

Doctrine of Creation

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[0 : 00] It is exactly 9 o'clock, and so I might as well just start, because I like to start on a round number, so if it's not 9, it'll be 9.05, and then that just takes too long.

So, why don't we start with prayer, and then we can jump right in. Father God, creator of heaven and earth, we ask that you would bless this time that we have together, that you would be revealed more fully through our time, and that through this discussion and through this time of learning, we can learn to glorify you more and see you everywhere.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. All right. So, good morning, everyone. I'm Luke Batty. I'm a professional scientist, although that really won't come in very much today.

So, just think of me as another layperson. And we're starting today a new class series on the doctrine of creation, and oftentimes the doctrine of creation can kind of feel like a battleground, you know.

Where we're always talking about different views on the age of the earth, the matter of days, evolution. And in this class, we are going to cover some of these things, for sure, but I think our goal here is to look at the doctrine of creation with a view to how we can more fully receive the foundational teaching as creation is a gift of God.

[1 : 38] Creation is a gift from God. Creation is a gift from God, and how we can then take creation as a gift and return to God as our creator by glorifying him.

So, today, we're basically, over the next seven weeks or so, we're going to take Genesis 1. Chapter 1 is sort of our guide as we move slowly through it, and we pick up different elements of the narrative and what we can learn from it.

And so, today, I'll be starting at the very, very beginning. The very beginning, you know. So, before I jump in, though, why don't we...

I love... I don't know about you guys, but I love mythology. Does anybody else here love mythology of different cultures, etc.? Yeah, I'm crazy about it. I grew up with... my parents had the doulairs.

I don't even know if I'm pronouncing that right. Doulairs, like book of Greek myths and Norse myths and all that stuff. So, I grew up with that stuff. It's my bread and butter. So, I love hearing different cultures' creation myths.

[2 : 42] So, I thought I'd give you a few samplings, and then we can use that as a starting point for differentiating the biblical worldview. So, let's start with Greek myth.

This is coming from Hesiods. Cosmogeny, if... or Cosmogony. I actually, honestly, don't know Greek. So, it could be pronounced either way. Cosmogeny sounds more interesting to me, though.

So, it starts this way. First, there was chaos. Then broad-chested Gaia, the steadfast seed of all immortals who live upon the snowy peaks of Olympus. Then murky Tartarus in the depths of the white earth.

And Eros, most beautiful of the immortal gods, who weakens the limbs and overwhelms the minds and wise counsel in the breast of all gods and humans. Chaos gave birth to Erebus and black Nyx.

And from Nyx came Aether and Hermera, conceived after Nyx joined in love with Erebus. First, Gaia bore stony Uranus, her equal, to envelop her on all sides so she would be the ever-secure home for the blessed gods.

[3 : 42] Then she bore Tal-Uria, pleasant refuge of the goddess Nymphs on the mountain forests, and the sterile swelling seas of Pontus. All of these she bore alone.

Then she bedded Uranus and bore deep whirling Oceanus, Coeus, Creus, Hyperion, Iapetus, Thea, Rhea, Themis, Nemesantine, and it goes on, golden-crowned Phoebe, and fair Tethys.

Then Wily Kronos was born, her youngest and most dreadful child, who hated his fearsome father. And so for those of you who are familiar with Greek myth, we all know about Kronos, right?

Kronos was the big bad guy. He was like, I want to be top dog. And so he started eating his children, because there was some sort of prophecy, I think, that one of his children would supplant him.

So he's like, I'll solve that problem just by eating my kids. Which, right? Why wouldn't you? But then, as we know, Zeus was hidden away, right?

[4 : 46] And then he comes back and beats up his dad, and then all of his siblings get vomited out. It's a very fun, interesting story. But that's how Greek mythology starts.

That's the creation myth of Greek mythology, or at least one of them. Here's another one I think really is interesting. This is Norse mythology. This one starts, Before there was soil or sky or any green thing, there was only the gaping abyss of Gnungagap.

This chaos of perfect silence and darkness lay between the homeland of elemental fire, Muspelheim, and the homeland of elemental ice, Niflheim. Frost from Niflheim and billowing flames of Muspelheim crept towards each other until they met in Gnungagap.

Amid the hissing and sputtering, the fire melted the ice, and the drops formed themselves into Ymir, the first of the godlike but destructive giants. When he slept, more giants leapt forth from his legs and from the sweat of his armpits.

