

## **The Apostle's Creed: I Believe in God Maker of Heaven and Earth**

**Genesis 1:1-23; John 1:1-3**

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Turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis 1. Today we are continuing our study of The Apostles' Creed. As we work through the Creed, topically studying the subjects of this great statement of Christian affirmation, it has been our intention all along to root these assertions in the word of Scripture, so that our confidence in speaking them comes not simply from being in accord with the rest of the tradition of the church, but clearly from God's authoritative word, the holy Scripture.

Now, as we have looked through the Creed so far, we have studied at least three things. One, we've looked at the Christian view of, and the importance of, belief. What it means to believe, especially in a culture that likes opinions, but doesn't like truth; that likes values, but not morality; that likes perspectives, but not truth with a capital "T."

Secondly, we have looked at the truth that God *is*, and the significance of that truth for us as believers.

Thirdly, we have looked at the truth that there is one true God, who is an almighty Father, and we've thought about the importance of that.

Today, we are going to consider what it means that this one true God, who is an almighty Father, is the maker of heaven and earth. Now, before we go on, I need to say that I received a very good question from a member last week. And the question was this: "When we say in the Creed that we believe that God the Father Almighty, is maker of heaven and earth, are we excluding the work of the Son in creation?" And of course, by extension we could also ask, "Are we excluding the work of the Spirit in creation?" In fact, one of the very passages we will read today, John 1:1-3, is going to emphasize that the Lord Jesus Christ, as the eternal Word, was active in the bringing into being of everything that is. And you don't have to go far: Ephesians and Colossians both stress the creative work of the eternal second person of the Trinity. So, does the Creed mean to exclude the Son and Spirit when it speaks of the Almighty Father who is maker of heaven and earth? Well, the answer is: No. And there are three reasons for that answer.

The first reason is, if you'll remember last week, we said that the insertion of God

as Father, at this point in the Creed, is precisely to emphasize that God is Trinity. God is eternally Father. That requires an eternal Son. And so the purpose of the Creed here is to not exclude the other persons of the Trinity, but to involve the other persons of the Trinity in our understanding of who the one true God is.

Secondly, however, we need to say that God the Father is often emphasized and stressed in the Scripture as the author of creation. Genesis 1 points in this direction. Other Old Testament passages will point in this direction, and even New Testament passages, not to the exclusion of the Son and the Spirit. In the course of redemptive history, different persons of the divine and unified holy Trinity are often emphasized in the different aspects of the work of God in creation and redemption. So, for instance, the Holy Spirit, who is active in the Old Testament, is especially emphasized after the Day of Pentecost, in the building up of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that doesn't mean that our Lord Jesus Christ isn't interested and involved in the building up of His Church, but it is the Holy Spirit who is especially identified in that activity. In all the activity of the Trinity, the whole of the Trinity has involvement.

There is one last thing in response to this. This very good question reminds us of just how hard it is to write a brief and precise statement of what the Bible teaches. It's easy to say something that's true that can be easily misunderstood.

We're going to begin our study of God as maker of heaven and earth by rooting our thinking in two passages of Scripture. First in Genesis 1:1 to 2:3, and then in John 1:1-3:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was [formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

His opening three words in English are designed to capture the attention of all his good Jewish listeners who knew their Old Testaments very well. They knew how the story started. It started, "In the beginning." Now, listen to John:

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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."

Amen. Thus ends these readings of God's holy and inspired word. May He write their eternal truth upon our hearts. Let's pray.

*Our Lord and our God, we thank You for Your word, its majesty, the way it bears*

*witness to who You are and what You've done. This day we ask that You would speak to us, speak to our hearts, take hold of us by Your Spirit that we might see, understand and embrace the truth of Your Scripture and the promises that You make therein. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.*

Now, I thought of beginning the sermon this way: I have 23 points I would like to share with you today on the doctrine of Creation, but I don't think I'm going to get to them; we'll just do five and you can read the rest. But during the first service I got through a point and a half so maybe we'll come back to this again later.

