

WHAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW (#WCSK), PART IV: CREATION & SIN

All Scriptures will be taken from The New American Standard Bible (NASB). Biblical references are examples and are in no way exhaustive. Also, the series What Christians Should Know is not a complete reference but is meant to provide basic beliefs, principles, and doctrines in the Christian faith. All of the lessons are best used as a general guide as you engage in your own Bible study.

“But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).

Introduction

The doctrine of creation is important to understand, because it not only sets the tone for everything else to follow, but it also gives all believers profound insight into the Who, what, when, where, how, and why of our very existence. If you are starting a business, you begin with a primary aim that guides all of your business activities. If you’re building a tree house, you start with the thought of what you want to build in your mind, and your successful material execution follows that intangible blueprint. Every step that you take is structured and ordered from a single origin, a concrete focal point from which everything else flows. Creation is that concrete focal point of the human experience.

The doctrine of creation answers our most important questions: *Who* made us, *why* do we exist, *how* did we come into being, and *for what purpose*—in other words, this doctrine deals with the whole meaning of life. Certainly, a life that is unexamined will lead to frustration, confusion, and discontent. A life that is examined will lead to wisdom, knowledge, and understanding—and a life that is examined with the original blueprint from the Creator will lead to peace, happiness, joy, and fulfillment.

What Christians should know is that the doctrine of creation says God made the entire universe out of nothing. It says that He made it in order to glorify Himself, and that He originally made everything very good.

The creation narrative is located in the beginning of the book of Genesis, the Bible’s first book. In Genesis, there are two major calls from God: (1) He calls the world into being. (2) He calls a special people to faithfully be His. As I will explain, the calls involve a gift given to creation, the stipulations that lay within the gift, and the divergent responses to that gift. The question then becomes *how* we will respond—with recalcitrant self-assertion or faithful obedience. The former response tends to dominate the narrative, leading to adverse consequences. The calls are rooted in a basic premise of the Bible that everything that follows is built upon: God and His creation are inextricably linked in unique and fragile ways.

Creation is a story about beginnings, and the story should be treated as a totality. So, when Genesis speaks about an individual, they should be regarded as representative of all creation, the part for the whole.¹

I. In the Beginning

The Bible starts in Genesis 1:1 by saying, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

The first thing we should notice is that “In the beginning” is a phrase in Hebrew that denotes an indefinite period of time. (And speaking of time, we know that God is eternal and *timeless*.² This means that when our universe was created, *our time* also began, which is why, for example, in each of the days of creation, there was a morning and an evening—both temporal events). In that beginning, Who was there? God was. He was present at the start, before our universe existed, because He *created*. The Bible begins with God, just as everything that we think, say, do, or believe ought to begin with God.

The heavens (plural) and the earth (singular) refers to the entire universe: our planet, celestial bodies, space, the stars, distant galaxies, and everything else that exists “out there.” *Heavens* also implies the heaven where God dwells, angels, the invisible spiritual realm, and other heavenly beings.³

“In the beginning God created” also tells us that when God did create our universe, He made it out of nothing. The Hebrew word for *created* is *bara*, which means to shape, fashion or create something from nothing. This is why throughout the Scriptures this word is only used with God as a subject. The Latin phrase *ex nihilo* is a fancy way of saying “out of nothing,” which indicates that when God made the universe, nothing else existed but Him. This is why in John 1:3 the Bible says, “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

Psalms 33:6 & 9 say, “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host ... For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”

Colossians 1:16 says, “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.”

¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2010), 11.

² Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 57:15; I Timothy 1:17

³ Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 103:21, 148:2-5; Acts 4:24; Revelation 10:6

Why did God make anything? We are given insight into His motivation in Revelation 4:11: “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and *because of Your will* they existed, and were created” (italics mine). In essence, all of creation is intended to reveal the glory of God. God made people specifically for His glory,⁴ and the Psalms tell us that the inanimate creation is telling of God’s glory as well.⁵ The creation demonstrates the limitless power of God, His authority, His wisdom, and above all else, that what He has done well exceeds what could ever be conceived of or executed by any part of the creation.⁶ The creation essentially reveals to us how great God is—yet He did not have to do any of it, because God does not need creation. In spite of this, He still gave all of us the free gift to enjoy.

And if anyone has ever wondered why people have an innate sense of creativity, the desire to do “big things” or the yearning to make things that are beautiful, then all you ought to do is consider Who made you. And, both at the end of each day of creation and at the end of His six-day creative work, God saw all He had made and that it was good.⁷ Yes, sin now exists in the world, but that does not negate the goodness of creation. This realization frees us all from a false sense of asceticism that seeks to reject the material world. This is why in I Timothy 4:4-5, Paul says, “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.” The point is that creation can be used in sinful, perverse, selfish, and destructive ways, but that does mean the creation itself is inherently bad. Rather, it is *how we use* creation—either in a God-centered or a self-centered way. More on this a bit later.