I'm sure we were all familiar with that. As the frost continued to melt, a cow, Adumia, emerged from it. She nourished Ymir with her milk, and she in turn was nourished by salt licks in the ice.

[5 : 56] Her licks slowly uncovered Buri, the first of the Aesir tribe of gods. Buri had a son named Bor, who married Besla, the daughter of the giant bolt-thorn. The half-god, half-giant children of Bor and Besla were Odin, who became the chief of the Aesir gods, and his two brothers, Vili and Vey.

Odin and his brothers slew Ymir and set about constructing the world from his corpse. They fashioned the oceans from his blood, the soil from his skin and muscles, vegetation from his hair, clouds from his brain, and the sky from his skull, where four dwarves, corresponding to the four cardinal points, held Ymir's skull aloft above the earth.

And then, after that, we get into all the fun of the adventures of Odin and the other Aesir gods and the Veynir gods, if you're familiar with Norse mythology. Lots of fun, weird stuff. That's the Norse creation myth.

Here, let's bring it a little closer to the context of the writing of Genesis. We have here the Babylonian Enuma Elish. This starts, When the heavens above did not exist, and earth beneath had not come into being, there was Apsu, which is fresh water, the first in order, their begetter, and Demi urged Tiamat, that's salt water, who gave birth to them all.

They had mingled their waters together before meadowland had coalesced and reedbed was to be found. When not one of the gods had been formed or had come into being, when no destinies had been decreed, the gods were created within them.

[7:31] Lamu and Lahamu were formed and came into being. While they grew and increased in stature, Ansar and Kisar, who excelled them, were created. And then on and on and on. More gods, more interesting stuff happens.

Creation of humans. That's like, we'll bring, I'll mention that later in a little bit. So these are different, this is just sort of a survey of different ways that creation has been understood in different cultures, in different times.

In ancient times, in Babylon, in Norse mythology, in Greek mythology. Let's compare and contrast these creation stories with the beginning we have in Genesis.

This starts, Genesis 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And then it continues on for the days, which we will continue to talk about later. Does anybody see, what are some of the differences you guys see in this account here versus the other accounts we read earlier?

[8:45] Anything jump out at you? Yes? God exists before, not for a picture. Yeah, yeah, it seems like God is there at the beginning, right?

And then there's nothing else, right? What else? Anybody see anything else? In the other myths, there's a lot of action, a lot of interaction. Whereas, from what you read from Genesis, there's a pregnant presence.

Yeah. Yeah, sort of like there's more characters going on. There's more conflict, maybe, we could say. Whereas in this account, there is no conflict.

There's just the Word of God. So I think, yeah, Matt? In all of them, I think there was some idea of chaos or the abyss or something like that near the beginning.

Yeah, the watery chaos or the giant, you know, maelstrom of Gnungagap, which is just a fun word to say. I'm not even sure I'm saying it right, but it's fun the way I'm saying it.

[9:55] Yeah, I think these are all correct things to see in this difference. For one, I think the lack of conflict.

There's no other element. There's no other being that is vying with God for control, vying for God with God for creation, for supremacy.

It's God. In the beginning, God. We also get monotheism, right? That's one of the ones that kind of jumps out.

I mean, all the other ones, there's multiple gods going on. You know, there's the earth god and the sky god, or there's the giant god, I guess. And then you have, you know, different water gods, whether that be salt water or fresh water and their progeny.

There's a lot of, like, birthing going on, right? No, in this account, we don't have any of those. We have one god. And I think the most important difference is the first difference that was brought up, which is God was there before anything else.

[11:08] God was there before anything else, and he created everything out of nothing. This is the doctrine we call creation ex nihilo, and that's what we're going to be talking about today.

This is one of the great doctrines of the church. But before we get into that, and this is a doctrine that all Christians agree on, but I think it's important, since we're using Genesis as our roadmap, to pause here and talk about a controversy that has to do with these first verses of Genesis.

And that controversy is over whether Genesis 1-1 is actually describing creation ex nihilo. So there's multiple views out there. The reason there is this controversy is that, grammatically, we can take the beginning verses of Genesis in a few different ways.

One of the ways that used to be brought out earlier in time, maybe I think more commonly in the 19th century, was the idea that you read it when God created the heavens and the earth, and you started that way.

