
CORE BELIEFS SERIES

DOCTRINE OF GOD THE CREATOR

SOVEREIGN GOD

QUOTES

*There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the **Creator**, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. **To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.** The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.*

Baptist Faith & Message¹

***God Is** – Only one true and living God exists. He is the Creator of the universe, eternally existing in three Persons—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each equally deserving of humanity’s worship and obedience. He is infinite and perfect in all His attributes.*

Student Life Bible Study²

SCRIPTURE (MAIN PASSAGES)

Gen. 1:1-31; 2:16-17; 6:5-6; **Ps.** 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 96:4-6; **Neh.** 9:6; **John.** 1:1-3; **Rom.** 1:18-21; 3:23; **Col.** 1:16-17; **Heb.** 1:3; **Rev.** 4:11

KEY TRUTHS

- God is the Creator
 - God created the universe, including humanity
 - God sustains the universe
- Humanity is subject to sovereign God
- Humanity has fallen short of God’s standards

Avoid Pitfalls!

*This topic is about who God is and how we are subject to Him. It is **not** about what is wrong with evolutionary theory.*

Focus on the positive truth, not the negative non-truth.

1. GOD IS THE CREATOR

Our existence on this planet was intentional rather than accidental. As we will see, the implications of this foundational truth are profound in shaping our worldview. What does it mean that God is the Creator? It means that He is responsible for the origination of the universe, including us. In a related way, we must recognize that God continues to sustain the universe by His power.

GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE, INCLUDING HUMANITY

Christians differ on how God created the universe. Some hold to six literal days of creation, while others view the days as representing eras or ages in time (an alternative meaning of *yod*, the Hebrew term for “day”). There is value in coming to an understanding and conviction on this matter, but for the purposes of these notes, it is better to agree on the essential truth – God created the universe. The Bible affirms several aspects of God’s creation³:

- He created out of nothing – The traditional Latin term for this is *ex nihilo*. God did not use some store of hydrogen atoms to get the process started. Only God existed prior to creation; there was nothing else. God created by the power of His voice. Psalm 33:6, 9 says, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of His mouth...For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood forth.” This aligns with Genesis 1, which describes all of creation coming into existence as God spoke. See also John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11.⁴
- He created for His glory – Isa. 43:7 makes this plain, saying of humanity, “Whom I created for my glory...”⁵ God’s glory is revealed as we see His power, creativity, wisdom, and other attributes.⁶ This means that we can see God and His goodness through observing His creation; knowledge of God through this means is called general revelation, and it is described in Ps. 19:1-6 and Rom. 1:18-21.⁷
- His creation was good – The mess that we see around us is the product of our own doing and is but a shadow of the goodness of original creation. Theologian Millard Erickson notes the important implications of this truth:⁸
 - *No part of creation is intrinsically evil*
 - *Our sin cannot be justified by an evil world* – the evil is the result of our own doing.
 - *Jesus’ coming in bodily form is good* – He took human flesh, but it wasn’t sinful.
 - *We don’t need to punish ourselves* – many somehow think that being spiritual means hating the physical, even their own bodies; but this is not true!

GOD SUSTAINS THE UNIVERSE

Not only did He create the world, but also He keeps it going. Consider these passages:

- "You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you." - (Neh. 9:6 ESV)
- "And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." - (Col. 1:17 ESV)

- "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power..." - (Heb. 1:3a ESV)

All of Ps. 104 tells of God's preserving creation. We are completely dependent upon Him.

2: HUMANITY IS SUBJECT TO SOVEREIGN GOD

We are not only dependent on God but also subject to Him. If our existence is a result of an accident or any means other than God, then what He wants has no bearing on our daily lives and decisions. If, however, God created us and continues to sustain our existence, then we must do as He says.

God's first command to people is found in Gen. 2:16-17. He gave Adam permission to eat of any tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Since God was His Creator, Adam had no problem acknowledging his subjection to God. The connection between God as Creator and man as creation responsible to God is made throughout the Bible. "The sea is His, and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Ps. 96:4-6).

God refers to His title as Creator as the basis for His right to let tribulation fall on Job. While Job complained and demanded an answer from God, God's response (paraphrased) was, "Who are you to question Me? Were you there when I formed the earth? I am Creator, and you are subject to Me."

3: HUMANITY HAS FALLEN SHORT OF GOD'S STANDARDS

The sad reality is that even though we are subject to God, we are guilty of not obeying Him. This fact began in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command. It continued when Moses led the Israelites through the wilderness; they continually failed to trust God. Even with the Ten Commandments, Israel failed to faithfully obey God, which led to invasion from other countries and eventually deportation for a time.

Before flooding the earth, we get a glimpse of humanity's anti-God behavior from God's eyes:

"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain" (Gen. 6:5-6).

"But that was before the flood," you may say. True, but that does not mean that human behavior has really changed. A similar description of humanity is found in Rom. 1:20-21:

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

The bottom line is that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Though subject to our Creator, we have decided to follow our own ways. Even the "good" things we do are

tainted with sin in the eyes of an all-righteous God (Isa. 64:6). So although God created us, and although we are subject to Him, we have chosen our own desires over His commands.

