



CITY OF GOD CHURCH

DOCTRINE

CREATION: GOD MAKES

This study is based on the book Doctrine by Mark Driscoll.

Introduction

The way we view our world begins with an understanding of our origins. How did we get here and why? This chapter examines those origins as revealed in Scripture. There is plenty of room for debate over some aspects of creation, but the fundamental truths of creation are essential for clear doctrine.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

(Genesis 1:1 ESV)

Introductory Comments:

1. There is no conflict between Christianity and science itself. The entire scientific enterprise depends upon a world governed by natural laws that give us the confidence that the world will act the same way tomorrow as it did today.
2. There is *total conflict* between Christianity and scientific naturalism (the belief that *everything* can be explained by natural causes and laws).
3. The Bible in general, and the book of Genesis in particular, was not written with the intention of being a scientific textbook. It is more concerned with the who and why of creation than the when and how.
4. One's view of the date of creation should not be the litmus test for Christian faithfulness.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT CREATION?

Genesis was penned by Moses around 1400 BC as the first of a five part book called the Pentateuch. Moses would have known about the creation account through revelation from the Holy Spirit and tradition.

In Genesis 1:1 God creates the "heavens and the earth." This could more literally be translated the "skies and the land." Everything in creation has been created by God.

Genesis 1:2, the earth was "without form and void."

- Elsewhere in the Old Testament these words are used to describe an uninhabited land (Deut. 32:10; Isa. 45:18; Jer. 4:23)
- The best understanding of this is that God created everything out of nothing, and that it existed for some unstated period of time in a desert-like empty state.



- Then God took six literal days to prepare the land for human habitation. This is not creating from nothing, but forming already existing material.

WHERE DID CREATION COME FROM?

The Bible teaches that God made creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing; cf. Heb. 11:3).

What is God's pattern of creation in Genesis 1?

1. Announcement: "And God said"
2. Commandment: "Let there be"
3. Separation: day and night, water and land, plants and animals
4. Report: "And it was so"
5. Evaluation: "And God saw that it was good"

[11] so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11 ESV)

The role of God's word in creation: Ps. 33:6, 9; 148:5; 2 Pt. 3:7

WHAT DOES CREATION REVEAL ABOUT GOD?

1. God is the only God
 - a. *[18] 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. (Isaiah 45:18 ESV)*
2. God is Trinitarian
 - a. The Father created: Ps. 19:1; Ac. 17:28; 1 Cor. 8:6
 - b. The Son created: Jn. 1:1-3, 10; Col. 1:16-17
 - c. The Spirit created: Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13
3. God is eternally uncaused
 - a. God is eternal, creation is not
4. God is living
 - a. God breathes his life into human beings
5. God is independent
 - a. *[24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. (Acts 17:24-25 ESV)*
6. God is transcendent
 - a. God is separate from creation.
7. God is immanent
 - a. He is actively at work in his creation sustaining it and ruling over it.



8. God is personal
 - a. God is a personal “he” and not an impersonal “it”. He has given us personality and personhood.
9. God is powerful
10. God is beautiful
11. God is holy
 - a. Originally creation was without sin and reflected the character of God. In recreating everything God will return creation to this original state.
12. God is a prophet
 - a. Through speaking God created. Similarly, God uses the spoken word in the lives of his people to bring life.
13. God is gracious
14. God is a sovereign king
 - a. All creation comes from God, is ruled by God, belongs to God, and will give an account before God.

WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF CREATION?

View 1: Historic Creationism

God created the world in Gen. 1:1. However, no time table is given on this, and there is no idea what type of gap exists between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2. The cultivation of the land and the creation of Adam and Eve took place in six literal days. This view leaves open the possibilities of: an old earth, six literal days of creation, and a young humanity on the old earth.

View 2: Young-earth Creationism

God created everything in six literal twenty-four hour days. This view affirms that everything is less than ten thousand years old. It does have some Biblical difficulties such as the creation of the Sun and Moon on day four while there is evening and morning on the first three days.

View 3: The Gap Theory

Genesis 1:1 explains a creation that happened perhaps billions of years ago. A catastrophic event left the earth in the shape it was in Gen. 1:2 (perhaps the fall of Satan). God responded by re-creating the earth and repopulating it in Gen. 1:3 and following. Problems with this include the fact that scripture never speaks of two creations, and the declaration that the earth was good does not correlate with the idea that it was good, bad, then good again.