But most biblical scholars don't take that reading anymore. They don't think that's, for reasons I don't understand, because I don't speak Hebrew, that's not really much of a viable option.

[12:19] But there's still two other options that we can use to take Genesis 1. So the first one is, surprise, the first one is the way that we have it in the ESV.

We just read it in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was out, form and void, and the narrative continues from there. Another way of taking the beginning verses is to see the first verse as sort of a title, sort of a summary of all that's about to come next.

So we can think of that, reading it would be like, Genesis 1, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Pause. The earth was without form and void. You see how the narrative can start here?

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. So, these are two different ways we can take the beginning verses of Genesis. So how do we, how do we, what are some reasons for taking the first or the second way of reading it?

Well, for the second reading, I think one of the reasons, outside of any of the grammatical reasons, is that there's an, if we start here, with the earth being without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, we start to see a greater, a stronger similarity between this narrative and other narratives like the Enuma Elish that we started with.

[13:43] Right? The starting in a place of disorder, starting with chaos, starting with this watery nothingness, sort of. You guys see that?

How this, now if we start here, we can start to see a closer similarity to these other creation myths. And I could have given you other ancient Near Eastern creation myths from ancient Egypt, for instance, or ancient Assyria, I think.

Yeah. We, there's, there's a few different ones and they all start sort of, just kind of like Greek myth and Norse myth in a place of chaos and disorder. And the creation myth is about bringing in order.

Right? And that order is usually brought about by fighting, fighting or birthing or marrying or something like that. Right? As we, as we read. And so if we take this second understanding of, of the, the first verses of Genesis, then we can, you see, we can conceive of this beginning creation account as sort of a direct frontal attack on these other creation myths.

Right? And what will come out of the, what will come out of understanding the creation account in comparison to these other myths is those things that we talked about.

[14:58] The fact that there was this lack of conflict in Genesis. In comparison to these other groups. That there's an elevation of human dignity. So for instance, in the Aniwa Elish, I didn't go into it because it's very long.

But when it eventually gets to the creation of humans, humans are like, they're, they're like the, the thing that was created to get the gods out of doing some work.

Basically. So the gods were, you know, they're on the earth, they're tilling the soil, they're making food, and they're like, oh man, this is a ton of work. I thought I was a god.

Why am I doing this work? Basically. And then human beings are created like, hey, we can make these things, they can do the work for us, and then they offer us the food, and everything's great. And then they're like, hey, great idea, let's do that.

And then boom. That's the creation of human beings. That's what being, a human being means in the Babylonian context. You are born into a life of work and service.

[15:53] For what end? Just to get the gods out of some work. And ultimately, actually, humans end up becoming way too loud and annoying. And then that's why they're flooded.

Because it's really, they're like, seriously, the gods are trying to sleep. And they're like, I can't sleep with all this noise down there. They're just making so many humans, it's to get rid of all of them, you know. So, obviously, if we take this second version, version of the Genesis, all those, those differences come to the fore.

Human dignity is so different in the, in the Genesis account than we get in other, these other accounts. And we can continue on in differences, like the expression is God as harmonious ruler, sole ruler over the earth, over creation.

So that's, I think, some of the, the benefits of that. And despite, I think, a lot of the strength of these considerations, I actually believe that the, the understanding that we get in the ESV and other translations is probably closer to the truth.

And that, indeed, the implications from the beginning, the first chapters of Genesis are way more radical and way more different than the surrounding cultures.

[17:04] verses. So some of the reasons that we can, we have for taking this, this first view here is that in the Hebrew, actually, verse two starts with an and.

And so if you imagine the narrative starting and the earth was out, form and void, it kind of sounds like, oh, what? I thought, you know, it's kind of like starting, boom, in the middle of the action and there seems to be a callback to earlier action.

So that actually gives us a little more confidence that this, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth is the first act in the narrative. And then the verse two is actually a continuance of the narrative.

Now, you know, I'm not a Hebrew scholar and so there's very good arguments both ways on the grammar. So I don't claim to be an authority there, but that seems pretty, pretty persuasive to me.

And more, and then secondly, I think more interestingly or more decisively is this view that if this is a title of what is about to follow, it is kind of strange that the first verse starts with the earth already there.

[18:09] Right? So in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth is what we're about to experience, what we're about to see and it starts with the earth is already there. It's kind of like, oh, well, what is the earth if it hasn't been created yet?

