whom he delegated further creative acts. In all these myths, there is no mention of the creation of man; it was left to a lesser god, Khnum, who fashioned man out of clay from the Nile River.

In Greek mythology, in the beginning was Chaos, a cosmic void, which asexually produced Gaia, the earth goddess. She in turn asexually produced Ouranos the sky god with whom she mated to produce the Titans who deposed Ouranos. The Titans were later led by Cronos who was overthrown by Zeus and the rest of the classical Greek pantheon of gods. Much later, a Titan named Prometheus created man; while even later, Zeus ordered Hephaistos to create woman.

In Sumerian mythology, there were four creator gods: An, Ki, Enlil, and Enki (heaven, earth, air, and water). Each god created his namesake and then gave birth to other gods. Mankind was fashioned out of clay at some later time.

In Mayan mythology, gods such as Heart of Heaven and Quetzalcoatl are said to have created the earth. Mankind was later created out of maize (corn) because the first two creations of man from clay and wood had failed and been destroyed.

In Norse mythology, a foggy void between the lands of fire and ice produced a primeval cow, the god Buri and the Frost Giant Ymir, who was later killed by Odin, a grandson of Buri. Ymir's flesh became the earth, his bones the mountains, his teeth became rocks and his blood became rivers lakes and seas. Mankind was created later by three gods; Odin gave them life, Vili gave them intelligence, and Ve gave them the five senses.

These few extremely condensed creation myths are enough to show that the various mythological gods associated with creative works are not regarded as all-powerful, or all knowing. In many cases a creative god had to cooperate with other gods, kill or maim other gods, or even practice trial and error methods in order to create.

Furthermore, the majority of the creation myths do not strictly speak of an eternally pre-existent god or of creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), but rather something (primordial air or water usually) gave rise to a god or gods who then from their own essence created particular components of the cosmos. The late Dr. Henry M. Morris, in his excellent commentary, *The Genesis Record*, suggested that Satan believes that he was not created, but that "all of the angels as well as God Himself had just arisen from the primeval chaos ... and that it was only an accident of the priority of time that placed him, with all of his wisdom and beauty, beneath God in the angelic hierarchy." If that were the case, it would be natural for fallen man to carry forward mythologies in which a god came forth from nothingness, as Satan desires to be worshipped as God, and we know that idols and false gods really are surrogates for demonic worship (Deuteronomy 32:17; 1 Corinthians 10:20). Sadly, many fall into this sort of trap: worshipping the creature, rather than the Creator.

Regarding the creation of man, in Genesis 1:26 we see that God did not just speak mankind into existence; first, God spoke to the other members of the Trinity. Mankind would be a special creation—in the image of God, and given dominion over the rest of creation. Furthermore, God took special care with this creation.

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. (Genesis 2:7, 21–22)

From this creative act we can clearly see that man's creation was not an afterthought, it was the pinnacle of His creation. And God saw that it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18), so the creation of woman was obviously a good thing. In contrast, Greek mythology's Zeus ordered Hephaistos to create woman as a punishment for man. He created Pandora and gave her to her husband. It was Zeus' intention that woman would hinder and afflict man, so he gave her a box filled with evils which she was commanded not to open. Of course, Pandora opened the box, as Zeus fully anticipated she would, unleashing death, bloodshed, and other ills upon mankind. In the box, however, was one good thing: hope. This seems to be the Greeks' interpretation of the Genesis curse and promise of a Savior, which they clearly did not understand.

