

Creation is about the Glory of God the Creator

Genesis 1:20-23

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on July 8, 2007

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20 Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens."

21 God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

23 There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

Revelation 4:9-11 (NASB95)

9 And when the living creatures **give glory** and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever,

10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

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**."

Creation is all about the Glory of God. The creatures are designed to exalt their Creator. There's a lot of things we can talk about and have talked about in relation to Genesis 1 and origins, but this message which I have seen all over the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and that I want to major on today is that everything God's Word does is concerned with revealing and magnifying God. The reason creatures exist is to glorify God.

- Isaiah 43:7 says God created us for His glory.

- Verse 20 of the same chapter says "the beasts of the field will glorify [God], the jackals and the ostriches" (these were made in day six of our text)

- It's not just man, but all the creatures that God created on days five and six of creation, as we'll learn today, everything God made was for His own glory.

- Psalm 19 says even the heavens declare the glory of God.

- Or as the song says, "The universe declares your majesty"

And the result of creation should be that we as God's creatures, would join with the living creatures in Revelation 4:9 in giving glory to Him who sits on the throne. What God has done in creating the creatures of Genesis 1 should cause us like this scene in Revelation to fall on our faces and worship and sing again "Thou art worthy O Lord to receive glory and honor and power for thou has created all thing and for thy pleasure they are created, thou art worthy O Lord."

I hope you paid attention to some of those words we sung earlier:

"Praise to the Lord the Almighty the King of creation, O my soul praise Him"

Or as we sang in another hymn about creation “Field and forest, vale and mountain, flow’ry meadow, flashing sea, chanting bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in thee” – all of creation calls us to rejoice in God and worship Him

**The biblical application and point of creation is that God would be glorified and worshipped

Romans 1:20-25 (NKJV)

²⁰For since the **creation of the world** His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being **understood by the things that are made**, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹because, although they knew God, **they did not glorify Him as God**, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and **changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man**—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. ²⁴Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and **worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator**, who is blessed forever. Amen.

This is the application of Genesis 1. Romans 1 is the classic N.T. commentary on creation and God’s glory and how God eventually abandons individuals and even nations who practice the sins mentioned in this chapter.

Verses 22-23 are an indictment which would apply to scientists or any who profess to be wise but are foolish when they exchange giving glory to the Creator God, and instead make images of corruptible man and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things, including those on their evolutionary icons and charts and diagrams – it also applies to idols of *your* heart as well.

According to Romans 1:21, mankind knows God; there are no consistent atheists. You don’t have to prove God, man already knows instinctively there is a God whether he attends Harvard or is in some jungle in Africa apart from any civilization. God does not begin the Bible trying to prove His existence – it is asserted and assumed and absolutely stated.

Someone asked about apologetics last week in the Q&A, and I just want to reiterate that pure evidences do NOT makes someone born again. There must be God’s sovereign grace. Jesus said in John 6:44 no one can come Him unless God draws him. The natural response of depraved men in Romans 1 is to suppress whatever truth points to God, it is not just an intellectual issue it is a moral issue. And there must be regeneration to produce and preserve true faith; and faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of God so we always want to seek to bring unbelievers to the Word, not just facts and arguments. It’s not just initial creation that is only due to God’s calling forth, man’s re-creation, man’s salvation is also only due to God’s calling forth. Both are monergistic (a work of God alone) and to the glory of God alone (*solus deo Gloria*).

Romans 1:21 says “they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful” – let’s shift the focus from the secular world to us. It’s one thing to talk about those people out there, but I want to address you personally and pointedly: Are *you* thankful to God for His creation and the blessing of life you have? Is your life marked by thankfulness to God? Do you glorify God for it?

My prayer is that none of us in this room would be guilty of failing to glorify and thank our Creator who is so clearly understood in what He made, that none of us would change the all-sufficient, all-satisfying glory of God for anything else here on earth.

The highest issue here is bigger than apologetics, it's not even winning a debate about intelligent design. The ultimate concern of this chapter, this sermon, and all of God's truth is that Christ our Creator would be glorified, magnified, and worshipped. And when we honor His Word and Works, He is glorified.