Right? What is the earth? And if you continue on and when he starts talking about the heavens, before the heavens are actually fully formed, they're called the heavens. And so in one sense, as we continue on in the narrative, narratively, the earth and the heavens already exist, at least in the language of the passage.

And so that, again, I think is other reasons to take this first view. Now, I think another reason we should consider the first view is it seems to be the way that the earliest people of God understood this passage.

As we call back to Genesis 1, there seems to be this insistence of there being nothing besides God in the act of creation. So if we look at, for instance, Isaiah 45, 18, For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, He is God, who formed the earth and made it.

He established it. He did not create it empty. He formed it to be inhabited. I am the Lord and there is no other. Right? So I think if we sit and we marinate on that kind of verse, it does seem to give us the feeling that there is nothing else other than God when He creates and He creates everything as is.

[19 : 32] Right? Another obvious example in the New Testament is John 1, 1. Right? In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. Now that is obviously very clear. And so, even those Christians, believers who take this second view would say, obviously creation ex nihilo is the truth that we affirm in Scripture.

But I think if we think about John 1, 1 as a callback, as a reference to Genesis 1, then that makes it not only an expression of new doctrine but also an interpretation of what it is Genesis 1 was saying in the first place.

So whether you're convinced by either of those arguments about creation ex nihilo as I, you know, whether you think Genesis 1 is talking about creation ex nihilo as I take it or not, we can all agree that actually this is the teaching of God's people, that the doctrine of creation ex nihilo is one of the distinguishing differences between Christianity and these other religious systems, other ways of thinking about the world.

So how is that? What does creation ex nihilo do for us? What are we to learn from it? Well, for one, we should remember that heaven and earth is a merism, meaning it's a phrase that's supposed to encompass everything.

[21 : 01] So when we say in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, we shouldn't think of this as specifically God created the sky and God created the planet earth.

Heaven and earth just means everything, right? It's like saying the whole kitten caboodle or the whole enchilada, right? We're not talking about enchiladas here. We're talking about everything, right?

So this is the same kind of figure of speech. Heaven and earth, everything. So when we confess that God created all things from nothing, everything, everything, this is actually a confession of truth both about God and about creation.

So how is this? So let's park here for what does this tell us about God? Well, if everything that is made, that is, if everything that was made by God, then that reveals that God is the only independent one.

The only being without beginning. You guys see that? This concept of deity is radically different from the other ones we heard about earlier.

[22 : 09] Zeus, Odin, Apsu. They may be called almighty. They may be called ultimate. But they actually just exist as one part of a larger whole.

They are part of the eternal cosmos of chaos or maybe a whirling maelstrom depending on what flavor you prefer. They're just one part of this larger whole, right?

They don't ground these realities. They kind of exert a power over them kind of like Superman on steroids, right? They can take this pre-existing material and they can form it and they can exert their will on it but they don't make it.

They don't ground it. It doesn't exist because of them. How different is this than the God of the Bible? When God gives Moses his personal name, what does he say?

I am. Right? I am. It gives me chills. Right? I am. I am. God is not one being among other beings.

[23 : 16] God is being. God is, is, as Augustine says. So what is that? There's not a watery chaos, an eternal universe.

There's not this unformed substance alongside him that he uses. This is what we learn when we really stop and consider the teaching of creation ex nihilo. There's only God and all things that depend on him for their existence.

There's basically only two kinds of things. God and creation. Right? If you're not God, you're created. And that determines the hierarchy.

Does that make sense? God is often called his aseity, meaning from himself. This is actually what Jesus mentions when he's defending his unity with the Father to the Pharisees.

He says, in John, I believe, 5, I didn't write that down, actually. John 5, for as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

[24 : 30] God isn't given life. God doesn't depend on anything. God has life in himself. Right? You can see immediately the radical departure that is from these other gods.

Aseity is one of those incommunicable attributes, we say. Those aspects of God's essence that are unique to him. If you have one of these attributes, you are God, by definition.

Right? If you're from yourself, you are God. Right? And a lot of us like to think we're self-made. We're not self-made like this. Right?

I think there's kind of a funny story, right? I think it's a joke, actually, but it's a story about a scientist, this very brash and confident scientist.

He says, God, I can create everything that you created out of this mud right here. And God says, okay, go ahead. Do it.