Motives

Besides differences in the creative acts, the mythological gods differ from the true God in their motives. Most mythologies describe the creation of man as an afterthought (Egyptian, Buddhism), a means to irritate another god (Greek and Roman), a means of sustaining the gods (Mayan, Aztec, and Sumerian), the direct progeny of the gods (Hinduism), or a means of aiding the gods in future conflicts (Norse). For the Mayans and Aztecs, mankind was created to worship and offer sacrifices to the gods in order that the gods did not perish. In Sumerian mythologies mankind was created to supply the gods with food, drink, and shelter so that the gods might have leisure for their divine activities. In Norse mythology, mankind was created to produce great warriors who, after dying on the battlefield, would ascend to Valhalla. Odin would then utilize these extra troops at the final doom of the gods in the hopes of changing the god's fated destruction. In Hinduism mankind exists to feed, clothe, bathe, and sometimes even awaken their gods. The dominant theme in all of these mythologies is

that the gods, while more powerful than mortals, still need mankind for some purpose or benefit to themselves. These gods are not totally self-sufficient, but require worship or sustenance or sexual union with mankind in order to prosper.

Jehovah God, on the other hand, needs nothing from His creation. Although God seeks fellowship with mankind and has sent His son Jesus Christ to reconcile mankind to God, He is not dependent on our worship, nor does He need anything from humankind.

The God who has made the world and all things which are in it, He, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor is served by men's hands as needing something, Himself giving to all life and breath and all things. (Acts 17:24–25)

For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Or who has first given to Him, and it shall be rendered to him? For of Him, and through Him, and for Him are all things: to Him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:34–36)

God's motive for the creation of man, according to the Bible is to glorify and worship God.

Among the gods there is none like unto Thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto Thy works. All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord; and shall glorify Thy name. For Thou art great, and doest wondrous things: Thou art God alone. (Psalm 86:8–10)

Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD. (Psalm 150:6)

Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest. (Revelation 15:3–4)

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

Morality

The behavior and character of the mythological gods is vastly different from the Christian God. The gods are usually depicted as selfish, arrogant, sadistic, lustful, drunken, vain, hateful, or some combination of the above. In other words, they mirror humanity. These gods are just hyper-powerful mortals with the same desires, character flaws, sins, and objectives as their lesser-powered creations. It would take far too many pages to list all the examples of mythological deity foibles, but a few examples should suffice to prove the point.

Starting with the Greek mythologies, we find that Cronos maimed his father Ouranos, usurped his position, and then swallowed his own children to prevent them from usurping his throne. Cronos' youngest son Zeus was hidden by his mother, and together they rescued the swallowed siblings. Eventually, Zeus banished Cronos and became the ruler of the gods along with his sister/wife Hera and his brothers Poseidon and Hades. Zeus was frequently unfaithful to Hera with demi-gods or mortal women, and Hera repeatedly tried to kill or banish any lovers and offspring of these illicit unions. Zeus clashed with Prometheus, a Titan who had remained faithful to him, because he gave fire to mankind. Zeus had him chained to a mountaintop while an eagle ate his daily regenerating liver. Poseidon would sink ships and drown mariners simply on whims or would unleash sea monsters at coastal towns with which he wasn't pleased. Ares, son of Zeus, fell in love with Aphrodite, and had relations with her even though she was married to Hephaistos. Hera sent snakes to kill the infant Heracles. Hera and Athena stirred up the Trojan War because of jealousy over Paris selecting Aphrodite as the most beautiful of the goddesses. The stories are replete with tales of vengeance and betrayal between the gods or between gods and men.

In the Egyptian mythologies we have war between Seth and Osiris. Seth slew and dismembered his older brother Osiris and ruled Egypt in his stead. When Osiris's son Horus claimed the throne, Seth fought with him as well. Eventually a tribunal of gods decided the dispute over who should rule Egypt. After much politicking and quarreling, Horus was granted the throne and Seth was given the position of thunder god.

In the Norse mythologies the main god Odin was constantly unfaithful to his wife Frigg, and he sometimes stirred up wars on earth in order to gain slain heroes for Valhalla. Loki, the god of mischief, was responsible for the death of the god Balder and for instigating events that would lead to Ragnarok, the doom of the gods. There was even a war between the two branches of Norse gods, the Aesir and the Vanir, which produced bad blood and treachery down through the ages.

Unlike these wicked gods, Jehovah God has no sin in Him. He is perfect, holy, and righteous. He never changes or reneges on His promises.

