

THE CREED

The Truth About God | Matt Bruns | 19th February

Hey,

I hope you are enjoying our series on the Apostle's Creed.

Below are the companion notes based on the first article of the creed "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth." During my talk I focused on the first aspect of God as Father and promised to supply the notes that would aid you in gaining a deeper understanding of the second half of that statement – of God being creator of heaven and earth.

Dig in!

Matt

Study Notes by Alistair McGrath from the book "I Believe."

Creator of heaven and earth

To talk about God as "our Father" is to speak of his authority and care, but it is also to speak of his creativity. We are here because God brought us into being.

Everything we see in the world was created by God and belongs to God. The universe reflects the wisdom, power and majesty of the God who brought it into being. At times the presence, power and majesty of a Creator God seem to be written into the fabric of his creation. It is almost as if God, like a master artist, signed his name on his creation for all to see.

Still, there is a limit to what can be known about God from nature. For example, nature may tell us that there is a God, that he is the Creator and that he is good and wise. But we need to know substantially more about God than this if we are to come to know and trust him. Christianity points to the biblical record culminating in Jesus Christ, especially his death and resurrection, as the supreme demonstration of the existence and character of God. It is here that God is most reliably disclosed and revealed; it is here that he may be found. The biblical witness to God both confirms and extends any knowledge of God available from nature itself.

In affirming our faith in God as Creator, however, we do not mean that God created the universe many years ago and then left it untended. He is not like some old-fashioned watchmaker who makes and winds up a clockwork watch and then leaves it to run without any further attention. Rather, God exercises continual care over his creation (Psalm 104). God once created and now sustains all things through his word (Genesis 1:3; Hebrews 1:3).

The ultimate demonstration of God's continuing concern for and involvement with his creation is his act of redemption in Jesus Christ. The creation is the theatre in which the great drama of redemption is played out. In redeeming us, God entered into his world as one of us (John 1:14). The Creator entered his creation in order to restore it. God does not abandon his creation after sin.

Still, it is very easy to think of creation as impersonal. That is why it is helpful to turn our eyes away from the world to ourselves and recall that God made us. Believing in God as Creator means believing that God made each one of us. The doctrine of creation allows us to feel at home in the world. It reminds us that we, like the rest of creation, were fashioned by God. We are here because God wants us to be here.

Earlier I drew an analogy between God and an artist. Just as an artist signs his works, so the hand of God is evident within his creation. And as we are the height of God's creation (what a sobering thought!), we might expect to find signs of the hand of God within ourselves. Scripture tells us that we have been made in the image or likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). This has several important consequences.

First, it means that there is some sort of affinity between God and human beings. We have been created with an inbuilt capacity to relate to God. To fulfill our potential as human beings we need to relate to God. We remain unsatisfied and unfulfilled until we enter into a relationship with the God who created and redeemed us. Many writers have written poignantly of the human tragedy – of the sense of lostness, loneliness and isolation felt by many people. Christianity affirms that this situation can be transformed when we enter into a personal relationship with the God who created the world and each one of us—and made us with a view to loving us.

Second, being made in the image of God reminds us that we belong to God. We are not our own masters. We have been bought by God at a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We are his. We have been stamped with that image and likeness. God made us with his own image impressed on us. Therefore, we must give ourselves over to God, for we are his. Recognition that we are created in the image of God amounts to a demand for commitment and obedience – or to a demand for faith.

Recognition that the world belongs to God has important consequences for understanding our own responsibilities within that world. We have been placed within God's creation to tend it and take care of it (Genesis 2:15). We may be superior to the remainder of that creation and may exercise authority over it (Psalm 8:4-8), but we remain under the authority of God and are responsible to him for the way we treat his creation. We are the stewards, not the owners, of creation. There is a growing realization today that past generations have seriously abused that trust. They have exploited the creation and its resources. There is a real danger that we will spoil what God so wonderfully created.

Fortunately, Christians are becoming more aware of our need to take a more responsible attitude toward creation. It matters to God that vast areas of our world are made uninhabitable through nuclear or toxic chemical waste. It matters that the delicate balance of natural forces is disturbed by human carelessness. This article of the creed is the basis of a new and overdue care for creation.

Key Bible Passages

A. The Father almighty

Psalm 105:8-11: Part of a psalm expressing God's faithfulness in keeping his promises.

Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-13: The prayer addressing God as Father which Jesus taught his followers.

Matthew 7:9-11: Jesus uses the analogy of human fatherhood to illustrate God's willingness to answer prayer.

John 14:5-14: Part of what Jesus taught about his relationship with God the Father.

Romans 8:13-17: The work of the Holy Spirit in making Christians aware of their identity as God's children.

B. Creator of heaven and earth

Genesis 1-2: The Bible's accounts of creation.

Psalms 8, 19, 104: Three psalms that focus on God as Creator.

Isaiah 40:21-31: Some implications of the fact that God created everything.

Romans 1:20: Paul's explanation of why no one can truly be an atheist.

Revelation 4:11: The worship due to the Creator

Questions for Group Discussion

1. What comes to mind when you think about God as "Father"? How would you help someone with very negative memories of their own father to appreciate the fatherhood of God?
2. Which prayers of yours has God not seemed to answer recently? Why do you think this is?
3. Is there anywhere in God's creation that you find yourself especially aware of his presence? A particular place? A sight? A work of art? A person?
4. What implications are there in the assertion that we have been made "in the image of God"? How do these apply to you?
5. What steps could you take to ensure that you take care of God's creation rather than spoil it?

Anslem Prayer

Lord, teach me to seek You.

I cannot seek You unless You teach me
or find You unless You show Yourself to me.

Let me seek You in my desire,
let me desire You in my seeking.

Let me find You by loving You,
let me love You when I find You.

Amen