What we have in this passage in Genesis 1 is an account of God creating the world and several great facts are already before us. Without having to do much thinking about what God is asserting in this passage, several things come through crystal clear. First, that it is God who has created the world, and the world is distinct from Him. God is not somehow mixed up *in* the world. He's not woven *into* the fabric of the world, like god of stones, and god of trees, and god of waters; He's brought those things into being. He's not a spirit which infects the world; He is the Spirit who has *spoken* the world into being. So, this passage shows us the Creator/creature distinction. The world is God's creation. He's not part of it. He's not under it. He's not encompassed by it. He brought it into being. He's over it. It is entirely dependent upon Him, not the other way around. That's one thing that comes through crystal clear in these passages.

Secondly however, we learn here that God in His goodness shapes this world which He had originally made as formless and empty and dark into a world of order and of fullness and of light. And this movement itself shows us the goodness of God in the construction of His works. This passage also points to us that the world was originally good. Did you notice how often God said the world was good? Why did He say that? Because He knows that you live in a world where you experience many not-so-good things. In fact, the only world that you have ever lived in is filled with not good things. So what is God saying to you in Genesis 1? This is *not* the way it always was. The way you have experienced My world. Yes, it is your Father's world, but the way you have experienced your Father's world is not the way it always was. Once upon a time, it was perfect. There were no sorrows, or tears, or crying, or evil or pain, or suffering. And God is hinting, "There will be a day when I will renovate that world and I will expunge all those experiences from your existence."

From this passage He is also reminding us that man was not created originally as a sinner. And because there was no evil in God's creation, man himself must bear the sole responsibility for the introduction of evil into God's human, moral universe. We ourselves are to blame. We can't kick the problem upstairs and say, "God, why did You allow evil?" God is saying, "You know, when I made this world, I didn't introduce evil into it, but you rebelled against Me in unbelief, in pride, rejecting the Creator/creature distinction, and thereby brought evil into this human world."

And then finally, of course, God's *character* is revealed to us in the creation. God must be sovereign if you can say of Him, "He created the stars, also." If *I* had created the stars, *you* wouldn't have stopped hearing about it yet. You have to be pretty humble and pretty awesome to put the creation of the stars in parenthesis. And so the mighty sovereignty of God is displayed in the creation of the world. So this passage makes it clear that God made the world; He's not a part of it, He didn't birth it into existence as an extension of His being as you get in so many modern pagan cosmologies which speak of an earth goddess who birthed the world into being. No, there's a Creator/creature distinction. The creation is made by the Creator. It's not a part of the Creator and the Creator is not a part of it. He brings it into being. And this passage makes it clear that God made the world by the Word of His power. It is entirely derived from His almightiness. And you know the testimony of the size of the universe is a witness to His infinite sovereign power. The scientists say that they can look out to the edges of the universe and see it still growing. It must be an almighty God who created that.

### **I. Modern theories of evolution have not and cannot disprove creation.**

Now there were four things that I was going to say about that today. I wanted to look at creation and evolution. I wanted to look at creation and how we understand God, creation and how we understand the world, and creation and how we understand ourselves, but I'm not going to get to that. We're going to try creation and evolution and *one* thing about creation and God. So let's turn our attention again to this truth.

God the Father almighty is maker of heaven and earth. Because of that truth, because of what we've read in Genesis, and because of what we have read in John, I want to say this: Modern theories of evolution have not and cannot disprove God's creative work. Now that is vitally important because there are many Christians who are experiencing a crisis of faith because they believe that science has empirically undermined the rationality of their belief in God. Science, in what it has discovered, has shown that it is ignorant or that it is just a little bit crazy to believe in a God who made heaven and earth. Science has come up with an alternative explanation for this whole process.

