



CREATION: GOD MAKES

Part 1 of Doctrine

Pastor Mark Driscoll | April 13, 2008

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Thus far we've covered who God is and how God reveals himself, and now we'll look at Creation: God Makes. And what I want to make note of is at this point it's still all about God. We need to get to know who God is, what God says, what God does. Today in this lecture on creation, we'll look at how God makes the world.

Now at this point, let me give you an introductory thought to how we do doctrine at Mars Hill. We hold something called a closed- and an open-hand approach. We have two hands, metaphorically speaking, and in the closed hand we put doctrines that we will fight for and fight over. They're very important. In the open hand, we'll discuss and debate, but not divide. All right, hard-core fundamentalism, everything goes in the closed hand. Liberalism, everything goes in the open hand. Mars Hill, two hands. Trinity: closed hand. The Bible is God's Word: closed hand. Creation: what you're gonna find is on this doctrine, we have some things in the closed hand, we have some things in the open hand.

What does the Bible say about creation? Genesis 1:1-2, "In the beginning—" the word there is *re'shiyth*. It's an indefinite period of time. "God created—" the word there in Hebrew is *bara'*, not *asah*. We'll use the word *asah* later. *Bara'* means to create from nothing. *Asah* means to take that which exists and to order it. So when you make your bed, you *asah* your bed, you don't *bara'* it. You don't create it from nothing. You put the blankets back on top, right? That's *asah*.

And sometimes in our English Bible they'll use the word create and the subtle distinction is lost, but it's very important. "In the beginning [*re'shiyth*], God created [*bara'd*] the heavens," that's everything above, "and the earth," that's everything below. We call this a merism. "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." So there's God the Father and God the Spirit right at the beginning of the Bible.

Now, we tend not to believe that this means that the earth was just a hunk of mud. This is ancient Greek cosmology that taught it went from chaos to cosmos, that God took a hunk of mud and then he turned it into creation. We tend not to believe that. Ancient translators, back to William Tyndale, were also affected by this translation. We don't hold that necessarily. What I find, particularly in the Old Testament prophets, is that this language means barren wilderness, that at some indefinite point in time, God made the earth, but it was more like a desert or a barren wilderness, that it was not yet ready for human life and human habitation. And so then God took six literal days to prepare the earth, particularly the Garden of Eden in that proximity, for human life. That's what we believe.

So in the closed hand you say, "What does Mars Hill believe?" In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now we're gonna get into other questions like: well, how old is the earth? Are the six days literal? Open hand. You could hold various Christian positions and be a member of Mars Hill. So here's what we'll do, we'll answer some of those open-handed questions.

First that comes in is, well, are the six days of creation literal? 'Cause Genesis 1:1-2 says that God made everything, and then the rest of Genesis 1 says and on day one he did this and on day two he did that, and it lays out a seven-day week, six days God worked, on the seventh day, God rested. Are those literal days? Yes, I think they are, but it's open handed. You can be a member at Mars Hill and disagree with me.

I'll give you some reasons why I think those six days in Genesis 1 are literal days. Number one, it says there was evening and morning. Well, that's a day. Number two, the Hebrew word *yom* means day. That's what it says. And it numbers them sequentially, one, two, three, four, five, six. Additionally, if you go to Exodus 20:11, where it lays out the Ten Commandments, it says we are to have a seven-day week because God worked for six days and on the seventh day he rested. So, yeah, I tend to think that those are literal twenty-four-hour days, but you can disagree with me and be at Mars Hill, just be nice about it, okay? That's in the closed hand.

Now, how old is the earth? Unlike a can of Budweiser, it doesn't come with a born-on date, so there's a little bit of disagreement on this. How old is the earth? In about the 1700s, there was a bishop named Ussher. He went to places like Genesis 5 and Genesis 10 where there are genealogies laying out the chronology of family lineages, and he added up the age of the people and he decided that the earth is about, roughly six thousand years old. Now there's a debate on this. There was a scholar at Princeton named Benjamin Warfield, the great Reformed thinker. He, among others, postulated, well, maybe there are gaps in the chronology of the genealogy, maybe this doesn't list every person that lived during that time but just the most noteworthy and key historical players.