A key point to be derived from the above verses is that the entire universe exists *because* of God, was created *by Him*, and was therefore *dependent on Him* to come into being. Without Him, there would be no us. And from a logical standpoint, this has to be the case because if anything existed before God or alongside Him, this would contradict the Biblical assertion that God is sovereign and rules over all. Accordingly, *nothing within or from* creation should ever be worshipped, because it is subordinate to God. Further, the denial that God made the universe *ex nihilo* means that something else is also eternal just like God. The implication, then, is that God is not sovereign, independent, or the only One worthy to be worshipped. And, since God made everything, we can be confident that *all* things come together for God’s good purposes.⁸ To deny that God made everything means that some things “just happened,” are subject to chance, and are not part of His divine plan. The purpose of creation is already decided.⁹

Because creation is dependent, God is distinct from it. This does not mean, however, that God made everything and then went on break. God is *immanent*, or in other words, He

⁴ Isaiah 43:7

⁵ Psalm 19:1-2

⁶ Jeremiah 10:12, 14-16

⁷ Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31

⁸ Romans 8:28

⁹ Ephesians 1:9-10

remains in creation. As it says in Job 12:10, “In whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?” Several other verses affirm the immanence of God.¹⁰

In [*What Christians Should Know Part II*](#), I discussed Who God is and all of His attributes. We therefore know that God is wholly good, so anything that He makes will be good. God didn’t begin creating out of malice or evil, because that would contradict His character. He began creating out of love—hence, in His infinite wisdom, God made you and me for something. To deny that reality means you accept as fact that your existence is pure happenstance and therefore devoid of meaning. Because if you weren’t made for something, then all of reality is an exercise in futility that happened because of nothing and is doomed to become nothing. Therefore love, morality, trust, kindness, motivation, hope, faith, and family have absolutely zero meaning because they came from nobody and will all equate to nothing upon death. To deny that God exists, and that He has a positive intent for the world, is the most depressing, dehumanizing, wicked, malicious, and destructive ideology ever invented—because the way things are now is the best they will ever get, and the apex of existence rests on the shoulders of the inherent iniquity of humankind.

After God created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1, the Bible says in verse 2 that “the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.” (The reference to Spirit denotes Trinitarian activity). Formless and void is a phrase that means an uninhabitable wilderness. So, from what was uninhabitable and devoid of life, God will now proceed to make what is inhabitable and vibrant.

Genesis 1:3-26 consists of the account of the six days of creation. At the start of each day, God speaks something into existence. For example on the third day, verses 9-13 says, “Then God said, ‘Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear’; and it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. Then God said, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, *and* fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them’; and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a third day.”

On the first day, God separated the light and darkness, thereby making day and night; on the second day, God created an expanse that separated the heaven above it and the waters below it; on the third day, God made dry land, the seas and plant life; on the fourth day, God made the sun, moon, and all the stars in the sky; on the fifth day, God made sea animals and birds; and on the sixth day, God made the land animals and also formed Adam and Eve.

¹⁰ Acts 17:25, 28; Colossians 1:17; Ephesians 4:6; Hebrews 1:3

On each day we notice several recurring themes: (1) The entire process is *structured and ordered*, so there is no randomness that generates order. Hence, not only is there intelligent design, but the Designer is well beyond our comprehension. Each day has an assigned task, and only certain things are made in each day. (2) There is *distinction and separation*. Different things are different, so God clearly distinguishes them. Light is separated from darkness, and the heavens are separated from the waters. (3) Each day has a beginning and an end signified by the fact that there was “evening and morning.” In other words, within each segment of creation, there was a clear start and stop time. God stopped creating a particular thing when the day was over and did not go back to create more. (4) God *spoke* everything into existence with the exception of humans. (5) What God made was already mature and fully developed. And when God spoke, things happened *immediately*. He didn’t make baby stars that would grow up to be big stars—He made them fully formed. The same is true of living creatures—birds, cattle, and creeping things were created fully formed. He didn’t make prototypes of things that would evolve or “improve” into better versions. To suggest anything else means that God made what wasn’t good, and therefore had to get better. This ties in to the final point: (6) Everything that God made was good. Because God is good, He is only capable of making what is good, and thus He didn’t make anything that was subpar, inferior, or questionable. Also, within the goodness of creation is a unity, and that unity is ethical as well as aesthetic.¹¹

II. The Bible versus Science

If one reads Genesis 1 and a science textbook, it would seem that the two narratives are incompatible. Genesis seems to suggest that God made the world in a week, and that everything happened quickly. Evolutionary science tells us that the Earth is billions of years old and things happened very, very slowly. There are actually many different ways to interpret to Genesis 1 (e.g., that days literally mean 24 hours and the age of the Earth is thousands of years old) but in the end, what should not divide Christians on creation is *how* as long as we agree on *Who*. The Who is irrevocably God, and the Bible is a theological statement on why God made our world and us. Theologically, for example, if there are six literal days in Genesis 1, does this change the fact that Christ died and atoned for our sins? No. Does this change the Trinity? No. Does this change the fact that we are saved by faith alone through grace alone? No.

Quite simply, that is an argument to have in the basement of the church, but never in the main sanctuary.

In the Appendix, I will give you my own take on things that reconciles what is known about our universe scientifically, and what we know about creation from Genesis 1. Because that section is more of an aside and not core doctrine, you’ll find it in the Appendix and not the main lesson.

¹¹ Genesis 1:31

III. The Story of all of Us

The creation of human beings was very special. The first reason for this is that God gave humans a purpose. In the first five days of creation, the text just says God said, and it happened. On the sixth day, God gave us more thought. Genesis 1:26 says, “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (The Us and Our are also Trinitarian references). Image and likeness refer to something that is similar but not the same. Hence, all of us are a *representation* or an image of God and *like* God, but we are not God. Our imperfect image reflects the perfect example of God. The fancy way of referring to humans being made in the image of God in Latin is *Imago Dei*.

