

# The Apostles' Creed

## Maker of Heaven and Earth

January 29, 2023—Sermon Discussion Guide

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Creation—a controversial subject for sure!

Depending upon your denominational background, your education, your family, or your personal experiences you may have beliefs very different from your friends and neighbors about the how, the when, and the how long of creation. But if you're a Christian, you are unlikely to debate the who of creation. God created heaven and earth!

This was the only point about creation that the church fathers chose to include in the Creed. Creation was not an accident of nature. It was a deliberate act of our Almighty God.

God started it. God spoke and his Word became something tangible. His Word set things in motion and God declared that it was good.



### Something from Nothing

In the early days of the church, the traditional belief of the Mediterranean world, where Christianity began, was that the material world had always existed. Then God came in and acted as the initial “first mover.” He made changes to what was already there (Gen 1:1). This belief was challenged from time to time, but it was not until the 13th century that this commonly held belief changed, four centuries after the Apostles' Creed was adopted by Charlemagne.

St. Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-1274) was a consummate scholar and philosopher of his time. He challenged the popular view of creation in his treatise, On the Eternity of the World. Aquinas believed that God was an eternal, unchangeable being who freely chose to create a changeable universe from nothing (Latin: *ex nihilo*). He wrote that everything else in the natural world can create new things by modifying what is already there. But only God can create something from nothing.

Aquinas' treatise was adopted by the Catholic Church in the late 13th century and is still respected today as one of the foremost studies in theology. His view has become the foundation of the creation beliefs of most Christian denominations today.

Read Genesis 1.

- What does Genesis 1 tell you about God's capabilities?
- How are God's abilities to create different from man's abilities to create?
- Why is it important that God declared his creation good?

**Personal study:** What does Genesis tell you about God's motives for creating the world? Why do you think God created the world? These verses might give you a hint: Isaiah 43:6-7, Psalms 19:1, Ephesians 1:4-6.

## In His Image

We are not divine. We are not equal to God. We are not an accident. We did not create ourselves. We are a creation of God. All people are created by God in His image.

Read Genesis 2:7-9.

In verse seven, the Hebrew word for "formed" is *yatsar* (יָצַר) . It is a word used by potters to describe the molding of clay into a shape that becomes useful and beautiful. We were shaped by God to be useful and beautiful. How amazing is that!

Read Genesis 1:26-31.

- According to Genesis 1:26, why did God create man?
- If you were designed to be a steward of God's creation and creation was intended to glorify Him, how are you doing? If you were tasked to evaluate the performance of mankind in accomplishing the purpose for which mankind was created, what grade would you give him? Why?
- God made us more aware than animals. We are able to think, to reason, to reflect. How does studying the word of God help us to be better caretakers of His world and each other?
- Read Isaiah 45:9-12. What do you think is the danger of arguing and questioning God? What should be our mindset when we talk to God? How does this draw the line between the creator and the created?
- Read Ephesians 2:10. Think about your unique talents and blessings. For what work did God create you?

**Personal Study:** Use these verses to help you reflect on how to show God's image to the world. Psalms 139:14, Isaiah 43:7, Matthew 5:48, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 15:49, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10.

**My take away:** Pray for God to reveal the ways he has designed for you to serve Him, care for His people, and protect His creation. Thank him for the trust He has put in you to glorify Him with your words and your deeds.