

Session 4: The Song of Creation; Ancient Near-Eastern Cosmology (Part II)

Key text: Genesis 1:1-2:3

Creation of the world was not a necessary act that God undertook to overcome loneliness...[and] God certainly did not create the world in order to become more glorious (Jn. 17:5). ...[On the contrary, God created the world] because He looked forward to the greater blessings that would be His as His glory and goodness met real needs in the lives of people whom He would create, who would depend on Him for joy and fulfillment. ...God's ultimate purpose is to increase His joy by sharing the blessing of the Trinity in creation.

– Daniel Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible*, 121, 129, 136.

The Purpose of the Creation Narrative: To Reestablish the One True God As the Only True God

What Genesis 1 is undertaking and accomplishing [is] a radical and sweeping affirmation of monotheism vis-à-vis polytheism, syncretism, and idolatry. Each day of creation...dismisses an additional cluster of deities.... On the first day, the gods of light and darkness are dismissed. On the second day, the gods of sky and sea. On the third day, earth gods and gods of vegetation. On the fourth day, sun, moon and star gods. The fifth and sixth days take away any associations with divinity from the animal kingdom. And finally human existence, too, is emptied of any intrinsic divinity—while at the same time *all* human beings, from the greatest to the least, and not just pharaohs, kings, and heroes, are granted a divine likeness and mediation.⁶

Implications of the Creation Narrative

Man-o-logue: *What have you learned from the creation narrative (Gen. 1:1-2:3)? What are the implications of the creation narrative for us personally and for the world we live in? How does it shape your understanding of God and your place in his big story?*

What Do We Learn from the Creation Narrative?⁷

1. The biblical doctrine of creation establishes the _____ of _____.

“He is not one God among many, a mere local, tribal deity. Rather he is the true and living God, the Lord of heaven and earth. He is the source of life and he is completely self-sufficient. He did not create to meet some lack in himself as if he needed something to do, someone to talk to, or someone to love. He created for his own good pleasure that he might reveal his magnificent splendor.” (Wellum)

⁶ H. Conrad Hyer, “Biblical Literalism: Constricting the Cosmic Dance,” in *Is God a Creationist? The Religious Case Against Creation Science*, ed. Roland Mushat Frye (New York: Scribner, 1983), 101.

⁷ Drawn from “The SBJT Forum: ‘In the Beginning.’” Sections from Kirk Wellum and Todd Miles (pp. 81-87).

2. The biblical doctrine of creation tells us that we are _____ in bearing the _____.
3. The biblical doctrine of creation makes a delineation between _____ and _____.
4. The biblical doctrine of creation makes a delineation between _____ and _____.
5. The biblical doctrine of creation tells us that the world we inhabit is _____.
6. The biblical doctrine of creation provides us with a _____.

In Genesis, God gives what we might call the first job description: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.” The first phrase, “be fruitful and multiply” means to develop the social world: build families, churches, schools, cities, governments, laws. The second phrase, “subdue the earth,” means to harness the natural world: plant crops, build bridges, design computers, compose music. This passage is sometimes called the Cultural Mandate because it tells us that our original purpose was to create cultures, build civilizations—nothing less.⁸

The New Paganism vs. The Creation Narrative

The “Six Faces of the New Paganism”⁹

1. _____ vs. Biblical Theism
2. _____ vs. Biblical Supernaturalism

“The most obvious fact that distinguishes our culture from all that have preceded it is that it is—in its public policy at least—atheist.”¹⁰

3. _____ vs. Biblical Compatibilism

⁸ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, 47.

⁹ See Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 177-79.

¹⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*, 65.

4. _____ vs. Biblical Divine Providence

5. _____ vs. Biblical Ethical Theism

6. _____ vs. Biblical Divine Revelation

Suggested reading for next week's seminar discussion

Scripture to study: Genesis 2:4-25

Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, pp. 79-90

David Atkinson, *The Message of Genesis 1-11*, pp. 52-99

Worship: *Crown Him With Many Crowns* Bridges and Thring

Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne.
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

Crown Him the Lord of lords, who over all doth reign,
Who once on earth, the incarnate Word, for ransomed sinners slain,
Now lives in realms of light, where saints with angels sing
Their songs before Him day and night, their God, Redeemer, King.

Crown Him the Lord of years, the Potentate of time,
Creator of the rolling spheres, ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail! For Thou has died for me;
Thy praise and glory shall not fail throughout eternity.