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity. (Habakkuk 1:13a)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (James 1:17)

The angels proclaim God's holiness:

And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. (Isaiah 6:3)

The writer of Hebrews says of our Savior Jesus Christ:

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

The apostle Paul says:

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Christ describes himself:

He that is Holy, He that is true. (Revelation 3:7)

In fact, it is precisely because of the holy nature of the biblical God that we have a basis for morality. He is the ultimate Lawgiver and has given us standards by which we are to live. Apart from the good God of the Bible, we have no logical basis upon which to claim for example, that murder is wrong, while helping others is right. Take a look again at the character and nature of the gods mentioned above—are any of them capable of dispensing a logical system of morality, where good is defined by their very nature? Their followers, acting consistently with their belief in their gods, show that their moral code left something to be desired—human sacrifice, murder, adultery, continual war, lying, scheming, and the like were all the norm, rather than sinful behavior to be punished.

Additionally, in the canon of Scripture we see a Holy God righteously judging people or nations many times, but never does God sin, and never does He vex mankind with unjust punishment or laws.

For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. (Lamentations 3:33)

The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. (Psalm 19:9)

Even David could say, when chastised by the Lord for his sin:

I know, O LORD, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. (Psalm 119:75)

What we do not see in Scripture is an ultra-powerful mortal bully. We see a transcendent God who is infinitely wiser and higher than man, yet deigns to condescend to us in order that we might know Him.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33)

When I consider thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him? (Psalm 8:3–4)

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8–9)

Of course the greatest revelation of God to mankind was in His Son Jesus Christ.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference. (Romans 3:21–22)

God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:1–3)

Eternality

One last comparison between the many false gods and the one True God is eternity. Many of the mythological gods or demi-gods were killed by other gods or even by mortals (Osiris, Balder, most of the Norse pantheon, Tiamat, Tammuz, Hercules, etc). Most died in battle or for offending another god. Some just faded away as their adherents died off or new “gods” replaced them (the Titans, the Vanir, Aten, etc.). But Scripture states, “God is from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalms 41:13, 90:2). Christ describes himself saying, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Revelation 22:13). God existed from eternity past and will exist into eternity future. From this eternal nature flows the basis for the natural laws that the universe obeys.

The One True God sent His Son to die, but He was not killed by anyone or anything. God the Son willingly

gave His life to save sinners from an eternal hell.

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. (John 10:17–18)

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

When Christ rose again on the third day, He did not rise as a spirit with no corporeal body, but appeared to over five hundred people and ate and drank with his disciples. He even offered to let Thomas place his hands in the nail and spear wounds (John 20:24–27). He laid down his life and he took it up again just as He said He would. His Father also “would not allow His Holy One to see corruption” (decay) (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27), proving that Christ was fully God and fully man.

The mythological gods who were resurrected never resurrected themselves, and they usually had some limitation placed on them once they were resurrected. Tammuz, Persephone, and Osiris were confined to the underworld for at least part of the year. They could not freely walk in the land of the living whenever they wanted to and they could not be with their loved ones. Zeus transported Hercules to paradise and Balder was allowed to return to the land of the living once paradise came about. These gods did not wish to die and had no active participation in their resurrection.

Jesus Christ, on the other hand, willingly died for sinners, “saw the travail of his soul and was satisfied” (Isaiah 53:11), and “after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:12). Nor is Jesus confined or restricted in His resurrected state. Currently He is in heaven as our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) and advocate (1 John 2:1), but He is preparing a place for his own followers and is coming again to take us to be with Him.

Conclusion

Consider anew the words of the prophet Isaiah, which we often hear around Christmas time:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6–7)

The God of the Bible is not merely one of a plethora of gods from which we may pick and choose to worship nor is He to be put on par with other supposed deities. He is the omnipotent Creator and Redeemer of mankind. Truly we worship a great God, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and a great King above all gods.

No matter which god you serve, in the end, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father. Wouldn't you rather do this now and live, than wait and perish?

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