

Understanding Theology in 15 Minutes A Day for 40 Days

Day 10

Did God Really Make Everything?

In the last three chapters, we have been considering the person of God—who he is. In this chapter and the next, we will be considering the work of God—first his work of creation, and then his work of providence.

God created everything—this fact utterly permeates Scripture! That the biblical writers brought it up over and over again establishes its importance. And the implications for one’s worldview are enormous, as we will see.

What does the Bible teach about God’s work of creation? The main account is in Genesis 1 and 2, and though opinions differ regarding proper interpretation of some details—it is *not* an easy text to understand in detail—some aspects are crystal clear.

The Power of God in Creation

For one, God demonstrated his mind-boggling power to speak everything into being: “God said, ‘Let there be ...’ ” (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; see also Psalm 33:6; Hebrews 11:3). Speaking is an expression of thought or, in this case, will. God could have simply *thought* everything into existence.

Only God is eternal; *everything* else came about through his will (Isaiah 44:24; John 1:3). This includes both the material and spiritual realms (e.g., angels; Colossians 1:16). The theological term (from Latin) for such creation is *ex nihilo*, meaning “out of nothing.” God did not use already-existing raw matter (as we do); he brought the material into being, and he formed it.

One implication of note is that God is ultimate reality. That fact rules out a worldview or philosophy known as dualism, which asserts that there are two ultimate realities—for

example, spirit and matter. There is nothing higher or of greater value than God, and there is nothing or no one equal to God. He and he alone is worthy of worship.

Further, reflecting his matchless wisdom (Psalm 104:24; Proverbs 3:19), God created in the very best way he could have created. Thus Genesis 1 states over and over, “God saw that it was good” (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) and finally, “it was very good” (v. 31). Out of the nearly infinite number of different possibilities, he chose the one very best way to create; he could not have improved on what he did in any way.

This is important because it means that evil is not inherent to creation. That rules out another form of dualism, i.e., that good and evil are opposing ultimate realities. Evil did invade God’s perfect creation, and early on, but it is not eternal.

Also, that God’s original creation was good in and of itself means that he can make it so again. His handiwork will be perfected through his redemptive or re-creative work, by which he will reverse and remove the effects of evil and sin and restore creation to what he originally intended.

The Purpose of God in Creation

God’s purpose in creation is also clear. He made everything for his glory (Psalm 19:1; Isaiah 43:7; Revelation 4:11), and in this sense *all* creation is first and foremost *theocentric*—about God. But it is likewise proper to say he made everything for humans, for us to live and thrive (Genesis 1:27–30). Our environment provides air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat; planet earth is precisely the right distance from the sun for a life-conducive temperature range (though we in Minnesota sometimes wonder about this in the winter).

That God created this world for humans is also implied by the fact that Adam and Eve are the pinnacle of his creation. People were his “last act” of creation. In a secondary sense, then, creation is *anthropocentric*—for humans.

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his *all* implies meaning and purpose in the existence of everything. This *all* is no convenient “accident”; there is a divine reason for what God made, for what *is*. And once more, even sin cannot keep him from fulfilling his purposes—in the world as a whole or through humanity in particular.

What Creation Reveals

What can we learn about God from the doctrine of creation? As already noted, the Creator is an astoundingly *powerful and wise* God who loves people, and in his goodness has provided for them through what he has made. So he is a *personal and relational* God who desires closeness to humans. By the way, we should not imagine that he created people because he was lonely. The doctrine of the Trinity reveals perfect eternal love between its three persons. Rather, God created in order to share his *loving goodness*, which we experience primarily through relationship.

We see God's *sovereignty* in what he has made. The principle is that you are sovereign over what you create (e.g., copyright and patent laws). Therefore, because God created everything, he is sovereign over everything and has the right to rule over it.

We see God's *transcendence*, which refers to his being outside of and over his creation; he is not contained within it. Yet he is not *only* outside and over, he also is down here and very much involved from moment to moment. This is referred to as God's *immanence*, and we must regard these realities in balance. God is not either/or but both/and. If we so emphasize transcendence that immanence is lost, we arrive at deism—the idea that the Creator God is now off doing other things, no longer involved with what he created. If we so emphasize immanence that transcendence is lost, we arrive at pantheism—the notion that God is so involved in creation that Creator and creation are one and the same; creation is God and God is creation.

What can we learn about creation from the doctrine of creation? Again, that there is meaning and purpose in all God has made—especially human existence. In addition, everyone and everything is totally dependent upon God for existence itself. We are not self-sufficient—we are radically God-dependent, even for our very next breath. This means we are to look to him and trust him for what we need in every dimension of life.

There is also God-given responsibility for humans as the pinnacle of his creation. First, we were created to bear God's image, so we are accountable to reflect his nature (Genesis 1:26–27). Second, we are tasked with caring for the rest of creation (Genesis 1:28). We will come back to this in chapter 13, regarding the doctrine of humanity.

INTERESTING FACT

Many scientists deny the Creator God. Ironically, however, their work is dependent upon an implication of his creation: It is rational and ordered; it makes sense; it works according to nature's laws, which are also God's creations and reflect his nature. If creation were not like this, the scientific method itself would not work.