IMPLICATIONS

Understanding this Core Belief fundamentally affects our views in the following areas:

- God is infinitely powerful, creative, and good – Our God’s creativity is clearly evident in creation, and it shows His power and goodness.
- We have value – We are no evolved accident; we were designed by our loving God who gives us value.
- We are not independent – All of creation is continually upheld by God, on whom we always depend. Even our lifestyle should be dependent on God, although we frequently disobey Him.
- We are in need of saving – Because of our disobedience to God and the sin in our lives, we are under God’s judgment. There is nothing we can do about this; we are in need of a savior.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

In the course of your lesson, there may be certain questions that come up. Listed below are some possible questions, along with a biblically appropriate response.

DOESN'T JOHN 1 SAY THAT *JESUS* CREATED THE WORLD?

Yes, it does! So how can Genesis give credit to God, while John gives credit to Jesus? This is where we let Scripture interpret Scripture. Jesus is God, the second Person of the Trinity. We can safely say that all three Persons of the Trinity were active in Creation. It was a cooperative act of the sovereign Godhead.

WHY DOES STUDYING THE ORIGIN OF THE EARTH EVEN MATTER?

We might be tempted to think that creation is one of those teachings that does not matter. Who cares whether God created the earth or not? Theologian Millard Erickson lists six reasons why we should care about this teaching:⁹

1. The Bible puts emphasis on it, showing its importance
2. It has been an important part of 2,000 years of church history. The Apostle’s Creed’s first article says, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”
3. This doctrine has a big effect on other doctrines. For example, since God created, matter is not evil (as some have believed). It also helps us understand God more.
4. The teaching is a distinguishing mark between Christianity and other belief systems.
5. It is a point of dialogue between Christianity and natural science.
6. Understanding Christianity helps with controversy among other Christians.

The third item in the list above may be the most important to students. Creation gives them value, and it gives them a reason to obey God. When they are challenged to treat Christianity as one preference among many, they can remember that the decision is not up to them. They are responsible to their Creator.

HOW COME SCIENCE DISPROVES CREATION?

Does it? Just because someone claims a “truth” with authority does not make it true. Perhaps the best way to help students with this struggle – and it is indeed a struggle – is to let them know that even scientific theories are reversed from time to time. For example, spontaneous generation held that life could suddenly spring from existing matter (maggots came to life from meat), but that was rightly refuted. So scientific theory can sometimes be wrong (faulty data, incorrect conclusions, etc.). In the same way, Christians have assumed the Bible teaches something that it doesn’t. For a time, Christians believed that the world was created in *exactly* 4004 BC. This type of specific dating is now widely discredited.

Wayne Grudem notes that when all the facts are rightly understood, science and the Bible will not conflict with each other. The Bible is 100% accurate, just as the facts of the universe are truly dependable. The problem is our interpretation and understanding of them. So science does not disprove creation. We simply must realize that we do not always get it right.

MORE QUESTIONS

As you teach and get questions, please pass them on. Our goal is to make these notes helpful for teachers by including several questions that arise in the teaching time. Thanks!

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¹ (Southern Baptist Convention 1999-2011) <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp>

² (Student Life, Inc. 2011)

³ Many of these points come from Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* in his chapter on Creation (pp. 262-273).

⁴ (Grudem 1994, 263)

⁵ (Grudem 1994, 271)

⁶ This would be a good place to list God's attributes, but they are covered in more detail in the Core Belief on the Trinity. A look at Creator God reveals (or at least hints at) these attributes, though not as plainly as in the revealed truth of Scripture. Here is a listing of what is mentioned in that study:

- **Holiness:** Lev 11:44; 19:2; 1 Thess. 4:7; 1 Pet 1:15-16
- **Omnipotence:** Gen. 18:14; Job 42:2; Jer. 32:17, 27; Matt. 19:26; Mark 14:36
- **Omnipresence:** Ps. 139:7-8; Jer. 23:24; Col 1:17
- **Omniscience:** Job 31:4; Ps 147:5; Isa. 40:28; Mt 9:4; John 16:30; 21:17
- **Immutability** (unchanging): Num. 23:19; Ps 102:27; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 1:12; 13:8; Jam. 1:17
- **Graciousness & Love:** Ex. 34:6; 2 Chron. 30:9; Ezra 9:9; Neh. 9:17; Ps 25:6; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 John 4:8-11, 16; Eph. 1:3-8;
- **Eternality:** Gen. 21:33; Job 36:26; Ps. 90:2; Isa 40:28; John 1:1-2; 8:58; Heb. 1:8-12; Rev. 1:8
- **Sovereignty:** Gen. 45:5, 7; 50:20; Jdg. 14:1-4; 1 Sam. 14:6; 1 Chron. 29:12; 2 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 83:18; 135:6; Prov. 20:24; Rom. 9:18

⁷ (Enns 2008, 190)

⁸ (Erickson 2001, 133-134)

⁹ (Erickson 2001, 130-131)