

Memory Verse:

Psalm 19:1-2

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. (2)
Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

Everyone Is Asking: “Where Did I Come From?”



Opposing Worldviews: A Chance Or A Creator?

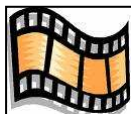
A worldview is our way of looking at life, our interpretation of the universe, the story we tell to answer such questions as: Where did I come from? What is my purpose in life? What went wrong with the world? How do we fix what went wrong? (Philip Graham Ryken, *What is the Christian Worldview?* (P & R Publishing, Phillipsburg, 2006), 7.)



Over the weeks to come, we will be looking deeper into these questions and finding the answers from the Scriptures. Today, we’re going to look at the first two questions: Where did I come from? What is my purpose?

Ask a large number of people, "Where did we come from?" and you will get a many different answers. Once we sort through these answers, we see that they basically fall into two sides. Some believe that human beings are the end result of lucky circumstances. They say that the Universe began by accident and then become more complex through sheer chance. Others believe that the Universe and everything in it was carefully, intelligently and purposefully created by God.

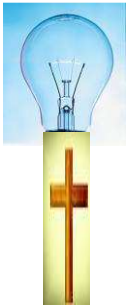
As Christians, is it important to believe in creation? If so, what are the implications of this? Should it change the way we think about God, how we worship, how we live and how we witness?



Play the DVD “The Privileged Planet” Bonus Section: Journey To The Edge Of Space



Earth from Voyager 1



Earth: An Accident or a Privilege?

A recurring theme of the 1994 book *Pale Blue Dot*, by the late astronomer Carl Sagan, is that we are insignificant in the cosmic scheme. In one memorable passage, Sagan pushes this point while reflecting on an image of Earth taken by Voyager 1 in 1990 from some four billion miles away. He writes:

“Because of the reflection of sunlight...Earth seems to be sitting in a beam of light, as if there were some special significance to this small world. But it's just an accident of geometry and optics...Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves. It is up to us.” (Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot*, (Ballantine Books, New York, 1997), 5.

Why Should Our Gospel Begin With Creation?

I. Creation glorifies Christ



In the comment above, Carl Sagan said, “In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves. It is up to us.” We must remember that people don’t deny creation because there is a lack of evidence. They deny creation because they are denying Christ. Creation versus evolution is not simply a difference of opinion or even two opposing worldviews; it is a spiritual war. May we faithfully proclaim the truth that Christ is the Creator. He is the Help to save us from ourselves and from God’s wrath. It’s not “up to us.” It is up to Him. And, thankfully, from a bloody cross Jesus uttered the most glorious words to a sinner’s ears; “It is finished!”

Colossians 1:16-17

“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. (17) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Hebrews 1:1-3

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3He (Jesus) is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

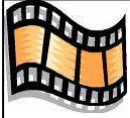


Verse 16 says, “All things were created _____ Christ and _____ Christ.” Why was the earth created? Why were you created?



According to John 1, where was Jesus when the heavens and earth were created?

Colossians and Hebrews both say that Jesus “upholds” creation. What does this mean?



Play the DVD “The Privileged Planet” at **48:20-51:15**

II. Creation causes us to worship God

Psalms 8:3-9

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, (4) what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? (5) Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. (6) You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, (7) all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, (8) the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. (9) O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!



Neil Armstrong said this about one of his journeys to space:

I remember on the trip home on Apollo 11 it suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet earth. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very, very small.

Psalms 33:6-9

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. (7) He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. (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 came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

According to v.9, why should we “fear the LORD” and “stand in awe of him?”

**III. Creation is the best approach to those who don't have a knowledge of the Bible.
(Acts 17:24)**

Act 17:22-32

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 "For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 "nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. 26 "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 "that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28 "for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.' 29 "Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. 30 "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 "because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." 32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this."

When speaking to people who have no knowledge of the Scriptures, how does Paul begin his gospel message (see v.24)?

According to verse 24, since God "made the world and everything in it," He is Lord of heaven and earth. What implications does this have on every person's life?

How is God's grace revealed to all people in v.25?

According to v.27, what should be every person's appropriate response to God's grace?



Summary

We've learned four truths from looking at Paul's gospel in Acts 17.