As representations, then, human beings have many attributes like God, such as morals; a conscience that gives us an inner sense of right and wrong; an invisible, intangible spirit; an intellect and the ability to reason; a complex ability to express ourselves and communicate that animals lack; the capacity for love, truth, justice, holiness; and finally, a relational nature. The relational nature of humankind as a function of being made in God’s image thus brings us into relationship with God, other humans, the rest of creation and ourselves.

Second, humans are special because no other part of creation carries this distinction of being God’s image bearers. And, because of this distinction, humans have *dominion* (from the word *rada* meaning to rule or subjugate) over the rest of creation. However, dominion *does not* mean exploitation. It *does* mean to secure the well being of other parts of creation. In a Biblical sense, leadership always equals servitude.¹²

Verses 27-31 says, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’ Then God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food’; and it was so. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”

Third, note *how* God made us in Genesis 2:7a: “Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground.” (From this point onward, I will use man and woman as figurative representations of all men and all women. Adam and Eve are our distant parents, and generally speaking, represent the male and female sides of humanity).

¹² John 10:11

The word *formed* derives from the Hebrew word *yasar*, which means to mold or shape in a more intimate sense—as a potter molds clay. Figuratively then, God had “a hand” in making Adam. God *spoke* everything else into existence but took the time to *form* us, and then He *breathed* life into us. We are more like Him than any other part of creation. Genesis 2:7b says, “[The LORD] ... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” The Bible does not say that God breathed the breath of life into any other part of creation. Furthermore, God speaks directly *only* to humans¹³ and addresses them individually as “you.”¹⁴ This demonstrates God’s commitment to us.

Woman was created in Genesis 2:18. The text says, “Then the LORD GOD said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’”

As I mentioned before, God was already in a Trinitarian relationship before He made human beings, so of course it makes sense that we, made in the image of God, ought to be in a relationship as well. Thus, Adam needed a helper *because he needed help* and he, being alone and not in a relationship, was a bad idea. The text says that in the created order during the time before Eve was made, the physical world, including the beasts of the field, were unsuitable to help Adam. So, God “caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. The LORD GOD fashioned into woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.”¹⁵ Note as well that God did not make another man for Adam to be with—He fashioned a woman. If, then, man ought not to be alone, the solution to that solitude is *not* another man.

These few verses are packed with information that many in modern society become confused with. Here are a few key points:

(1) Adam and Eve are made from the “same stuff.” If I were to choose a word in Greek to express that idea it would be *homoousia*. God did not make Eve independently from Adam because she was never meant to be separate from Him. She literally was made from Adam’s rib and therefore the two of them are equals, yet “man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake” (I Corinthians 11:8-9).

(2) Yet within their equality, there is deference. Adam was made first, and Adam was given the privilege of “naming rights.” Genesis 1:19 says that God brought “every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.” Did God need Adam to name anything? No, but God gave Adam the free gift and privilege of doing so as a *steward* of God’s creation. Adam was the creator of nothing, but *he had been given* privilege over creation *only* because of God. Adam was given the right to name Woman, or Eve (Genesis 2:23), as well. Notably, Adam’s stewardship was meant to be enjoyed as God demonstrated, but *stewardship can never be*

¹³ Genesis 1:28

¹⁴ Genesis 1:29

¹⁵ Genesis 2:21-22

confused with ownership. Being a proper steward means taking responsibility for and tending to what ultimately is someone else's. This means (all men please listen very carefully), that God has given us a free gift, and yes, that gift comes with privileges. But we should never, ever act as if we "own" anything, because we don't. Everything we were, are, and ever will amount to be is *because of God*, not us. Which means when we look at ourselves, we say, "I am a child God." So act like it. When we look at women, we say, "They are all children of God." So treat them as such. When we look at creation, we say, "THE LORD made this for us." So treat it as such. And when we look at God, we say, "Thank you LORD, for You are Almighty, and I am your humble servant. Without You, I am nothing, and everything I do is to glorify the One Who made me." Act as if you believe this truth.

(3) Adam and Eve's identity is a function of mutual dependence. Eve was made *because* Adam needed help and Adam needed help *because* he would fail by himself. Man and Woman separately *serve different functions*, and considering the male and female forms naked is a fitting example of this. The male and female bodies by themselves are non-productive and are incapable of producing life, as are two of the same forms. In order to generate life and to fulfill God's first command to creation ("Be fruitful and multiply"¹⁶), they absolutely need each other.

(4) *Deference does not mean inequality.* Of course, in modern society, no one wants to be labeled "the help." But "helping" stems from the Trinitarian formulation of love, and from that love, deference. For example, the Holy Spirit is called a "Helper" throughout the New Testament,¹⁷ and without the Holy Spirit, we would be incapable of living Christ-centered lives. Is there anything "subordinate" or unworthy about the Holy Spirit?

In fact, in John's gospel, the word Helper comes from the Greek *parakletos* that also means an intercessor, consoler, advocate, comforter, or *someone called to one's side*. Jesus is referred to as a Helper and the primary *parakletos* by implication in John 14:16. And in I John 2:1, we are told Jesus is the *parakletos* that advocates for us to the Father. Therefore, if Jesus didn't "help," no one will be able to advocate for us and atone for our sins. Even further, to illustrate deference as a Trinitarian concept, all one has to do is examine the passage from Philippians 2:3-9, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in *Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.* Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" (italics mine).