[25 : 31] And so the scientist says, okay. He starts working with the mud and God says, oh, well, make your own mud. Right? There's all this stuff that we just take for granted as just existing that we think, oh, yeah, the laws of physics.

Right? A lot of times you'll hear of people talking about, well, if we have a quantum vacuum and we have quantum fluctuations, then something actually can come out of nothing. Right?

But this just misses the point. This is sort of obtuse because there isn't nothing. There are quantum laws. Right?

You see that? There are laws of physics that are operative. So those things need to be explained. It's not about the existence of material things as such. It's the existence of anything.

It's existence. Period. Full stop. That we're trying to explain here. Right? Another thing that we get from Ex nihilo, another of his incommunicable attributes, is God's immutability.

[26 : 38] God's not growing. Being born from the salt like the Aesir. I love that view. And that's one of the reasons I shared it. I love the view of a cosmic cow licking the ice and a guy just coming out of it.

In the Duler Book of Myths, there's actually a really great picture where the cow is like licking and it's like you can start seeing the hair coming from the thing like a cow lick in your hair, right?

But God's not growing. God's not developing. He's not reaching or striving. God is perfect. And therefore, there's no need for God to change.

Like his aseity, God's immutability is revealed in his being the only one to not have a beginning. So let's look at Psalm 92. where it says, Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

When we apply this to the aspect of time, God's immutability, we arrive at God's eternity. He's the only beginning that was always. Right?

[27 : 51] Revelations 1.8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. There wasn't a time where God was not.

There wasn't a time when God needed to change or to grow. He didn't need to take on humanity to learn what it was really like. Does it make sense?

Sometimes we talk like this. Like God needed something. Like he needs us. Does God need us? I hope not. Because I'm not going to be any help.

And we could go on. There's so many things we can draw about God from creation ex nihilo. His unity, God's infinity, his simplicity. All of these attributes are attempts to articulate this radical transcendence that we have in the Creator.

He's beyond all things for he made all things and there's no one like him. That's, I think, the title, should be the title of what we learn from creation ex nihilo is that there is no one like him.

[29 : 00] So, that's God. We're finished with God. You know? No, we're not. So, but what do we learn about God? What do we learn about creation from the doctrine of creation ex nihilo?

Well, if God, if discussing God's transcendence is leaving you feeling cold, making you think if God's so distinct from his creation, if he's so different, if he's so beyond, if he doesn't need, how can we say that he's with us?

Right? On the contrary, this view makes God closer than you can even imagine. If all things depend on God for their existence, then that means that we have derivative existence.

Right? If God is being, that anything that exists is sort of relying on God's being to exist. Are we getting that?

So, this is all to say we don't exist autonomously. I heard a great analogy where it's like, you know, before we're born, we rely on this umbilical cord to exist.

[30 : 10] Right? We as human beings we're kind of attached to our mothers where we receive this existence. We receive our nourishment.

And sort of like invisible umbilical cords. We all walk around. Everything walks around connected to God, relying on God for its existence.

Right? So, we don't exist autonomously. we actually must participate in God's being to be. And so, it's incorrect to think of our existence as the result of blind forces like electromagnetism or the weak nuclear force or gravity.

You know? This is like, these are the things that we usually think about when we think about like the bare bones of existence like these laws, these things controlling how atoms relate to each other or how atoms are formed.

And surely, these forces have their place in explaining a host of different phenomena that we observe. But no, ultimately, it is the personal triune God of Scripture who is love, who is also the ground and sustainer of our very being.

[31 : 20] Or as Paul quotes Epimenides in Acts 17, in Him, we live and move and have our being. Speaking of Jesus as the logos of creation in Colossians 1, 15-17, Paul says that He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him and He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.

So far from separating us from God, the fact that we are contingent, that we are dependent is actually described in Scripture God being our source as our being in Him.

We are not separated from God. We are in God. Every moment, second by second, God sustains us. We are connected to Him. This is one of the reasons why sin is so heinous.

Right? So, if we conceive of sin as rejection of God, a turning away from Him, it's actually a rejection of life and being itself. Now, this is actually one of the reasons philosophically that we, that the view of sin as privation emerges in the church.