1. Paul begins his gospel with _____ (v.24).
2. Starting with creation makes every person _____ to God (v.24).
3. God's _____ is revealed in giving life and breath to all people (v.25).
4. Because of God's grace, all people are responsible to _____ God (v.27).



Is America Different From Athens?

A 2007 study done by *The Barna Group* revealed that 37% of Americans consider themselves evangelical. Of these "evangelicals" only 8% said they would agree that Jesus was sinless, the Bible is totally accurate and salvation is by grace and not works.

<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=263>

Beloved, we are living in Athens. We should not assume that the unbelievers, or even "evangelicals," have an understanding of the elementary truths of Scripture, such as creation. When Paul preached the gospel to the biblically illiterate he started in Genesis 1:1; "The God who made the world and everything in it." In order to connect with our culture, we, too, must begin our gospel conversations with creation. It's biblical. It's relevant. And it's powerful.

V. Creation appeals to the conscience

Romans 1:18-23

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (20) 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. (21) For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.



Is God's eternal power and divine nature hidden and hard to discover?



How has God revealed himself to every person?



Why do people reject him?



A General Revelation of God's Glory



John Calvin says, "Wherever you turn your eyes, there is no portion of the world, however minute, that does not exhibit at least some sparks of beauty; while it is impossible to contemplate the vast and beautiful fabric as it extends around, without being overwhelmed by the immense weight of glory. Hence, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews elegantly describes the visible worlds as *images of the invisible* (Heb. Xi.3), the elegant structure of the world serving us as a kind of mirror, in which we may behold God, though otherwise invisible." (John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1989), Book I: Ch. 4.1)

God, in His mercy and goodness, gives every person glimpses into His glory when they gaze upon creation. He shouts at us in the thunderstorm (Job 38:25). He offers us wisdom in observing the ant (Proverbs 6:6). He reveals to us unharnessed power in the mighty stallion (Job 39:20). And He shows us His tender care when we consider the lilies of the field (Luke 12:27). His power, majesty, wonder, awesomeness, beauty, perfection and joy can be seen and delighted in by every human being. The question for each of us is, "Have you gazed upon the glories of God today?"



Play the DVD "The Privileged Planet" Bonus Section: Questions and Answers: Question #6

Psalms 53:1

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

Hebrews 11:3

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God

What is necessary to "understand that the universe was created by the word of God?"



Faith Versus Reason

We must always remember that when we witness it takes the gift faith to open their eyes to the truth of creation. Christians should reason with unbelievers from the Scriptures (cf. Acts 17:2), but we must never forget that faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Pray is our power. Pray that the Holy Spirit would open the eyes of unbelievers to see the glory of Christ in creation. Pray before you witness, as you witness, and after you witness.

The Gospel Begins In Genesis 1-2

I. Creation Ex Nihilo

Genesis 1:1

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

Hebrews 11:3

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.

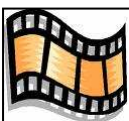


What Is Ex Nihilo?

Theologians use the words, "Ex Nihilo" to describe Genesis 1:1. This is a Latin phrase meaning "out of nothing." A major argument for creation ex nihilo, the First cause argument, states this:

1. everything that begins to exist has a cause
2. the universe began to exist
3. therefore, the universe must have a cause

As discoveries are made in science, this logical argument is gaining more and more acceptance. It should not surprise us that science validates the Bible. If the Bible is true, and it is, then science should never be able disprove it.



Play the DVD “The Privileged Planet” Bonus Section: Questions and Answers: Question #5



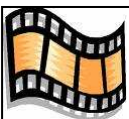
Write down what is created on each day.



There are a number of key repeated phrases in Genesis 1. Circle these.

Genesis 1:2-25

(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. (3) And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. (4) And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. (5) God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. (6) And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." (7) And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. (8) And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. (9) And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. (10) God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. (11) And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. (12) The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. (13) And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. (14) And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, (15) and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. (16) And God made the two great lights--the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night--and the stars. (17) And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, (18) to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. (19) And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. (20) And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." (21) So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. (22) And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." (23) And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. (24) And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds--livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. (25) And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.



Play the DVD "The Privileged Planet" at **21:20-24:00**

**“I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully
made.” Psalm 139:14**



What Is My Purpose In Life?