¹⁶ Genesis 1:28

¹⁷ John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7

In other words, Jesus is the ultimate example of equality with deference, because even though He is fully God, He emptied Himself and, for our sake, took the form of a human being. His obedience led to His death, and that obedience brought Him exaltation.

If I were to briefly sum up Genesis 1 and 2, I would say it describes God's calling of the world into existence. From that calling, we are able to define (1) our origins, (2) our identity, and (3) our purpose. We can only know what we are meant to do if we know who we are. That identity, in turn, is based exclusively on the One from Whom we came. An identity fuels a purpose, and a purpose based on a false identity leads to failure. God made you, so why would you look anywhere else to find your life's mission statement? It naturally follows, then, that any misunderstanding about our purpose or who we are is rooted in an incorrect formulation of Who we came from, leading to confusion, anxiety about what to do with ourselves, and a life filled with identity crises. A firm acknowledgement in the divine craftsmanship of God fulfills us all and allows us to embrace our true identity.

IV. An aside to discuss oneism

This section talks about alternative models for creation and why they fail. It is designed to make you aware of modern heresies and provide you with a defense against false doctrine. If you would like to continue reading about creation and sin, please skip ahead to section V.

Many people would suggest that to embrace faith means to reject reason and, therefore, to deny what can be perceived with the senses. This idea is based on a philosophy of "oneism"—that everything in our known universe fits within the confines of a box. Here, the universe began inside the box without external influences, and everything that *is*, *was*, or *will be* must be defined *within* the confines of that box. All phenomena, therefore, need not have a cause or a purpose—rather, all that is needed is an explanatory mechanism (how) based upon the rules established within the closed system (also, one need not consider *why* the box is there or *who* established the rules of the box). And since there is no reality outside of the box, the pinnacle of existence occurs during our lifetime. There was nothing before, and thus, there is nothing after. Oneism suggests that reality (the whole box) came out of nothing and is ultimately fated to become nothing. Atheism and theism thus have a common trait at a single point: out of nothing came something. A divergence exists in what happens before and after that point.

In "twoism," there is something outside of the box, and that other thing can communicate with, speak to, and interact with our box. In twoism, another entity exists in the universe separate and distinct from our human world. In this paradigm, God certainly does exist and can move between the two boxes. Here, our reality is a function of another reality, and that other reality will follow rules and norms foreign to us. Further, that other reality *must* be superior to ours because in order to create, design, and influence another box, the first box must have more power, knowledge, skill, and talent, just as a painter creates an image that resembles, *but is subordinate to*, himself.

In oneism, Christ is not God but a regular human being just like you and me. Of course, He existed, but He couldn't possibly be God, because He comes from the same system as you and me—at best, He can be a great role model or teacher. Men, women, grass, plants, animals, and different religions, for example, are all the same because we all come from the exact same raw material. No one element has dominion over another, there is no separation among groups, and thus, a rock is equal to a young boy.

Now, allow me to take a moment to explain the problem of bias. Pretty much everyone has the same amount of information, knowledge, and resources in front of them—we all have access to the Bible, we all have access to scientific information about the known universe, and we all live in a time where information (in most of the world) is freely disseminated. Yet despite having the same data, some people are staunch atheists, and others are devout believers in God. Why? Bias. In our thinking, we all have certain predispositions toward ideology, and our upbringing, experiences, and environment will mold how we perceive the world. This cardinal bias ultimately forms each of our belief systems. Like it or not, we all are guilty in some form of this prejudice, and Haynes described this phenomenon to be the boggle line.

A “famous” atheist once said that he could not *prove* God does not exist in much the same way that he could not prove the tooth fairy does not exist, but based upon the sheer mathematical improbability of God's existence, atheism, for him, was a foregone conclusion. True, I also cannot prove God doesn't exist, nor can I prove that God *does* exist. Where does that leave me but in a nebulous void where I must subjectively choose which path to follow based upon personal preference?

Ironically, a cornerstone of belief in God is predicated on the fact that nonbelief *has to be* a very real possibility. Belief and hoping in the unseen, or faith, *actually requires the possibility that the subscriber be wrong*. For if that possibility did not exist, there would be no conscious trust on the part of the believer—if not, what you're left with is coercion. After all, if I splash you with a bucket of water and then tell you that water is wet, there's absolutely no room for argument. Keep in mind that God never forces your hand. He *invites* you to freely and graciously commit.

In oneism, why have hope if the best we can do is right here on Earth? Why excel in life if, once you die, you cease to exist? Why dream unless those wishes can materialize here and now since their effectiveness is nullified upon death? Why ever care for another or practice *selflessness* instead of choosing to maximize one's own potential at the expense of others?

One depressing defeat for oneism lies in the reality that it inevitably leads to nonexistence, which paints a picture of humanity even more tainted than the one that already exists. There will be no ultimate justice, no ultimate mercy, no redemption, no salvation, and no future. To subscribe to oneism means to deny God's existence and to pretend that all the treacherous, cruel behavior in this world will never face judgment from the divine Judge, and all immorality and licentiousness is valid and acceptable

behavior to an indifferent, void universe that regards all of humanity as happenstance. Oneism means you accept every perverse, wicked, cruel, malicious, and destructive desire man has ever produced and embrace such debauchery with the casual indifference that accepts that this is the way things will be. Oneism permanently condones the suffering of the innocent and celebrates in the triumph of evil. Oneism applauds the pride that fuels its own convictions; it directs all honor and glory toward the self in the perpetual festival of self-interest.

