

THEOLOGY SESSION 4

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

GOD'S ORIGINATING WORK: CREATION

*Knowing that God created the world around us,
and ourselves as part of it, is basic to true religion.¹*

J. I. Packer

*The inspired Word of God begins with the doctrine of creation;
that is the foundation of the whole book of redemption.²*

Douglas F. Kelly

Group Work: What are the theological implications of these verses in regard to the doctrines of creation? (Psalm 104:1-4; Psalm 104:5-13; Psalm 104:14-15; Psalm 104:16-18; Psalm 104:19-23; Psalm 104:24-30; Psalm 104:31-35)

¹J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, 22.

²Douglas F. Kelly, "Creation: Foundational Doctrine of Scripture," Monergism.com, accessed July 3, 2015, http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/creation_kelly.html

WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION?

The doctrine of creation is introduced in the first verse of the Bible, ‘In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth’ (Gen. 1:1). This statement offers a simple, conclusive answer to questions universally asked by humans: Why does something exist rather than nothing? How does what exists exist? Where do we come from?’³ (David P. Nelson)

The work of creation is, God’s making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q.11)

God created the entire universe out of nothing; it was originally very good; and he created it to glorify himself.⁴ (Wayne Grudem)

1. God Created the World out of Nothing (*ex nihilo*)

- *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)*
- *... then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. (Genesis 2:7)*
- *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their hosts... For he spoke, and it came to be... (Psalm 33:6, 9)*
- *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:3)*
- *... yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1 Corinthians 8:6)*
- *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. (Colossians 1:16)*
- *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. (Hebrews 11:3)*

*The majesty of God is magnified when we see him through the lens of creation—‘*ex nihilo*’ (out of nothing). He commands nothingness and it obeys and becomes something.⁵ (John Piper)*

To say that He created ‘out of nothing’ is to confess the mystery, not explain it.⁶ (J. I. Packer)

2. The Universe God Created was Called “Very Good”

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. (Genesis 1:31)

For everything created by God is good... (1 Timothy 4:4)

The Bible teaches that God is distinct from his creation. He is not part of it, for he has made it and rules over it.⁷ (Wayne Grudem)

³David P. Nelson, “The Work of God: Creation and Providence,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 242.

⁴Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 262.

⁵John Piper, “When the Potter is for Us: Boom!,” *Desiring God*, October 6, 1981, accessed July 3, 2015, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/when-the-potter-is-for-us-boom>.

⁶J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, 21.

...the biblical doctrine of 'ex nihilo' creation maintains that God created finite, temporal, and material-spiritual creatures and pronounced this intrinsic difference 'good' ...Neither divine nor demonic, nature was created good but different from God.⁸ (Michael Horton)

God by his word created a world, and it is a world that is identified as good by God himself. It is a good world in that is ordered and purposeful.⁹ (David P. Nelson)

3. God Created the World to Show His Glory

- O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. (Psalm 8:1)
- The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. (Psalm 19:1)
- Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth! (Psalm 57:5)
- ... everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made. (Isaiah 43:7)
- For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14)
- 'Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.' (Revelation 4:11)

The Bible teaches us that God made everything, in the first place, and one day he will bring everything to completion when Christ returns. That past and future makes sense of the present. We live in God's world, and our purpose is to live his way for his glory in relationship to him, the one who made us in his image.¹⁰ (Vaughan Roberts)

Points to Note (J. I. Packer)¹¹

1. The act of creation is a mystery to us; there is more in it than we can understand.
2. Space and time are dimensions of the created order; God is not "in" either; nor is he bound by either as we are.
3. As the world order is not self-created, so it is not self-sustaining, as God is.
4. The possibility of creative intrusions (e.g., miracles of creative power; creating new persons through human procreative activity; reorienting human hearts and redirecting human desires and energies in regeneration) is as old as the cosmos itself.

How can a right understanding of God as the One who creates strengthen our intimacy with him?

How can a right understanding of God as the One who creates strengthen our missional activity?

⁷Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 267.

⁸Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 328.

⁹David P. Nelson, "The Work of God: Creation and Providence," 244.

¹⁰Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Design: Life as He Intends It to Be*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 26.

¹¹J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, 21-22.