Genesis 1:26-31

(26) Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (28) And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (29) And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. (30) And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. (31) And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 2:7

(7) 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. (8) And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. (9) And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (15) The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. (16) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, (17) but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (18) Then the LORD God said, "It is **not good** that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." (19) So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. (20) and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. (21) So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. (22) And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. (23) Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (24) Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (25) And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

II. What does it mean to be an image-bearer?

1. 1:26 “Let *us* make man”: 1:27 “male and female”: 2:18 “it is *not good* for man to be alone”
 - a. We created to be in _____
2. 2:16 “And the LORD God commanded the man”: 2:20 “The man gave names to all livestock”
 - a. We were created with an _____
3. 1:31 “and it was very good”: 2:23 “this at last is”
 - a. We were created with _____
4. 1:28 “have dominion” 2:17 “work and keep it”:
 - a. We were created to _____ God for His glory.





The Purpose of Creation

God does not create because He is lacking in anything. Acts 17:25 says, “He [is not] served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.” God creates for the purpose sharing His beauty, joy, love and knowledge.

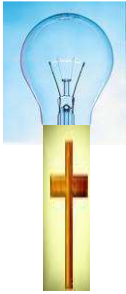


It is amazing that every human being has been given this amazing potential to *know* God, to *worship* God and to *serve* God. Jonathan Edwards believed that “the purpose-the end-of creation in its entirety and in its detail is to give glory to God through promoting the knowledge and love of God in His intelligent creatures. If any part of creation, or any moment of history, is not able to serve this end, then it has no reason to be- and so God would not have created it.” (Stephen R. Holmes, *God Of Grace And God Of Glory* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000), 78)

Humans are intelligent beings. We are able to reason and think. This is a gift from God. He created us so that we would be able to know and understand His ways and His beauty. We are not “grown up germs and globs of slime,” as evolution asserts. We have been “crowned with glory and honor” as God’s creation. Every embryo, newborn, infant, child, teenager, adult and elderly we encounter has the incredible potential to know and reflect God’s beauty. It is an amazing plan that human beings from every tribe, tongue and nation will reflect God’s glory throughout all eternity.

The Implications Of Being Created In The Image Of God

What are some of the implications of being created in the image of God?



Created To Labor For God's Glory

*Dorothy Sayers, a renowned British author, said this in her book *Creed or Chaos?**

“The habit of thinking about work as something one does to make money is so ingrained in us that we can scarcely imagine what a revolutionary change it would be to think about it instead in terms of work done. We should ask of an enterprise, not “will it pay?” but “is it good?”; of a man, not “what does he make?” but “what is his work worth?”; of goods, not “can we induce people to buy them?” but “are they useful things well made?”; of employment, not “how much a week?” but “will it exercise my faculties to the utmost?”

Luke 10:1-11

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. ² And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³ Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' ⁶ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. ⁷ And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'



In a famous sermon by Martin Luther King Jr. titled "The American Dream" he said:



You see, the founding fathers were really influenced by the Bible. The whole concept of the *imago dei*, as it is expressed in Latin, the "image of God," is the idea that all men have something within them that God injected. Not that they have substantial unity with God, but that every man has a capacity to have fellowship with God. And this gives him a uniqueness, it gives him worth, it gives him dignity. And we must never forget this as a nation: there are no gradations in the image of God. Every man from a treble white to a bass black is significant on God's keyboard, precisely because every man is made in the image of God. One day we will learn that. (Yes) We will know one day that God made us to live together as brothers and to respect the dignity and worth of every man.

(http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/sermons/650704_The_American_Dream.html)

Genesis 2:1-2:25

(2:1) Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. (2) And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. (3) So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (4) These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. (5) When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up-- for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, (6) and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground-- (7) 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. (8) And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. (9) And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (10) A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. (11) The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. (12) And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. (13) The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. (14) And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. (15) The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. (16) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, (17) but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (18) Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." (19) So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. (20) The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. (21) So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. (22) And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. (23) Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (24) Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (25) And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.



Explain how you would use creation in our gospel presentation?

Closing Song

“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

*Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!
All Thy works with joy surround Thee, earth and heaven reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Singing bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in Thee.
Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blessed,
Wellspring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother, all who live in love are Thine;
Teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.
Mortals, join the happy chorus, which the morning stars began;
Father love is reigning o'er us, brother love binds man to man.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us Sunward in the triumph song of life.*