Another depressing defeat for oneism is the absence of primary causality. Everything in our world has a cause and also has its resultant effect. If a tree falls down in the forest, it's because a lumberjack decided to get some wood. If a car explodes, it's because someone threw a match into the gas tank. If there's an earthquake, it's because tectonic plates shifted. If everything in our world has a known, established cause, and science strives to seek out and explain such causes, why would any rational mind accept that the original starting point of our world is that it "just happened" *without* a definite cause? In fact, the ultimate fallacy of oneism lies at its genesis: how can a causeless, purposeless megaphenomenon (the big bang) spawn a universe that follows rules antithetical to itself?

We live in a world so blinded by its own desire for all to be the same that we have begun sacrificing the truth for mixtures and derivations of the truth so that all may feel welcome with their own perception of reality. The truth, in and of itself, is mutually *exclusive*. If the truth were mutually *inclusive*, then it would not be the truth but an accommodation. Earth functions in the manner we're all used to because gravity remains constant at 9.8 m/s^2 . If this number were 13.4 or 7.4, the world as we know it would cease to exist. The truth does not waver, yet people tend to waver between two opinions, hopping from branch to branch.

Ultimately, we are each faced with the one cardinal question in life: shall we choose to believe that *we* are the pinnacle of all existence, or is there something else greater than us that does, in fact, exist? Statistics and reason tell us that *both scenarios are equally improbable*. To what conclusion, then, will reason lead us? It could be to neither and that we are simply asking the wrong question, yet common sense suggests that all answers will essentially boil down to more-than-oneism or oneism. For each, every person's boggle line segregates the acceptable from the implausible, but implausibility is a matter of perspective. What you believe, therefore, has little to do with the actual facts but *how those facts are perceived by you*. And this perception is built upon the security of certainty—reason finds comfort in the tangible, observable, and familiar, while faith challenges you to take a risk and venture into the unknown. Furthermore, at some point, the certainty itself can be idolized, dissolving the importance of whatever the certainty *is in*. (Also consider that life as we know it *is not*, in fact, certain but based on assumptions about reality and significant likelihoods).

In my experience, I have come to the conclusion that faith does not negate reason, but the former is the ultimate expression of the latter. (In fact, as the former Pope John Paul II suggests in his thirteenth encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*, faith less reason leads to superstition and reason less faith leads to nihilism). Hence, the intersection of faith and reason is the

point where reason finally admits its own deficiencies and submits to the higher authority. If oneism were true, randomness still *could not* create an ultimate form of reason in an ultimate form of life because, as with any other observable system, anything that is influenced by chance *will tend to regress to a mean*. This means that based on oneism, human beings are mediocre compromises who, in their mediocrity, have formulated (at best) an ordinary, yet wholly inadequate, explanation for their own origins. This realization begs, then, to ask a very striking question: if mediocrity, in the pursuit of certainty, can produce a very unlikely yet theoretically plausible answer, what would superiority, unhindered by the rules of oneism, produce with total assurance?

The cardinal danger of oneism, then, points to one inescapable and horrid reality: idolatry. Since God does not exist, something has to take His place, and that something is therein exalted as supreme.

For those who would like to read a bit more on the subject, please refer to the For Further Reading section at the end of this lesson.

V. The Fall & Sin

The history of humanity is saturated with individuals born into sin who revolt against God, thereby separating themselves from Him. In the end, everyone knows that sin is bad. When you commit a sin, you have a good idea that what you did was wrong, but what is sin, where did it come from, and why is it so bad?

Wayne Grudem defines sin as “any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.”¹⁸ The great theologian Augustine said that pride is the root of all sin in that it directs all attention toward the self and away from God. If we were all made for *His* glory, sin directs our efforts away from God, rejecting our purpose and our Creator. Sin is lawlessness,¹⁹ unrighteousness,²⁰ that which is a violation of the laws given by God,²¹ or the unwritten laws written on our hearts.²² Sin is also the failure to what is right when you know what is right.²³

So ... back to creation. We know by now that everything that God made was “good” and therefore God neither created sin nor is He to be blamed for sin because He is perfect and just.²⁴ The reason sin is bad is very simple: the wages for sin is death.²⁵ So if God didn’t create sin, what did happen?

¹⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 490.

¹⁹ I John 3:4

²⁰ I John 5:17

²¹ Romans 2:17-29

²² Romans 2:15

²³ James 4:17

²⁴ Deuteronomy 32:4

In Genesis 3:1-7, we find out: “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, “You shall not eat from any tree of the garden”?’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.”’ The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.” Sin had now entered into creation.

Up until this point in Genesis, God gave only one negative command: “From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die” (Gen 2:17).

The serpent in the Garden of Eden asked one of the most loaded questions in the entire Bible. Essentially, the snake said, “Did God *really* say?” Had Eve been totally focused on God, there is only one appropriate response: walk away in recognition that something is questioning God. Such sources of abominable wretchedness ought to never be given any attention.

This is what God said in Genesis 2:16-17, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

This is what Eve *said that God said* in Genesis 3:2-3, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it *or touch it*, or you will die.’”