[32 : 49] Right? Sin is non-being. Anyways, we don't need to go into that. Unless you really want to. Because I would love to talk about that. But, yeah. But more importantly, actually, it's so heinous, sin is so heinous, because in rejecting God, we actually have to use the gift of God's sustaining work in creation to reject Him.

we stand on top of God on the limb of God's sustaining grace and we start cutting on the limb saying, I don't need you.

I reject you. So, this is the, constitutes the most severe form of ingratitude. As Paul says in Romans 1, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him. For they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

[34 : 07] Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. You see how by sitting and really thinking about what does it mean for God to be creator?

For God to make everything apart from Himself and the fact that we rely on God, we're sustained by God. You can see how silly idolatry becomes.

we take these things that these other created things that we see and we fashion them and we worship them and how silly it is when those very things rely on God for their existence.

Right? So thanks be to God that He does not reject us in turn, obviously, but continues in His mercy to sustain us. Right? Right? And, not only that, He entered into contingency by taking on human nature and then even works with the Holy Spirit to reunite us to Himself.

So sin is us turning away from God, rejecting being, existence, life, goodness, love, everything that God is. If we consider sin as that thing, then, through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we are brought back to God, back to being, back to existence.

[35 : 37] I like how Herman Baving puts it. He says, the doctrine of creation, affirming the distinction between the Creator and His creature, is the starting point of true religion.

There is no existence apart from God and the Creator can only be known truly through revelation. This creation is properly said to be ex nihilo, out of nothing, thus preserving the distinction in essence between the Creator and the world and the contingency of the world and its dependence on God.

The Son is the Logos by whom the Father creates all things. And so here's the interesting thing. The whole world is a realization of an idea of God. The creation proceeds from the Father through the Son and in the Spirit so that in the Spirit and through the Son it may return to the Father.

You see that? Now, this actually is referencing that aspect of creation whereas Jesus as the Son, God the Son is the Logo, sort of the creating principle, right?

The logic, the thing that forms. And so, in some earlier Christians like Augustine, we find he said he likes to imagine creation, which as we all know in the Trinity is interpenetrating.

[36 : 54] We can't really distinguish fully all the acts of God into, oh, that was the Father but not the Son and the Spirit, right? We don't want to do that, right? But, Augustine likes to think of the Trinity's separate activities in the act of creation.

I shouldn't say separate activities. This is probably a better word. But as you can see, as we talk about God, our words start to fail, right? He likes to say that God the Father creates like bare matter.

And then God the Son provides form to that matter and it is God the Spirit that actually actuates it, right? So the way he imagines it as we go through Genesis, we're going to see in the early chapters God says let there be and that is thought to be God the Father using the word God the Son to say let there be and the Spirit saying and there was.

Right? So it's a beautiful, beautiful way of thinking about our creation. And so to finish up, I was going to go on this long tangent about what it means to glorify God.

I was going to use a lot of words and stuff and then I started writing it and then I thought what am I doing? I can't write this better than Scripture. So anybody have their Bible here wants to read a significant portion of Scripture?

[38 : 24] Yeah. Yeah? Yeah. Alright, I got Isaiah 46 if you do not mind. Isaiah 46? Yeah, and as we read this I want you guys to think about the things that we've talked about.

God is ultimate. God is the one God, the true God. The insanity of idolatry and how God being the one creator actually brings us closer to him.

Allows God to be the thing that can save us and bring us back to himself. Sorry, go ahead. Isaiah 46, what? Just the whole chapter.

Okay. Okay. Bel boweth down, nebo, stupid, stupid. Their idols were upon the beast and upon the cattle.

Their carriages were heavy laden. They are a burden. They are a burden to the weary beast. They stoke. They bow down together. They could not deliver the burden but themselves are gone into captivity.

[39 : 28] Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob and all the remnant of the house of Israel which are born by me from the belly which are carried from the womb.

And even to your old age I am key and even to whore hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear even I will carry and will deliver you.

To whom will you liken me and make me equal? Compare me that we may be alike. They lavish gold out of the bag and weigh silver in the balance and hire a goldsmith and he maketh it a god.

They fall down. Yea, they worship. They bear him up upon the shoulder. They carry him and set him in place and he standeth. From his place he shall not be removed.

Yea, one shall cry unto him yet can he not answer nor save him out of this trouble. Remember this and show yourselves men.

[40 : 28] Bring it again to mind for you transgressors. Remember the former things of old for I am God and there is none else. I am God and there is none like me.