Let me quickly say, science hasn't done that and most good scientists will admit that it hasn't done that, but there are a lot of bad scientists out there who think that it has and who attempt to do that. They attempt to argue that science has a self contained alternative and intellectually preferable view of reality to the Christian view of reality. Wrong. That is not the case. Modern theories of evolution have not and cannot disprove creation. Evolution does not provide any account of ultimate origins. Evolution isn't even in the business of answering the question of ultimate origins. It *assumes* an answer to the question of ultimate origins. But it doesn't empirically, and can't empirically, demonstrate or give an

answer to the question of ultimate origins. Evolution is all about how we developed to where we are from a long time ago. Whether that is good science or not, I'm not going to engage that today. That is not the issue that I want to lay hold of.

I want to lay hold of something deeper than that and that is this issue. There are only two secular views of the origins of the universe that exist as alternatives to the Christian view. And evolution is not one of them. The two views are as follows: there is one view that says, "Everything came from nothing." Once upon a time there was nothing and then there was something and now there's everything. There are not many people standing in the line holding that view today. But it is a historic view that has been held by philosophers from time to time in the history of thought.

The second secular view which is dominant everywhere in the world today is the view that there has always been something, that matter is eternal, that what is now always has been even if in another undeveloped form. It is the view that "It has always been here."

Now those are the only two alternatives to the Christian view on the market, and really, it's that latter view of the eternity of matter which is the major competitor to the Christian view that the eternal and everlasting and almighty God brought this world into being from nothing when it didn't exist beforehand.

And I want to suggest to you that in at least two ways the Christian view is superior to the pagan view, to the secular view. The Christian view can ask and answer two questions that the pagan view does not have a clue how to answer, and, in fact, is capable of being far more compelling in our world today, to the people who will sit down and listen and think, than the pagan alternative. The Christian view, you see, says to both of those views, that once there was nothing and now there's something, and to the view that says that there has just always been something, matter has always existed, and then it exploded one day, and poof, here's the universe, and over billions and billions of years, poof, here's the earth and animals and people.

Over against those views, the Christian view says, "No, there wasn't always something. But there was always Someone. And the Someone brought the something into existence. In other words, the something that is here is not the inevitable result of impersonal, unorganized, incoherent, random, accidental development of matter, it is the result of a purposeful, personal, sovereign God bringing it into being and crafting it so that it has order, and symmetry, it makes sense, there is meaning. That is the Christian view.

And I want to suggest to you, my friends, that there has never been a better time, since the very advent of Darwinian evolution in our culture at the end of the 19th century, when Darwinian thinking took over in the Western world, there has never

been a better time to engage the thinking world with a distinctively Christian doctrine of creation than now. Because, we have the advantage in at least a couple of ways.

The first way is this: the Christian has a better answer to the question, "Where did this come from?" than the unbeliever. When you ask a savvy philosopher, "Where did the stuff for the 'Big Bang' come from?" He will either answer, "I don't know. It was just there." Or he will say, "That's an illegitimate question." Now folks, nigh unto every human being that has ever lived has asked that question, and there will be very few human beings who will be satisfied with the answer, "That's not a good question," "That's an illegitimate question," "You can't ask where original matter came from," "That's a nonsensical question," "It doesn't make sense." It makes perfect sense. I want to know where the stuff came from.

I had a friend at the University of Edinburgh, whose Ph.D. in physics was studying the first one three-hundredths of a second of the history of the Big Bang in the universe. Now, I don't know how you do that, but he spent seven years doing that. I need to call him some day and find out what he found out. I do know this: no matter what he learns, and I'm sure he learned a lot, he knows a lot more than I do about God's creation and those things than I could tell him. But one thing that he can't give me a better answer for, because he's not a believer, is "Where did that stuff come from?" I want to know where the stuff came from. And you will run into a brick wall when you ask that question and you will not get a good answer. I want to suggest to you that the Christian answer makes far better sense. The Bible's answer, God's answer to that, makes far better sense than to say, "Oh, it was just always there."