View 4: Literary Framework View



Genesis 1 and 2 are intended to be read as a figurative framework explaining creation in a topical not sequential order. The six days of creation are to be interpreted metaphorically. While the Bible does use poetic language to describe creation, it uses poetry to convey a literal truth.

View 5: Day-Age View

God created everything in six sequential periods of time that are geological ages and not six literal twenty-four hour days. The problem with this view is that the order of creation in Genesis does not square with old-earth science (the Sun being created on day four). Also, the six days of creation appear to be literal days.

View 6: Theistic Evolution

God began creating and then pulled back to work through the process of natural evolution. The only exception is that God directly involved himself again in the making of the human spirit. This view accepts evolution, but wants to include God as its originator and overseer. There are several problems with this view including: the silence in the Bible on one species evolving in to another, also scripture does not show God to be removed from creation.

ARE THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION LITERAL TWENTY FOUR HOUR DAYS?

Against:

The Hebrew word for day (*yom*) can be used of an extended period of time (Ps. 20:1; Prov. 11:4; Eccl. 7:14).

For:

Each day is marked off by “morning and evening.”

Creation is the foundation for a seven day week with a Sabbath in the Old Testament

HOW OLD IS THE EARTH?

1. Taking the Bible literally, and counting the genealogies the earth is around 6,000 years old.
2. Some think trying to nail down a date for the earth takes the focus off of God in these first few chapters.
3. Others try to integrate the scientific concensus that the earth is around 4.5 billion years old.

It must be admitted that the age of the earth is not of great concern in the Bible. The greatest individuals in the Bible all attribute creation to God, but do not try and answer this question.



We must be strong on what the Bible has revealed, but open handed on questions the Bible does not try and answer.

How should we deal with the scientific consensus of an earth that is 4.5 billion years old?

1. Scientists are simply mistaken
2. The earth appears old because it was made mature (like Adam and Eve)
3. The flood in Genesis 6-9 made significant changes to the earth that give it the appearance of being older than it really is.
4. The earth is old and the days in Gen. 1-2 are not literal twenty-four hour days.
5. The earth is old, but God did prepare this earth in six literal twenty-four hour days.

Doctrine finds the final answer given compelling for five reasons:

1. Maintains a literal reading of six twenty-four hour days in Gen. 1-2
2. Defines key terms Biblically rather than scientifically
3. Teaches that the first humans appeared recently
4. It was the most common view among early Christians (e.g. Augustine)
5. It correlates with the findings of science from a Biblical worldview

However, whether one takes Gen. 1-2 literally or is an unbelieving scientist most would not date true humans as being older than 10,000 years.

HOW DOES CREATIONISM DIFFER FROM NATURALISM

Naturalism views creation as primarily a product of time, energy, and chance.

“The cosmos is all that is, all that was, and all that ever will be.”

Carl Sagan

Christians are free to believe in micro evolution (that species adapt over time to become accustomed to their environment).

However, macro evolution (the jump of one species to another) has come under scrutiny from Christian and non-Christian alike over recent years. Several of the most notable problems are as follows:

1. Macro-evolution purports that nothing made everything. Macro-evolution is put in a quandry between the evidence that the universe had a beginning, and the difficult principle that anything could “come” from nothing.
2. For many the argument is made that our present world was created out of cataclysmic disorder, chaos, and chance. What else in the known world naturally goes from a state of disorder to perfect harmonious order?



“The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the big bang are enormous. I think there are clearly religious implications.”

“It would be very difficult to explain why the universe would have begun in just this way except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us.”

Stephen Hawking (popular British theoretical physicist)

3. Macro-evolution purports that impersonal matter created personal beings.
4. There are glaring absences of “transitional forms” in the fossil record.
5. Macro-evolution purports to be unbiased science, but after one hundred years no attempt to replicate this has succeeded.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION MAKE FOR YOUR LIFE?

If you don't believe in the doctrine of creation you likely believe you were created by no one, with no specific purpose in life, and that when you die you will go to no one.

Quote from N.T. Wright (2,040-57)

Discussion

How does understanding your origin affect your worldview?

Examination

1. What are the debatable or open-handed views of creation?
2. What are the essential or closed-handed views of creation?
3. What does the creation indicate about the character of God?
4. What Christian view of creation best describes your own view of creation? What are the Biblical strengths and weaknesses of your view?
5. What effects can a wrong view of creation have on your understanding of life and theology?

Application

1. How does your understanding of creation affect your view of God?
2. How does the purpose of creation affect your view of your life and world?
3. Why is it important to have a clear understanding of open-handed issues related to creation? How has scripture clarified those views?