One writer has summarized it this way:

God's chief end in creation was Himself, and identifies his chief end as being His glory. Because He is the God of glory, He created in, of, by and through His glory. Edwards further explains that creation is an emanation of God's own glory and excellence. Thus in creation God's glory has burst forth in such a way that His glory can be identified and experienced, albeit in a small way. Creation has emanated from His glory for His glory. In this way we can say that creation is His glory.¹

5 Ways the Creator is Revealed and Magnified in His Creatures

1. The **Effectual** Word of God – v. 20-21
2. The **Blessing of God** – v. 22 (we'll only cover these first two this week)
3. The **Goodness** of God – v. 23-25
4. The **Plural Persons** of God – v. 26-27
5. The **Praise Deserving** of God – Ps 148 (Rev. 4:11)

1. The **Effectual** Word of God – v. 20-21

<Read v. 20-21>

Notice the pattern “Then God said ... and it was so” – see v. 3, 9, 11, 14-15, 24

Each time God says something, it happens just that way, He creates it by the Word of His power, and He sees it is good, it is perfect. One of the amazing ways God is revealed and magnified in this passage is that He speaks and creates out of nothing, ex nihilo, by divine fiat, by merely saying “let there be”

Romans 4:17 says God “calls into being that which does not exist.”

Hebrews 11:3 says (ESV) “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God”

It is also by faith that atheists and naturalists believe the universe was not created by the Word of God. It is by faith in *their* words that scientists understand the world was prepared a different way, that an explosion created the exquisite order and harmony and things they cannot explain like retrograde orbits and data from astronomy that defies their theories.

Let's be clear, the supposed conflict between religion and science is not faith vs. *fact*, it's faith vs. faith. Evolution is a religion, a dogma, make no mistake about it, it's a faith as much as anything else. Two religions going head to head, two faiths in conflict.

And the more we learn about the irreducible complexity of God's creation, the more scientists are unable to find intermediate forms, the more faith it requires to believe there is no Intelligent Designer.

Origins science is outside of the observable, testable, repeatable, scientific method. So this issue is one of faith, not just facts.

You can have a bunch of PhD's after your name, you can have all the academic credentials, you can have more degrees than a thermometer, but God's question in Job 38 would still apply to all the most brilliant men of any day "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the world?" And essentially the message of the end of Job is "if you weren't there, you need to close your mouth and listen to what God says."

Since God is the only one who was there, shouldn't we trust Him in what He said about it?

Going back to the main point of God's Effectual Word, the spoken Word of God in Genesis 1 not only reveals God's glory, it also reveals His sovereignty. In verse 10 when it says God named the dry land earth, this speaks further of God's greatness and superiority. In ancient orient, act of giving a name meant exercise of sovereign right. This expresses God's claim of divine right and lordship over what He created.

God's Word in creation was not merely a voice; it was not just a verbal thing.

John 1:1-3 (NASB95)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

... 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us

When our Lord Jesus commands, not even demons can disobey. While He walked this earth even the wind and seas obeyed Him. It is true that God sovereignly allows sinful man to disobey His *written* scripture, but when we speak of our Lord's spoken Word, His *effectual* Word, we are talking about sovereign commands not suggestions. In other words, God's effectual call or command is effective, it's efficacious, it's irresistible, it is invincible.

When the Lord calls and commands "Lazarus, come forth," Lazarus doesn't say "no thanks" (nor does Saul of Tarsus at God's effectual call). God's call also causes what it calls for.

2 Corinthians 4:6 says the same God who commanded light from darkness in Genesis 1 does a very similar thing in our own dark hearts in bringing the light of the gospel and the new creation.

God's Effectual Word is life-giving, it is powerful, it accomplishes its purpose and doesn't return void. Over and over again, this chapter says "Then God said, 'Let'" – and each time a following phrase describes how it happened just that way.

The powerful effectual Word of God is one of the ways God is revealed and magnified by creation.

Psalm 33:6-9 6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host ...

8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. 9 For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

It doesn't say that God spoke, and then millions or billions of years later, things gradually formed by naturalistic processes. The Hebrew grammar in Genesis 1 has a close connection between God saying and it happening – it is emphatic here.² Every biblical example we have of the Lord Jesus commanding miracles it always has it happened the same day, virtually always instantaneously.