The mistake that Eve made was that she gave the serpent an audience, gave it time to speak, and then *entertained* what the serpent said. (In fact, it’s very important to note that the snake tempted Eve simply by talking to her.) Subsequently, the serpent made a direct assault on three of God’s truthful, honest, and good promises that *He had already provided*: (1) the truth that Adam and Eve would die if they ate; (2) the command to do what is lawful and not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and (3) their identity as subordinate creations and not an omnipotent Creator. Another way of saying this is that the serpent appealed to the carnal nature inside of Eve by appealing to the (a) lust of the flesh, (b) the lust of the eyes, and the (c) pride of life. All of these types of sins are mentioned in I John 4:16. This is why Eve, “saw that the tree was good for food,^a and that it was a delight to the eyes,^b and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise.”^c Still another way to say it is that Eve was (a) tempted by a biological need, (b) saw something worthwhile that would make her “better,” and (c) could make her superior than just a

²⁵ Romans 6:23

“mere woman”—“empowered,” “independent,” and just like God. What the snake didn’t tell Eve is that all of these false goals carry a hefty price.

Another way to analyze the interaction between the serpent and Eve is to go back to Genesis 2:15-17. There, human creatures are given a *vocation* (“cultivate and keep”), *permission* (“From any tree of the garden you may eat freely”) and a *prohibition* (“from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat”).²⁶ The divine assignments should be considered as a whole, and each task obtains validation in the context of the other two. The serpent persuaded Eve to focus on the *prohibition* so that she forgot what God had already given. As a result, the prohibition does not remain a safeguard but a limitation and a barrier to individual growth and autonomy. In other words, the serpent made God’s protection look like a threat and God’s commands were now *optional*.

Although the serpent tempted Eve, Adam still ate. Had Adam led and not followed, this never would have happened. Had Eve obeyed and not succumbed, none of this would have happened. Blaming “the man” or blaming “the woman” is a pointless exercise and directs attention from the real problem: the selfishness that lurks inside all of us and the pride that rejects God.

The cataclysmic effect of the Fall of Man is that the sin of Adam (not the sin of Eve) was imputed to all of humanity, and thus all of humanity was counted guilty. This is summed up nicely by the apostle Paul in Romans 5:12-21, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned ... death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come ... For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners.” Essentially, God made creation and it was good, but Adam’s sin tarnished that creation, and Adam, having sinned and therefore becoming a sinner, could not have offspring that were sinless because what is corrupted cannot make what is incorruptible—sin is that powerful and pervasive. Adam’s sin gave us a sinful nature,²⁷ our whole being became corrupt,²⁸ and apart from Jesus, we are incapable of doing good or pleasing God.²⁹ The bottom line is that because “there is no man without sin”³⁰ all people are guilty before God and no one is righteous.³¹

The penalty for sin is death, so whether it’s Sin with a big “S” or sin with a tiny “s” the penalty remains the same. So *do not* get technical and try to put sin in a hierarchy by studying instances where Jesus refers to *greater* sin³² or lesser commandments³³ or THE LORD refers to an abomination.³⁴ Sin equals death. Period.

²⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2010), 46.

²⁷ Psalm 51:1-5, 58:3; Ephesians 2:3

²⁸ Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:18; Ephesians 4:18; Titus 1:15

²⁹ Isaiah 64:6; John 8:34, 15:5; Romans 8:8; Ephesians 2:1-2; Hebrews 11:6

³⁰ I Kings 8:46

³¹ Romans 3:9-18

³² John 19:11

Sin not only destroys you, but separates you from God.³⁵ Even thinking about sin brings sin to life, and such thoughts lead to death.³⁶ Sin leads to internal conflict and strife,³⁷ has deleterious environmental consequences,³⁸ leads to more sin³⁹ and enslaves you to it.⁴⁰ Sin grieves the Holy Spirit⁴¹ and is characterized by immorality, thievery, greed, idolatry, drunkenness,⁴² lying, and cowardice.⁴³ Sin also results in events of mass destruction;⁴⁴ envy, slander, malice, deceit, and hypocrisy;⁴⁵ destruction of interpersonal relationships;⁴⁶ physical illnesses;⁴⁷ hatred, confusion, desire, impatience, viciousness, faithlessness, harshness, and impulsivity.⁴⁸ (Please keep in mind that sin can cause all of the above things but that does not mean sin *always* causes these things. For example, Christ was *sinless* but experienced some of the most horrific and barbaric things ever known).

To go back to the concept of helper for a moment, please pay special attention to who God called after Eve ate the fruit. Eve is the *helper*, which means she is *not* the one who is ultimately accountable. This is why even though Adam and Eve both sinned, God called on Adam only: “Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:9). With privilege comes responsibility.

To highlight just how quickly sin disrupts what is good, pay attention to how many times Adam uses the term “I” after God calls him. Genesis 3:10-13 says, “*I* heard the sound of You in the garden, and *I* was afraid because *I* was naked; so *I* hid myself.’ And [God] said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’ The man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and *I* ate.’ Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ And the woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’” (italics mine).

