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CREATION: THE FOUNDATION OF REDEMPTION

Psalm 148:5; Gen. 1:1-2; John 1:1-5; Ps. 19:1-2

Introduction

What I hope will become very obvious to each of you in this room in the next 14 weeks is that there is something much, much bigger going on in this world and you and I are just a tiny but very significant part of it. In his book *Orthodoxy*, G. K. Chesterton wrote, ***“I had always felt life first as a story: and if there is a story there is a story teller.”*** There is a story that is being told; the title of that story is **redemption** and its story teller is the God of all creation.

What I mean by “God’s Redemptive Story” is that theme that runs through the Bible of how God is restoring all things to what they were created for and how He is causing all things to rebound for His glory. It started before creation and its conclusion will be for many, eternal condemnation in the lake of fire, but for some of us, it will be a never ending climax of eternal delight in the presence of God.

It is my hope that as we stop at the scenic spots of God’s story, the very story we find ourselves in today, that the roots of our love, our hope and our passion for this God will grow very deep so that when the whirlwinds of life rip through the world of our lives we will be able to stand firm and say as Job said after the whirlwinds ripped through his world,

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another.

Every story has a beginning; the beginning of the story of redemption is found in Genesis 1:1. My purpose in looking at creation today is not to exhaust Genesis 1, all I want to do is look at who designed creation, who actually did the creative work, and the reason why God created it in the first place. So who is the designer of all that exists?

The Architect of Creation: God (Gen. 1:1-2)

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² 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.

The foundation of all redemptive history is found in Genesis 1:1, ***“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”*** So, the foundation of Redemptive history is that God created out of nothing all that is not God; all that existed in eternity past was the three persons in the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The Bible does not begin by defending the existence of God, it simply begins with God. Nothing existed before creation except God: One God in three persons. This is why when Moses who wrote Genesis, used the Hebrew plural form of God: *ĕlōhîm*, and after one reads Genesis, *“let us make man in our image, after our likeness”* it becomes clear that God is indeed a Trinity.

We need to understand that God did not need to create anything to be happy. He was not lacking in anything before He brought into existence creation. In-fact, God was perfectly happy within the fellowship of the Trinity (now try to wrap your mind around that).

In-other-words, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit were so perfectly content within their fellowship with each other that they did not need to create anything. Even though God did not need to create anything He did, and He did it with a purpose.

God created the stars, the earth, the plants, the birds and fish, the animals, and mankind all in six days. I am not concerned if you do not take a literal six day view of creation, it doesn't make you any less of a Christian because you do not agree. There are many conservative, evangelical, Bible believing Christians who believe the six day language is figurative rather than literal.

I believe that it only took God six literal days to create everything with apparent age for several reasons:

1. He is fully capable of creating everything in six 24 hour days.
2. The way “day” is used here lends itself to a 24 hour period.
3. Psalm 148:5 says that God commanded, and they were created.
4. God set up the week as seven total days: 6 work days and 1 day of rest.
5. Paul says that God is the one who, *“gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist”* (Rom. 4:17).
6. If God can raise the dead, make a young virgin girl pregnant through His spirit, and take the likes of me and make me His child, then He is capable of molding and creating out of nothing!

So, on the...

- 1st day: God created light
- 2nd day: God created the sky
- 3rd day: God created the land and plants
- 4th day: God created the stars
- 5th day: God created the birds and fish
- 6th day: God created animals and man (plants for food)
- 7th day: God rested

The point of Genesis 1-2 is not how God did it, but that He did it. He did it by commanding all that didn't exist to come into existence and all that wasn't became what is and that's how the Bible tells us He did it.

God did this with such art and creative force that the Psalmist had no other alternative but to exclaim,

O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. ²⁵ Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. ²⁶ There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it. ²⁷ These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. ²⁸ When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. ²⁹ When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. ³⁰ When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. ³¹ May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works, ³² who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke! (Psalm 104:24-32)

This is why we read in Psalm 19:1-2, “*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*”

But that is not all; God saves the best of His creative acts for last, the creation of man and woman, one of the central characters of God's story,

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.... So God create man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Gen. 1:26a, 27).

We will talk more about the creation of man next week, but now we need to move on to our next point...

The Agent of Creation: The Word of God (John 1:1-3)

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 were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

One of the things that we should consider when studying the Bible is that every passage studied should be read in light of the whole Bible. And what we learn from the New Testament is that Jesus Christ was the agent of creation.

The early church father, Irenaeus saw Creation as an act in which God created by means of His two hands: The Son and the Holy Spirit. In other words, Creation was framed in the mind of God, and the actual creative acts of God were performed through the Word of God: Jesus Christ.

There are four things that we learn from John 1:1-3 that will help us understand more clearly Jesus' involvement in the Creation,

- 1) Jesus existed before time. John is very specific, **“In the beginning was the Word...”** What John means by this statement is that “if you are going to talk about Jesus’ life, you can only do so properly when you go beyond his life.”¹ The Bible supports this concept...
 - a. Jesus said, **“I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Rev. 1:8).**
 - b. Jesus is the Wisdom personified in Proverbs 8, **“... When he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight...”**

- 2) Jesus is God. The New Testament supports this...
 - **“...though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” (Philippians 2:6).**
 - **“He is the image of the invisible God...” (Col.1:15).**
 - Jesus said, **“whoever sees me sees him who sent me” (John 12:45).**

Some of you have encountered Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons, and you have heard them argue that in the original language John 1:1 should be translated, **“the Word was a god”** instead of, **“the Word was God”** because in the Greek it lacks a definite article.