My translation for verse 20 reads "let the waters teem with swarms" but the better rendering is "let the water swarm with swarms" – the Hebrew has a wordplay using the same word for both. The NKJV has the idea "let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures"

The idea in Genesis 1:21 is not that there was a little here a little there, or that there were some fish eggs and they matured and after awhile they grew, the language indicates God called forth instantly immense swarms and schools of grown fish and sea creatures in incredible quantity, swarming, teeming, abundant – it's like when Jesus had the disciples put the net on the other side, then all of a sudden it was overwhelmed with fish.

Remember Jesus did another miracle where He created massive quantities of fish out of nothing when He fed the 5,000? The Word who was with God and who was God and who created the world from nothing, as John 1 says, Jesus gives a little sample of that same power in His creative miracles here on earth.

The original language of Genesis 1 speaks of God creating life, even plant life as mature. Verses 11-12 say that God didn't create seeds, He created plants and trees with seed already in them.

And verse 20 says that God called forth birds to fly – literally "let birds *fly*" and the verb form stresses a swarming flight, again underscoring abundance³ - the language indicates that these birds were created in flocks, full-grown and able to fly when they were created.

So the next time someone asks you the age-old question as to what came first, the chicken or the egg, what are you going to say? God created all the birds (not eggs, actual birds) on day five and the sea was swarming with sea creatures as well.

Is this a problem if God's created things with appearance of age? Does it make God deceptive?

Not at all. God clearly says he created man and woman created full-grown. When they were only minutes old, they would have appeared to be the “perfect age.”

The fact that they looked like they had lived a full life does not make God deceptive – God did things exactly the way He said He did. What *would* be deceptive is if Genesis 1 teaches things as fact that are different than what actually happened.

Remember the fish Jesus created to feed the 5,000 also would have had the appearance of age, full life, and death, when they were only created a few seconds ago. This type of miracle doesn't diminish our Lord's glory or cast shadows on God, it actually exalts God.

Many have tried to describe the amazing scene of verse 21.

At the spoken word of God the waters of the sea suddenly swarmed with all kinds of living creatures. At the same time, the sky came alive with all kinds of birds. What a scene that must have been. One moment the waters were still and empty, and the sky was empty. The next moment schools of fish were leaping and stirring the waters, whales were spouting, and other great sea creatures were appearing here and there on the surface of the sea. The sky above was filled with flocks of flying birds. They added color and noise to the surroundings.⁴

‘swordfish reigned amidst schools of tuna and dolphin and thousands of ... finned creatures – many unknown until the twentieth century. And above ... eagles, cormorants, ravens, gulls, geese, ducks, woodpeckers, finches, cardinals, indigo buntings. The skies and seas teemed with astonishing variety, all from the mind of God. The waving, undulating beauties seen first by the sea diver and the gliding, iridescent arrays of the heavens exist because of God's thought and his pleasure.’⁵

Stunning bright–pink flamingos, radiantly colored parrots, thick–plumed peacocks, long–legged cranes, spectacular long–tailed pheasants, and fancy–plumed cockatoos are familiar to us all. Everything from eagles and hawks to hummingbirds and doves reveals an amazingly rich creative originality.⁶

What an amazing thing it must have been for angels to see peacocks, and pelicans, and parrots, and peregrine falcons, and pigeons, and partridges, and also sparrows, and storks, and swallows, and sea gulls, and swans, and all these amazing birds just spoken into existence by God! These are just some of the creatures that point to the glory of their Creator and teach us about God.

Matthew 6:25-33 (NASB95)

25 “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

26 “**Look at the birds of the air**, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?

27 “And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?

v. 33 “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Matthew 10:29-33 (NASB95)

29 “Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

30 “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 “So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

In Genesis 1, God commands ten times, and some have compared this to the Ten Commandments. God’s effectual Word further reveals God’s glory because God has the power to create what He commands (ex: “Lazarus come forth”)

The word for “create” in verse 21 is the same word from verse 1 (*bara*) which has the idea from context of creating from nothing.

Without God, no one can account for how something could come into being where nothing existed. Nothing produces nothing. Even Julie Andrews in Sound of Music knew this as she sang in one of her songs “nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever will.”