Before sin, Adam sang (Genesis 2:23) about how great Eve was. Eden was filled with mutuality and equity. After the fall, Adam can’t stop blaming Eve for what happened. Impartiality turned into control and distortion. Since sin disrupts relationships, Adam separated himself from Eve and labeled her as “defective” and something that a

³³ Matthew 5:19

³⁴ Leviticus 18:22

³⁵ Isaiah 59:2

³⁶ James 1:15

³⁷ I Peter 2:11

³⁸ Leviticus 18:24-25

³⁹ Romans 6:19

⁴⁰ John 8:34; Romans 6:16

⁴¹ Ephesians 4:30

⁴² I Corinthians 6:9-11

⁴³ Revelation 21:8

⁴⁴ Jude 1:7

⁴⁵ I Peter 2:1-5

⁴⁶ Genesis 3:12-13

⁴⁷ John 5:8, 14

⁴⁸ Galatians 5:19-21

“defective God” gave him. Adam has now become the center of his own universe, so if he fails, it can’t be his fault. God, women, circumstances, weight, race, drugs, class, upbringing, friends, habits, politics, height, eye color, and ideology all become crutches upon which man falls in order to dismiss himself of all responsibility. Any man that abuses his God-ordained position to take authority must always first consider that when God comes knocking at your door, it doesn’t matter who did what. He holds you accountable *first*.

Yet, the story doesn’t end there, because sin does not overpower God, and Jesus will ultimately conquer sin. That is, while sin (and therefore death) reigned because of one man, the sins of all of humanity were paid for by the death and atoning sacrifice of Jesus. One man condemning everyone is a bad deal. The best deal is everyone being set free by one man: Jesus.⁴⁹

Finally, it compels us all to think that the choices Adam and Eve made not only were foolish but irrational. They lived in the Garden of Eden, a place pure, pristine, and untainted where scarcity did not exist nor did pain, heartache, or suffering. But for the illusory chance to be like God, they both believed a lie that offered a false assurance of gain when, in actuality, Adam and Eve needed nothing. Through this voluntary act, Adam and Eve turned away from God and pursued a course of self-interest, and ironically, in the end they both got what they wanted: knowledge of good and evil. But neither considered the cataclysmic cost their choice would have. The serpent, representative of Satan,⁵⁰ is fully aware that he cannot overpower God, so he does the next best thing and lures God’s creation away from Him. Lucifer was the first to rebel against God, and he persistently tries to lure us away from God as well.

Before I move on, it is worth mentioning that Genesis 3 is frequently treated as the origin of sin and evil in the world, but this assumption is false. We know this because Lucifer rebelled against God *prior* to our creation. The Bible, generally speaking, does not concern itself with how evil *came into the world* but rather *how we respond to it*. Walter Brueggemann says, “There is no hint that the serpent is the embodiment of principle of evil. The Old Testament characteristically is more existential. It is not concerned with origins but with faithful responses and effective coping. The Bible offers no theoretical statement about the origin of evil ... Similarly [the fall] is taken as an account of the *origin of death* in the world. That assumption is based upon the mechanistic connection of sin and death ... A variety of responses to the reality of death are offered, most often assuming that while certain forms of death may be punishment, death in and of itself belongs properly to the human life God wills for humankind.”⁵¹ God’s main concern is always life. Our concern thus ought to be how we can answer God’s call and *live* by His terms.

⁴⁹ Romans 5:12-21

⁵⁰ Revelation 12:9

⁵¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2010), 41-42.

VI. Conclusion

A helpful way to view the entire creation narrative is first to realize that God didn't have to do any of it, nor did He need creation. But because He is a relational, loving God, He claimed His ownership over creation by giving it all away as a free gift. (And as mentioned before, that gift comes with stipulations). He made us as the dominant stewards of that free gift. And because God is timeless, He already knew that when He made us, we would reject Him, but He went ahead anyway. Why? Because that's how powerful God's love is—He can say yes to us even when we say no to Him. And it's proper that creation was made on His terms, because we are the dinner guests, and He is the host.

His love becomes even more apparent in how He reacted after Adam and Eve sinned. God responded to those who rejected Him by providing for them: “The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21).

And when you think about this logically, Adam and Eve *had* to be kicked out of the Garden, because if not, they could have eaten from the tree of life (thereby sustaining their immortality) and for eternity be doomed in their fallen state. There would be no atonement, no salvation, and no release from sin. Still, even though the serpent intended to mock God and spit in His face through temptation and sin, *death now served a purpose*. The devil thought death would be his championship ring, but now the death of those who believed would be the ticket into heaven for eternity. And God, knowing humans would reject Him beforehand, also knew they could not come back to Him without His help. So, in his unceasing love, God pre-decided to save creation by sacrificing Himself for all of us. So before Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden, God already had a plan in place to save them. He tells the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (Genesis 3:14-15). The ‘He’ who “shall bruise” points directly to Jesus.

The serpent thought he could outdo God, but God already had a plan. Adam and Eve thought they could be like God, but He already knew what would happen. All of their mishaps and failures would now set up the single greatest phenomenon in the entire history of known existence: the Incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God simply refuses to leave the world alone.

It now becomes clear how *all* things work together for good for God's purposes.⁵²

Join me in a few weeks for Part V: The Incarnation, Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ ...

⁵² Romans 8:28

Questions? Email us at dlcfchurch@gmail.com. Be sure to put WCSK (yes, all caps) in the subject line. We'd love to hear from you!

God Bless.

Dr. C. H. E. Sadaphal

For Further Reading

Articles on CHESadaphal.com: [The Dangers of Oneism](#), [A Disproof of Evolution](#), [Why Atheism Fails](#), [Why Atheism Fails II & Why God Succeeds](#), & [On Religious Pluralism](#).

Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2010).

Appendix: A Theoretical Gap & Very Long Days

Beware this is *very* technical!