Secondly, the Christian view has a better answer to the question of "How did this impersonal something grow up into a world in which there are thinking, feeling, relating and loving human beings who are under the delusion that there is an ultimate reality and meaning to life?" How did we get from a Blob to a Blob That Thinks? How do we get from a blob to a blob that is aware of itself? How do we get from a blob to millions and billions of people that love, marry, fight, make up, build things, and think about building things? How do we get there? From some impersonal something with random accidental chance as the operative force, how do we get from that to this?

Again, some astute philosophers will say, "Well, actually you're not far from giving the answer in the very way that you phrased it. There really is no meaning. All of this stuff, love, meaning, etc., is a facade. It's something that we have made up to help ourselves cope with a meaningless world." Now folks, I have never seen that consistently lived out. People don't want you to pull the trigger when the gun is against their temple. And the reason they don't want you to do that is that it does matter and there is meaning and there are moral laws. It's not because they've made up a reality in their own mind. You can't live in a meaningless universe, even if you assert the universe is meaningless. And

Christianity has an answer for that that the pagan world doesn't have. And the Christian answer is: this world did not come from an impersonal something, but a personal God created it with order and with meaning and with symmetry and with life and with hope and with relationships. Because the relationships manifested in the human world are but a shadow of His personality and relationships in the eternal Trinity. You see, the Christian doctrine is superior to secular speculation.

One Christian theologian said this, "The impression has got abroad that not only has the Christian doctrine been disproved, but that scholars have agreed on an alternative. Neither of these assumptions is correct. There is no agreed alternative to the Christian position. Those which are affirmed are beset with enormous difficulties. The Christian doctrine of God, on the other hand, seems to have no particular difficulty in its own, is supported by a great body of argument, philosophically and scientific, and is confirmed by the whole process of special revelation in which God both asserts and describes Himself.

The only three options are this: that before creation, God alone existed and His existence is the reason for coming into being of all else, which is the Christian view; or two, before creation nothing existed, absolutely nothing, not God, not matter, not mass, not energy, not potential, not protoplasm, nothing. Well, it takes a fair bit of credulity to rest in that and that's why there are not many people lining up in that line these days.

Thirdly, here's the secular alternative that is most prominent today: before the creation of the universe, an impersonal something existed, some protoplasm or primary particle, in which all the potentialities later realized in the universe were latent. Surely, however, the existence of such an impersonal something, is no less a mystery and no less a stumbling block to the radically skeptical intellect, than the existence of God. Such a something, if you believe that everything came from that something, such a something already possesses some of the characteristics of deity, being eternal, self-existent, and all-powerful.. Moreover, this theory of origins is burdened with all the difficulties that face consistent materialism, the view that everything is just matter. Matter is all there is. We're just stuff. The nature of the universe is against this. It is difficult to believe that the complexity of familiar life forms is the result of unprogrammed molecular and genetic change, and it's even more difficult to convince ourselves that *Paradise Lost*, *Hamlet*, and *The Sermon on the Mount* are derived from an inexorable sequence of cause and effect from a primitive protein. The point is, you don't move from the Blob to Shakespeare. Where did the 'think' come from? Where did the 'know' come from? Where did the 'self-awareness' come from? Where did that come from? So, the Christian view is more compelling in this world, I would say, than the alternative that is being touted. That was my first point. We're not going to get to my second point.

Let me say briefly, that John tells you something extraordinary about the Creator who made that world. He said that once upon a time that Creator who made the

world, came to earth, and John, once upon a time, laid his head on His chest. And John is saying to you, the man Jesus Christ that I knew and lived with, the man that I ministered with, the man that I lived for years in exile and isolation for, is the Creator who brought this world into being. And he saying, "You bow down and worship Him, because that's the only way your eyes will ever be opened to see by faith that God brought all things seen into being, by His unseen power." Let's pray.

*Our Lord and our God, Your creation is marvelous, Your wisdom is beyond all that we could comprehend, so as we sing the almighty power of God, grant us that we might so trust in Jesus Christ as to praise You not only as the God who made us, but as the God who is our Savior, who mightily redeemed us. And we ask this through Your all sufficient, redeeming Son, Jesus Christ, Amen.*

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