

Creation

Why is it important to study the Biblical doctrine of creation?

- The Bible places great significance upon it.
 - Gen. 1:1
 - John 1:1-3
- Historically, it has been a highly important aspect of the church's faith, teaching and preaching.
 - The Apostles' Creed:
 - First article states: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."
- Our understanding of the doctrine of creation impacts our understanding of other doctrines. For example:
 - Humans were created by God as separate beings—they did not emanate from him.
 - God pronounced his creation good—so there is no inherent evil in being material rather than spiritual.
 - Since the universe is God's doing, not mere chance, we can discern something about the nature and will of God from examining his creation (Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:18-20 & ff).
- The doctrine of creation helps differentiate Christianity from other religions and worldviews.
- The study of the doctrine of creation is one point of potential dialogue between Christianity and natural science.
- There needs to be a careful understanding of what the Bible teaches on creation because there have been sharp disagreements within Christian circles.

What are the elements of the Bible's teaching on creation?

- **Creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*)**

The whole of what now exists was begun by God's act of bringing it into existence—he did not fashion and adapt something which already existed independent of him.

- “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” (Gen. 1:1 & ff)
 - “from [since, before] the foundation of the world” (Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Eph. 1:14; Heb. 4:3; 9:26; 1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8)
 - “from the beginning” (Matt. 19:4; John 8:44; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 1:1; 2:13-14; 3:8)
 - “from the beginning of the world” (Matt. 24:21)
 - “from the beginning of the creation” (Mark 10:6; 2 Peter 3:4)
 - “from the beginning of creation which God created” (Mark 13:19)
 - “since the creation of the world” (Rom. 1:20)
 - “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning” (Heb. 1:10)
 - “the beginning of God's creation” (Rev. 3:14)
 - “[God] calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rom. 4:17)
 - “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” (Heb. 11:3)
- Conclusions from these scriptures:
 - God has the power to will situations to be, and they immediately come to pass as he has willed.
 - Creation is an act of God's will, not something he is compelled to by any force outside himself.
 - God does not involve himself, his own being, in the process; creation is not something made out of him—it is not a part of him or an emanation from his reality.

What is the theological meaning of the doctrine of creation?

What is really being affirmed by the Bible's teaching on creation?

Perhaps just as important, what is being rejected or contradicted?

- **The doctrine of creation is first a statement that everything that is not God has derived its existence from him.**

There is no room for **Dualism**:

- In dualism, there are 2 ultimate principles:
 - The Creator
 - The material the Creator employs in creating

But the Bible is clear that God did not work on something which was already in existence; rather, he brought into existence the very raw material he employed (see **Creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*)** above).

- **The doctrine of creation means that nothing made is intrinsically evil.**
 - God pronounced the parts of his creation good (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25)
 - And he declared the whole to be “very good” (Gen. 1:31)
- **The doctrine of creation puts a responsibility on humankind.**
 - We cannot justify our evil behavior by blaming the “evil” realm of the material, or blaming society.
 - Our sin must be an exercise of our own freedom (Js. 1:13-15).
- **The doctrine of creation guards against depreciating the incarnation of Christ.**
 - If the material world were somehow inherently evil, how could the Son of God take human form, including a physical body? (Gnostics)

- **The doctrine of creation restrains us from asceticism.**

“[T]he doctrine of creation affirms that God has made all that is and has made it good. It is therefore redeemable. Salvation and spirituality are to be found, not by fleeing from or avoiding the material realm, but by sanctifying it.”

- **If all creation has been made by God, there are a connection and an affinity among the various parts of it.**

- We are each connected with all other humans, because the same God made us all.
- We are connected with the inanimate material world in a responsible way also, because it too is part of God’s creation.

- **The doctrine of creation not only excludes the error or dualism, but also Monism.**

- Monism holds that the creation is an emanation from God—that the creation is part of him, separated from his essence.
- The Biblical doctrine of creation holds that the individual elements of creation are genuine creatures, dependent on their Creator.

- **The doctrine of creation points out the inherent limitations of creaturehood.**

- No creature or combination of creatures can ever be equated with God.
- Thus, there is no basis for idolatry—for worship of nature or for revering human beings (Ex. 20:2-3, Rom. 1:18-25 & ff).