Declaring the end from the beginning and from the ancient times the things that are not yet done saying my counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure.

Calling a ravenous bird from the east the man that executed my counsel from a far country. Yea, I have spoken it. I will also bring it to pass.

I have purposed it. I will also do it. Hearken unto me ye stephearted that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness.

I shall not be far off and my salvation shall not carry. I will place salvation in Zion for Israel. Glory.

[41 : 28] Magnificent. worth 10,000 of my words. I love this image in the beginning. They are taking Nebo and they are taking Bel and they are loading him onto these donkeys and the donkeys are like under the weight of them as they go along.

And they can't even get him all the way there. They fail in their attempts to carry God on their backs. Right? But what does God say? I have born you these other people they are bearing their gods I bore you from the womb.

Even to your old age I am carrying you. You guys see that? See the contrast there that we get? And also that God is not far off. Right?

There is no one like God and that means God is near. Not far. Alright. Somebody else. Who wants to read Psalm 86? You want to read it?

Go ahead Laura. Incline your ear O Lord and answer me for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life for I am godly. Save your servant and trust in you.

[42 : 44] You are my God. Be gracious to me O Lord for to you do I cry all the day. Gladden the soul of your servant for to you O Lord do I lift up my soul.

For you O Lord are good and forgiving. Abounding and steadfast love to all who call upon you. Give ear O Lord to my prayer. Listen to my plea for grace.

In the day of my trouble I call upon you and you answer me. There is none like you among the gods O Lord nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you O Lord and shall glorify your name.

For you are great and wonderful things. You alone are God. Teach me your way O Lord that I may walk in your truth. Unite my heart to fear your name.

I give thanks to you O Lord my God with my whole heart and I will glorify your name forever. For great is your steadfast love toward me. You have delivered my soul from the death of your soul.

[43 : 49] O God insolent men have risen up against me. A band of ruthless men seeks my life and they do not set you before them. But you O Lord are a God merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Turn to me and be gracious to me. Give your strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant. Show me a sign of your favor that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you Lord have helped me and comfort me.

Beautiful. Beautiful. Right? We're needy. We call on God. We need God. And because God there are because there's no one like God that exists God is uniquely placed to answer our requests.

Right? Even to need God you've got to presuppose a God. Exactly. Right. It's beautiful. So, you know what? I'm impressed about this psalm and really a number of others too.

So, in this psalm he makes sure that his hearers or readers know how tough the situation he is is.

[45 : 19] And yet, unlike me, he does in his misery raise his eyes above his misery and see the greatness and the sovereignty of God the power of God to deal with his situation.

Yeah. Yeah. Right? Only the creator God only the God who actually is power and being and love can actually help us in our time of need.

Right? And beyond that not just God's power but we can trust God. Right? This is the triune God of scripture. Right? Our redeemer our friend. You know?

Talk about friends in high places, right? All right. Let me finish with what I think is really the exclamation point. It's a little long but I think it's just so worth reading.

This is Isaiah 40. He says, comfort, comfort, comfort my people says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she is received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

[46 : 29] A voice cries, in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low. The uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a plain.

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord is spoken. A voice says, cry, and I say, what shall I cry? All flesh is grass and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news.

Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news. Lift it up, fear not. Say to the cities of Judah, behold your God. Behold the Lord comes with might and His arm rules for Him.

Behold His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him. He will tend His flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in His arms. He will carry them in His bosom and gently lead those that are with young.

[47:35] Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord or what man shows Him His counsel?

Whom did He consult and whom made Him understand? Who taught Him the path of justice and taught Him knowledge and showed Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket and are accounted as the dust on the scales.

Behold, He takes up the coastlands like fine dust. Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor is its beast enough for a burnt offering. All the nations are as nothing before Him.

They are counted by Him as less than nothing in emptiness. To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness can pair with Him? An idol. A craftsman casts it and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains.

He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot. He seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move. Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning?

[48:43] Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to dwell in, who brings princes to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.

Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth when He blows on them and they wither and the tempest carries them off like stubble. To whom then will you compare me that I should be like Him, says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on I and see who created these. He who brings out their host by number calling them all by name by the greatness of His might and because He is strong in power not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel? My way is hidden from the Lord and my right is disregarded by my God. Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youth shall faint and be weary and young men shall fall exhausted.

[49:49] But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. This is the God we worship.