Francis Schaeffer has written a book called *No Final Conflict* that basically says our comprehension of scientific and Biblical knowledge is less than perfect. As a result, once our understanding significantly improves, there will be no final conflict between Biblical truth and scientific truth.

God is the One who always is, and before our universe ever existed, God could say, “I AM.” “In the beginning” God created, which means God was already there in the beginning. “In the beginning” is thus the beginning of *our* time and universe since God wrote the Bible for our sake and not as a personal diary. God has no beginning, so by implication, any beginning *has to do exclusively* with us. “In the beginning” is also an indefinite period of time according to the original Hebrew. In John’s gospel it uses the same phrase “In the beginning” but in the *past tense* to refer to God: “In the beginning *was* the Word, and the Word *was* with God, and the Word *was* God” (italics mine). Hence, God pre-existed our “In the beginning.”

“In the beginning” happened billions and billions of years ago as scientific evidence can clearly and irrefutably demonstrate, and this would coincide with a start that happened over an indefinite period. (And as an aside, the “Big Bang” essentially means that the whole universe went from zero to a million in less than a second. This drastic burst of an unfathomable amount of energy has no plausible scientific explanation. Scientists may know a little about *how* but can’t explain *why*. My point is that the *why* is *Who*: If God says, “Let there be light,” the “Big Bang” is exactly what I would expect to happen.)

Genesis 1:2 says, “The earth was formless and void.” There is only one other place in the Bible where this exact Hebrew phrase is used, in Jeremiah 4:23: “I looked on the earth, and behold; it was *formless and void*; and to the heavens, and they had no light” (italics mine). Jeremiah says these words in the context of a lament over the destruction of Judah because of the people’s sin. As a result, there was no light, and *it was a time of judgment*. God *created* in Genesis 1:1 and then in 1:2 *the earth* (not the heavens) was formless and void. Formless comes from *tohu*, meaning a desert, an empty place, a desolation. Void comes from *bohu*, meaning a vanity or an undistinguishable ruin.

God is Someone who makes something that is good and valuable, so how could He create an uninhabited wilderness? He didn't. Something happened that brought the earth under judgment, which means there's a presupposed gap in between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. The only event that we know happened prior to *our* beginning other than God is the fall of Lucifer and angels from heaven for their revolt against God.⁵³ Perhaps that or something else caused a period of judgment, but the point is that this all happened in that gap. When the gap was closed is when the figurative (and therefore *very* long) days of creation start in Genesis 1.

The Hebrew for day is *yom*, which can mean a literal sunrise to sunset day but can also denote a season or an unspecified period of time. For example, in Genesis 2:4, *yom* is used to refer to the entire six days of creation, and many other places use *yom* in a figurative sense.⁵⁴ And on the seventh day, God rested, but the text does not denote there was an evening and a morning the seventh day. Could we still be in the seventh day? Yes, especially if we consider that this explains why God isn't creating any more, because Biblically, seven equates to completion and perfection. Hebrews 4:3-4 says that God *is still resting* from creation. Perhaps the start of the eighth (a number that means new beginnings) day will be Christ's second coming.

Granted, in Exodus 20:11, the six days of creation are compared to six literal days of the week, but God also told Adam in Genesis 2:17 that in the *day* he ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die. Well, Adam did not die in the literal day that he ate the fruit but when he was more than 900 years old.⁵⁵ It also contradicts logic that life could have survived without sunlight for an extended period of time from Genesis 1:11 to 1:14, *but* the first thing God commanded into existence was light—not the sun or sunlight, but “light”—which *would be able* to sustain life over a very long period of time from 1:11 to 1:14. When one considers that one day with God is like 1,000 years with man,⁵⁶ you would at the very least have to consider the possibility.

Further, contemplate that on the third day of creation (Genesis 1:12), the text says, “Then God said, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, *and* fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them’; and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.” It clearly takes longer than 24 hours for vegetation to produce seeds and then have those seeds yield more seed-bearing plants. And on the sixth day God made Adam, Adam named *all* the animals God brought to him, and He put Adam to sleep to make Eve. All of this is a lot to achieve in 24 hours.

If all the days are figurative, then “In the beginning” happened billions and billions of years ago and the creation narrative leaves room for all that we have discovered about an

⁵³ Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28:12-19

⁵⁴ Job 20:28; Proverbs 11:4, 24:10, 25:13; Ecclesiastes 7:14; Isaiah 2:12, 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15, 2:1

⁵⁵ Genesis 5:5

⁵⁶ II Peter 3:8

“old Earth” (e.g., dinosaurs and other forms of advanced life dating back tens of thousands of years) that existed well before humans arrived on the scene on the sixth day.

For those who subscribe to an “old Earth” philosophy, it is important to consider if plants and animals died before the fall (pre-sin). God may have created animals prior to the fall that were subject to death *when they were created*. When God created plants (Genesis 1:11-12), they were made already producing seeds after their own kind. Because mortality necessitates reproduction, the implication is that plant life was made already being subject to death. The warning that Adam received in Genesis 2:17 is that *only he* would die if he ate the forbidden fruit, *not* that animals would die. Furthermore, in Romans 5:12, Paul makes it very clear that “death spread to *all men*, because all sinned” (italics mine). In other words, death spread to human beings, and not other parts of creation. My expectation is that death can only spread where death does not exist, and because humans are the only part of creation made in God’s image, we were originally made without the possibility of death, but sin changed that.