Non-Christians like to pose hard questions to Christians about the Bible and creation, but they themselves cannot adequately answer the most basic questions of origins:

- How can nothing explode (i.e., some Big Bang theorists)?
- How can matter just spring into existence from non-matter?
- How can life just spring from non-life?
- How can incredible complexity and design superior to what the most intelligent humans can reproduce, how can that just spring up by accident?
- How can you have creation without any creating?
- How can you have design without a designer?
- How can you have creatures without a Creator?
- How do you explain your conscience and the moral law written on your heart, of right and wrong?
- You cannot even argue by laws of logic consistently in an atheistic worldview – how do you account for the existence of reason and true and false and logic if you don’t believe in an absolute God of absolute truths?

Note: there’s an excellent debate you can read or listen to online, which I did again this week. It’s between atheist champion Robert Stein and reformed apologist Greg Bahnsen, who gives excellent illustration of presuppositional apologetics in action if you want to study further. I will put links to this on the sermon notes on the website.⁷

So in verses 20-21, the Creator is Revealed and Magnified in His Effectual Word, now in verse 22, we see another truth about God that should cause all His creatures to glorify Him:

The Blessing of God

Something new happens when God creates the living creatures and animals. The creation narrative has used the word “good” before, but this is the first time the word “bless” is used in the Bible. Plant life is not pronounced with a blessing, it is only given to living creatures. As soon as ‘living creatures’¹ are created, the notion of ‘blessing’ is appropriate because the blessing relates to the giving of life.

“Be fruitful and multiply” is more of a blessing than a command, which the sea animals heard and would consciously obey. The imperatives are not just permission, they grant power to reproduce.⁸ The blessing is actually what endows the fruitfulness and enables the multiplying. God blesses by giving His creatures the capacity to reproduce. Life is dependent on Him and a gift from Him. The word of blessing guarantees success, and the most visible evidence of that enrichment is productivity or fruitfulness.⁹

Genesis uses the Heb. word for “bless” (*barak*) more than any other book in the Bible (88x) even more than the book of Psalms (83x)

The most important use of “bless” in Genesis is 12:2-3

1 Now the LORD said to Abram,
 "Go forth from your country,
 And from your relatives
 And from your father's house,
 To the land which I will show you;
 2 And I will make you a great nation,
 And I will bless you,
 And make your name great;
 And so you shall be a blessing;
 3 And I will bless those who bless you,
 And the one who curses you I will curse
 And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

Did you know this is the gospel in Genesis?

Galatians 3:8 says ‘The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."’

The context are those trusting in Christ *and* works of the law, rather than by faith alone in Christ alone. Paul writes some of his strongest words defending the gospel which is rooted in Genesis 12 and Genesis 15

¹ The Hebrew phrase for “living creatures” in v. 21 and relating to animals and man is *nephesh chaya* – this refers basically to “that which breathes” and the idea may include “principle of consciousness” or “entity of conscious life which would henceforth be an integral part of every animate being, including man” (Douglas Kelly, *Creation and Change*, p. 208; citing Leupold). Animal life is distinguished in scripture from plant life, which is never referred to by this Hebrew phrase. It is an organic life form, rather than a “living creature.”

1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

4 Did you suffer so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain?

5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

6 Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."

9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."

11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM."

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"--

14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

By God's grace, turn from trusting in anything you have done to save you and trust Christ alone today, beg Him to have mercy on you the sinner.

¹ *Reformation and Revival Journal* 4:2 (Spring 1995) p. 50

² Dr. William Barrick says the Hebrew *wayêhî-kên* is "consecutive imperfect + adverb = emphatic declaration ("and it happened just that way"); established, fixed ("and thus it has ever been"; cf. Ross, Cassuto)." www.drbarrick.org *NET Bible Notes* adds "This statement indicates that it happened the way God designed it, underscoring the connection between word and event."

³ *NET Bible Notes*. Verb form is Polel form instead of the simple Qal

⁴ Bill Barrick, "Cutting It Straight" (Shepherd's Conference Notes)

⁵ Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, p. 34

⁶ MacArthur, J. *The battle for the beginning : The Bible on creation and the fall of Adam* (129). Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001.

⁷ <http://veritasdomain.wordpress.com/2006/12/05/greg-bahnsen-vs-gordon-stein-the-great-debate/>

For text version, click below:

http://www.bellevuechristian.org/faculty/dribera/htdocs/PDFs/Apol_Bahnsen_Stein_Debate_Transcript.pdf (read for example pages 16, 20-21 and following, 39-42, and esp. page 32 and 36-37)

⁸ *Gesenius Grammar* 110b; Barrick, 3

⁹ *NET Bible Notes*.