

“In The Beginning” The Biblical View Of Creation, Part 1

In August 2004 Stephen Meyer, a research fellow at the Discovery Institute (Ph.D. from Cambridge), had an article published in the Smithsonian Institute’s *Proceedings Of the Biological Society Of Washington*. The article, “The Origin Of Biological Information And The Higher Taxonomic Categories,” argued that the evidence points toward the conclusion that life comes from “conscious rational activity.” In other words, it comes from an Intelligent Designer.

Though the article was properly submitted to the editor, Rick Stenberg (a researcher at the museum with two Ph.D.s in biology), and also a panel of three peer reviewers before being deemed worthy of publication, its presence in the journal created a firestorm. Not only did other publications vigorously oppose the presence of the article in such a prestigious journal, Stenberg was disciplined in a very heavy-handed manner by his supervisors. (Story from World, Feb. 19, 2005: 26)

What this incident demonstrates for us is how strongly many oppose both the doctrine of Creation and its more general cousin, Intelligent Design. It can be easy for us to try and avoid this debate—thinking that we simply don’t want to get involved. Yet the ramifications are too significant to ignore.

Consider the following true story as told by Chuck Colson in his September 13, 2005 Breakpoint commentary:

Visitors to the London Zoo a couple of weeks ago saw what you might call an unusual exhibit.... The "Human Zoo," as the exhibit was titled, was just what it sounds like: a cage of humans in their "natural habitat." ...For the duration of that weekend, "Homo Sapiens" was just one more primate species on display.

At first, the "Human Zoo" doesn't sound like such a big deal.... But there's a worldview behind it that is deeply troubling. Listen to the reasoning behind the exhibit, from zoo spokeswoman Polly Wills: "Seeing people in a different environment, among other animals, teaches members of the public that the human is just another primate." ...When they see humans as animals, here, it kind of reminds us that we're not that special."

Exactly the problem. To many people, it may sound noble and generous to put apes on the same level as ourselves. But think about what we're really saying when we equate humans with animals. We're ignoring the fact that in our Creator's eyes, we are indeed "special." We're not raising animals to our level; we're lowering ourselves to theirs.

What we believe about the origin of this world and mankind not only stands at the head of the line in our worldview, as this

“It is hard to overestimate the importance of the doctrine of creation. In Scripture God first identifies himself as the sovereign Creator and, thus, the Lord of his universe. Many Christians are naturally interested in the doctrine of salvation, but without the God of creation and providence, there is no Christianity as the Bible describes it.” Stephen J. Wellum, “The Doctrine Of Creation Matters”. Southern Baptist Journal Of Theology, 11, 1 (Spr. 2007).

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 8 asks: “How does God execute His decrees?” The answer: “God executes His decrees through the works of creation and providence.”

zoo exhibit exemplified, it will ultimately decide in so many ways how we behave and how we relate to others.

This is why it is so important that we view the subject of origins the same way that God does. To do that, we first must be aware of what the Bible teaches about it. Here are several very important statements the Bible makes about creation and its significance for us which will guide us in that direction.

(1) It is clear that the reality of creation stands at the very headwaters of the scriptures' stream, as if this must be the starting point of knowing who God is and how He works. Genesis 1:1 reads: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Likewise, Paul states in Ephesians 3:9, "God...created all things." Similarly Hebrews 3:4 teaches, "the builder of all things is God" and Revelation 10:6 rounds out the biblical witness with these words: "[God] created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it...."

(2) This creation is the result of the spoken Word of God who brought into existence matter that is distinct from Him. The world is not part of God or something that is merely an extension of Him (as Pantheism would teach). Nor does it exist on its own (as Naturalism would teach). See Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29; 2:18.; Pss. 33:6, 9; 148:5; Heb. 11:3; 2 Peter 3:5; Rev.4:11.

(3) The reality of creation leads to man's special place in the world. He is not merely one of the many animals. Instead, he is made in God's image. Genesis 1:26 reads: "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.'" This special place leads to the sanctity of human life. (Gen. 9:6)

(4) All that God created was good, i.e. morally good and beneficial for man. See Gn. 1:4a, 31. Even though the world is twisted by sin (Rom. 8:19f.), nevertheless all that is not totally distorted by sin is still good because it belongs to Him (1 Cor. 10:26; 1 Tim. 4:4).

(5) The fact that God named His creation (e.g. Gn. 1:5, 8) shows His sovereignty and ownership.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 9 asks: "What is the work of creation?" The answer: "The work of creation is, God's making all things out of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good."

Historically Christians have spoken of creation *ex nihilo*. This is a Latin phrase that means "out of nothing". It is the affirmation that prior to creation nothing existed other than the triune God and He spoke into existence all things, material and immaterial, out of nothing.

In Matthew 12:12 the Evangelist writes that Jesus said: "Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!" In his argument in favor of helping man on the Sabbath in light of Jews' willing to help sheep, He knew the leaders would agree readily with man's superior value. It was a clear theological conclusion from the Old Testament. The WSC, #10 asks: "How did God create man?" Answer: "God created man both male and female, after His own image, in knowledge, righteous, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures."

(6) The reality of creation is part of our acknowledging that God is God and our savior. We belong to Him. (Ps. 100:3)

Psalm 100:3: Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

(7) The reality that God is creator reminds us of His eternity and greatness—humbling us. (Ps. 102:25)

(8) God has great pleasure in his creation (Job 38:4-7). He values it so much that He sent His Son into the world to redeem it (cf. Rom. 8:19-25), taking upon Himself flesh (John 1:14) and even being resurrected so that He is eternally the God/man (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 4:2).

Psalm 102:25: Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

(9) There are a number of ethical ramifications which arise out the truth that God is creator: As our creator, we should listen to His teaching and commands (Ps. 119:73); we should believe His promises and prophesies—after all He created and governs all (Rev. 10:5-6); we should praise Him as creator (Pss. 95; 136) and trust in Him (Is. 40:26; Neh. 9:6)—after all such shows nothing is too difficult for Him (Jer. 32:17); we should value God’s creation—especially all human life made in His image (Gen. 1:26; 9:6); and finally that God owns all things and we are only stewards of that with which He has entrusted us (Pss. 24:1; 89:11-12).

As you can see, the worldview which arises from the Bible and the reality that God created all and He created us in His image with great purpose is far richer and more encouraging than any other explanation!

Discussion Questions:

1. Was there anything that the Bible teaches about creation that surprises you? Was there anything that was new to you?
2. In light of the ethical ramifications that arise out of the biblical teaching of creation:
 - a. What changes do you need to make or steps of growth do you need to take?
 - b. Why do you believe that so many people vehemently oppose believing that God created the world?
3. How should we be impacted by the fact that God created mankind in His image with a special purpose?

4. We learned that God made all things good and that He views material things positively—after all, they are part of His creation. How should this shape our view of things like:
 - a. Helping needy people with their physical needs (such as clothing, food, medical care)?
 - b. The importance of our work in this world?
 - c. Art?
 - d. Science?