Jehovah Witnesses: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.”

English Standard Bible: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Let me give you four reasons why they are wrong...

- a. John, as a monotheistic Jew, would never have referred to another person as “a god.”
- b. And if John wanted to refer to Jesus as simply being a divine person, he would have used θεῖος (*theios*, divine).
- c. If John used the definite article, the distinction between God and the Word would have been lost.
- d. It is common for a definite nominative predicate noun preceding a finite verb to be without the article.

So what is John’s point? **Jesus, who is the Word, was and is God.**

- 3) Jesus was with God. Not only is Jesus God, but it is here that we learn of His personhood. Jesus is not the Father, but was with the Father from eternity past – both are

¹ James Montgomery Boice. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Backer Books, 1999; p. 22.

God. John 14:9 makes Jesus' deity very plain, "***I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.***"

- * (Sentence below is missing something)
- 4) All things were made through Jesus. John is specifically clear that no critical was Jesus' involvement in the creation that nothing could have been made without His involvement. Again, this is a point that the Bible supports...
 - a. We learn from the Bible that Jesus, "***for by him all things were created... all things were created through him and for him***" (Col. 1:16).
 - b. The Bible also tells us that it was Jesus who was "***...appointed heir of all things, through whom God created the world***" (Heb. 1:1-2)

So what do I mean by God being the architect and Jesus being the agent of creation? Creation was birthed in the mind of God, it was physically carried out through Jesus Christ, **and the force behind creation is the Holy Spirit**, "***When you send forth your Spirit, they are created***" (Ps. 104:30).

This is why Genesis 1:26-27 is not so perplexing for the person who believes in the Trinity, because creation was a Trinitarian event. When God says... "***Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...***" He is saying let us make man in the image of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

What makes us image bearers of God? We are able to worship in a way that is distinct from the animal kingdom: We have the ability to worship God in Spirit and in Truth.

Finally, let's move on to our final point...

The Aim of Creation: The Glory of God (Psalm 19:1-2; Hab. 2:14)

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork."

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

What we learn from Numbers 14:21 is the motive for why God created the Earth: His glory. God created the Earth that He might put on display His glory (multifaceted perfections).

This is indeed the point of Psalm 19:1-2, "***The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.***"

Daniel Fuller, in his book *The Unity of the Bible*, suggests that “**God’s righteousness consists in his fully delighting in his praiseworthiness, or glory.**”² In other words, the only being worthy of any glorification is our triune God and no one else. Why else would we read in Isaiah 48:11, “My glory I will not give to another.”

In fact, I am inclined to agree with what Jonathan Edwards wrote in his work, *The End for Which God Created the World* (a book I believe is one of the most important books ever written)...

“We see that the great end of God’s works, which is so variously expressed in Scripture, is indeed but ONE; and this one end is most properly and comprehensively called, THE GLORY OF GOD.”³

In other words, the greatest motive behind all that God does is His glory. That means that the great theme of the Bible is not Israel, it is not the Church, and it is not even people; it is God’s passion for God’s glory. Please let me illustrate this by directing our attention to a quick survey of the Bible.

God created us for His glory: Isaiah 43:6-7

I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, [7] everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

God called Israel for His glory: Jeremiah 13:11

For as the loincloth clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory, but they would not listen.

Jesus sought the glory of His Father in all He did: John 7:18

The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.

Jesus told us to do good works so that God gets the glory: Matthew 5:16

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Jesus said that he answers prayer so that God would be glorified: John 14:13

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Jesus endured the cross for God’s glory: John 17:1

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,

² *The Unity of the Bible*, p. 188.

³ “The End for Which God Created the World,” in *God’s Passion for His Glory*, by John Piper, p.246.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Son of God: John 16:14

He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

God's Word instructs us to do everything for the glory of God: 1 Corinthians 10:31

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

All are under judgment of dishonoring God's glory: Romans 1:23; 3:23

... and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Jesus is coming again for the glory of God: 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, [10] when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

God's plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory: Habakkuk 2:14

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Everything that happens, happens for the glory of God: Romans 11:36

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

From Genesis to Revelation it can be seen that God is enamored with his glory. One theologian wrote...

“From beginning to end, the driving impulse of God's heart is to be praised for his glory, from creation to consummation his ultimate allegiance is to himself. His unwavering purpose in all he does is to exalt the honor of his name and to be marveled at for his grace and power. He is infinitely jealous for his reputation.”⁴

[God created the earth for the purpose of filling it with His glory]

Conclusion

The foundation of God's redemptive story is the Creation, for it is here we see the trinity at work: That the Architect of Creation is God, The Agent of Creation is Jesus Christ: the Word of God, and it is here we discover the aim of creation: the glory of God.

⁴ John Piper, “Is God For Us or For Himself?” (Wheaton College Chapel Address: October 23, 1984).

What we will see in the weeks to come is that God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will play the central role of Redemption as He works out His plan to purchase back individuals to make His people.

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