

## CHAPTER 4

### OF CREATION

#### ***Creation of the universe***

“1. It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.”

Note how the whole Trinity was active in the creation:

- God (Gen 1:1, 26)
- Father (1 Cor 8:6)
- Father through the Son (Heb 1:2)
- Father through the Spirit (Ps 104:30)
- Son (John 1:2-3, 10, 11)
- Holy Spirit (Gen 1:2; Job 33:4)

The creation of the universe displays these qualities of God:

- Glory (Ps 19:1; Pro 16:4; Col 1:16)
- Power and wisdom (Jer 10:12)
- Wisdom (Ps 104:24)
- Goodness (Ps 33:5-6)
- Power and Godhead (Rom 1:20)

The Bible teaches creation *ex nihilo*, “out of nothing.” Of course, by “out of nothing,” we mean, out of no pre-existing created materials; God himself has always existed. God did not simply rearrange materials that existed already, but he brought them into existence by the pure force of his will and decree—“and God said . . . and it was so” (see Heb 11:3). In some of his creative activity after the initial creation of the heavens and the earth, he used pre-existing material he had made to form his new creations. The word *to create* (Hebrew *bara*) means to make something entirely new and different. Often times other Hebrew words are used in the Genesis creation account, such as *to make*, *to form*, or *to allow to appear*. In each of these cases, the creation appears as the result of God’s sovereign will and power.

This decree of creation includes all things that exist in this or any other universe. Nothing has independent existence apart from God's creation (Gen 1; John 1:3; Acts 17:24; Col 1:16).

Because God has created all things by his sovereign power, he has absolute rights over his creation. It is all for his purpose and glory (Neh 9:6; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Rev 4:11).

God created all things in six days (Gen 1 – 2:3; Exod 20:11 [not in parallel, Deut. 5:12-15]; 31:17). Before the advent of modern science in the sixteenth century Christians generally considered these days of creation to be 24-hour days, and this appears also to have been the general understanding of the Westminster divines. However, as the sciences of astronomy and geology developed, many saw in them evidence of a much longer history for the universe and the earth. This led many Christians to interpret the creation days in a different way. Some noted that the word *day* (Hebrew *yom*) often meant a long period of time, a period of activity (in this case, of God's activity); they favored the "day-age" theory. Others taught that there was a long period between the initial creation and the six days of "recreation"; this was the "gap theory." Many Christians still hold to the traditional understanding, and a very recent creation (at most, several tens of thousands of years ago). In 1999 and again in 2004 the Bible Presbyterian Synod has taken a position favoring the traditional understanding of 24-hour days, and the board of Western Reformed Seminary in 2003 has made it a policy of the seminary to promote that view. More detailed arguments are provided in other courses of the seminary.

### ***Creation of man***

"2. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image, having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it; and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change. Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures."

Note that the generic term "man" means "human being," and refers to both men and women—"he created man, male and female."

Man was created male and female from the beginning (Gen 1:27, 20-22). God created only one pair of humans. We did not evolve at different times from ape-like creatures. The unity of the human race from one pair of ancestors is a newly proved scientific conclusion, but it has always been taught in the Bible:

- Gen 10 (descendants of Noah)
- Acts 17:26 ("from one [man]" = Adam; "blood" is not in the better manuscripts)
- 1 Cor 15:21-22
- Rom 5:12-19

- Heb 2:11

These passages indicate that the creation of a single pair is a vital part of biblical theology. We all are one family, and our unity in Adam is parallel to the unity of believers in Christ.

Adam and Eve, and all other humans, have eternal souls (Eccl 12:7; Matt 10:28; Luke 23:42-43). Their souls were not “neutral.” They were created “good,” endowed with qualities that must be present in moral creatures to receive God’s approval: “knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.”

They bore the image of God (Gen 1:26-27), their immortal souls, capable of rational thought, speech, understanding, and moral responsibility. It is not their bodies, but their souls, that bore that image. This image of God exists in every human being today, not only in Christians (Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9). Because human beings bear this image of God, each individual is of eternal worth, and his life is sacred, and his liberty to exercise his own will is required. Undeserved slavery and killing is a great sin, since it denies the image of God in man. This single doctrine is the antidote to communism and all other forms of totalitarianism.

Adam and Eve were created good:

- The law written on their hearts, even true for the heathen (Rom 2:14-15)
- Morally upright (Eccl 7:29)
- With the power to obey God perfectly

While much of this goodness has been lost through the fall, a portion of it is restored in the hearts of the believers (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10).

As is evident in Genesis, Adam and Eve were created with free will; they could either obey or disobey God, whichever they chose. No human since their time (except Jesus Christ) has had their ability to use this freedom to obey God. Our sinful wills are under bondage until God saves us.

In addition to the moral law, which binds people in all ages, God gave a specific command to Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Otherwise, he could eat of any tree, including the tree of life, which seems to have had supernatural power to preserve life (Gen 3:22; Rev 22:2).

If Adam had kept this commandment, he probably would have been glorified, as we shall be at the last day, or at least would have been made incapable of sin. This offer to him and to his posterity is called the covenant of works.

As long as Adam and Eve obeyed God, they continued living in the Garden of Eden, in honest labor, and perfect happiness in communion with God. They enjoyed perfect love and fellowship with each other. They also had dominion over all the animals, living in perfect harmony with nature.