You see all those different aspects? God is absolute, almighty, separate. None is like him. But God is also the one who sustains.

He carries us like lamb. He's slow with those who have child. And ultimately it is God who raises us up on wings like eagles.

This is the God we worship. This is the Creator who brings everything out of nothing. Alright, that's it guys. Any questions? We have like five minutes before we should go downstairs and respond appropriately with worship.

Yeah, Lerami. It seems to me that the prevailing version of the creation story in the Old Testament is this one.

[50 : 55] It is constantly referenced in the Psalms and the prophets. There is also a version that is less referenced but is present especially in some passages like Psalm 74, I think.

which is a more conflict heavy version of the creation story. So, could it be that depending on the different theological emphasis that the author is trying to make he references these two different traditions of the same story the more conflict heavy tradition where God actually slays the serpent and the serpent creates everything and liberates his people for example and the version where God actually just uses his word to shape everything.

Yeah, I think that's a great point. I think we have to be careful of the context here, right? So, we think in Genesis 1 we're receiving the creation account in the narrative of the history of all of humanity and then God's people so it's sort of the start of the big picture, the big story and we do have other accounts where it talks about God slaying Rahab or is it Leviathan?

Slaying these are like pictures, these are symbols for chaotic water, that chaotic water spirit or water gods that we talked about, some of these other myths, right?

I think really, so I think it depends on what the point of the passage is. So, I think the point of the passages like we get in Psalm 74 where it's talking about this conflict, I don't think it's necessarily reflecting on what creation is like, but more like you saying Baal is the one who slew this person and is the one who set up this thing, but it's not Baal, it's God.

[52 : 53] God is the one who does these things, right? And I think we can use poetic language to discuss the idea of God taking what could be unformed chaos and forming it into order and structure, right?

So, for instance, I think in other passages it talks about the Israelites crossing the Red Sea as God slaying the water spirit, Rahab, right?

And so, I think we can take different passages in the way that they're meant to be taken, so I think probably accounts like in Exodus or in Genesis are meant to be taken in more of a historical lens, and these other passages are more poetic riffs on this larger tradition.

Does that make sense? Yeah. But I think, yeah, there are certainly, you read Job too, I'm reading Job right now, you read Job too, there's all kinds of references to God slaying the serpents, and these are often like images of chaos and unformed water, stuff like that.

Yeah, exactly. Yeah? So, I like that you bring up the different pathologies that the Babylonian and the I wish.

[54 : 10] I have to think that a lot of our kind of modern pathologies are very similar to the Babylonian story. I guess I'm curious, as you said, you're a scientist.

Yeah. Technically. At a broad level, do you see your interest in science interacting with the idea of creation?

Oh, yeah, certainly. Certainly. Where do you see that? Not necessarily evolution, per se, but where do you see them kind of interacting? Yeah, yeah, I mean, I think, so, that's a great question.

I actually had a whole talk on science and faith that you don't need to watch. It's okay. As it was coming out of my mouth, I was like, I don't do that. Anyways, but yeah, a lot of the things I was talking about in that talk were discussing sort of those overlaps.

So, for instance, there are a lot of things in science that we take for granted that really don't make any sense unless you put it into a larger world view. So, for instance, why are there regularities in nature?

[55 : 11] Why do things actually make sense to the human mind? How can we use math to actually describe things? Right?

Because if math isn't an actual deeper reality, if there isn't actually a deeper order to reality, then math is just a human construct made by man. Right?

And so, there really is no reason we should expect for there to be such deep harmony between what we conceive of in our mind and what is actually out there in reality.

Right? So, the fact that there's regularities, the fact that there is consistency, there's all kinds of things that are involved in the scientific enterprise that we take for granted but really don't make any sense if there's such a thing as purpose, teleology, a reason why things should happen, and an order to the universe.

Does that make sense? So, I think there's a lot of ways that science and my faith interact. I mean, the understanding of creation, I feel like, is just something that we all want to know. We all want to know where we came from, and as a scientist, I feel like I confront this more often in my everyday life than the average person.

[56 : 24] So, I think probably that's where a lot of my interest comes from. Does that answer your question, or did I just totally avoid it? You did. I'm sure you have a lot more to say. Definitely. Yeah.

Well, it's about three minutes until church, so why don't we break and head downstairs. Thank you so much, guys. Thank you so much, guys. Thank you so much,