Question is, how old is the earth? To be honest with you, we don't know. The Bible never says that the earth is a particular age. Now, some will say that the earth is young, maybe six to ten thousand years of age. They will say, "Well, here are some potential reasons why." Number one: God made Adam mature, so when Adam was made, he was not made as a zygote, he was made as a man. If you were to see Adam, you'd say, "How old are you?" He'd say, "A day." You'd say, "Well, you're big for a day, two hundred pounds, you know, big." They would say if God could make Adam mature, couldn't God make the earth mature? Perhaps. Others would say that the flood in the days of Noah, beginning around Genesis 6, so altered the global topography and compressed the geological layers that the earth appears old but is not. For these reasons and others, some would say the earth is young. If you hold a young earth position, you could be a member at Mars Hill. Again, this is in the open hand.

Others will say no, the earth is very old. They'll go to radiometric dating which lists the age of the earth anywhere from about 4.5 billion years of age. Some will say that the universe is maybe 13 billion years old, and they'll say, well, science confirms that the earth is very old. You'll notice that this is a big difference, from 6,000 to 4.5 billion, that's quite a gap.

Now is it possible that the earth is old? Yes. And I'll tell you why I think there is a possibility that the earth is old. When the Bible says in the beginning (*re'shiyth*), it's an indefinite period of time. At some point in time, God made the earth and then some time later, he took six days, preparing it for human life. So could the earth have existed for a really long time without human life and then God prepares it for our first parents, Adam and Eve? This is my position; it's called historic creationism. It was the position of the early church. Men like Augustine held this position, that the earth is old but human life on the earth is young.

Some of you say, "I disagree with that." You can still be a member of Mars Hill, and I love you. "God created the heavens and the earth," if you believe that, we're good. Let me give you my reason, though, why I think the earth can be old and humanity could be young. I think that God could have made the earth, it could have existed, then God prepared it over the course of six literal days for human life. And I do believe that human life on the earth is young. Those who tally up the genealogies in Genesis, they will say that human life is about six thousand years old and what's curious is that that is very close to the fossil record. Human life on the earth as we know it, those who are upright, living in villages, not gathering their own food but participating in agriculture and growing their own crops, even non-Christians agree that kind of human life on the earth is about ten thousand years old. And so, it's entirely possible that the earth is old and that human life is young.

Furthermore, this would agree with both science and the Bible. I tend not to be a guy who says, I just want to argue with science all the time. If this is what the Bible teaches, and I think it is, the early church fathers did and Augustine did, and it corroborates the evidence of science, then to me it seems most sensible. Now, if something disagrees with science and it's in the Bible, we hold Scripture in highest authority, not science. What we don't want to do is reject all science. We want to be humble and listen to science and, inasmuch as it agrees with Scripture, we want to receive it as truth.

Now this leads to the next question, where did human life come from? Where did creation come from? We have another Latin phrase here that theologians use, it's called *ex nihilo*, that God made everything from nothing. From nothing. This is exactly what it says in Hebrews 11:3, "By faith—" see, we weren't there, so we have to trust God on this. "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." Out of nothing, God made everything by the sheer force of his word. This shows God as a prophet who preaches creation into existence.

So closed hand, God made the heavens and the earth. Open hand, how old is the earth? You can hold a few different positions on that. As well, where did creation come from? Well, we tend to put in the closed hand that God made everything from nothing. And this does agree with science. Some will say, "Well, the universe is eternal." It's not. Even those who hold a big bang—we call it big God—would say that the earth is winding down toward an eventual conclusion, that it had a beginning and it will have an ending, so the universe is not eternal. Also, the second law of thermodynamics confirms this, and that's one of the most well-established scientific principles. So we don't believe the universe is eternal, we believe that it began at a point in time and is winding down for God to begin a new creation to sort of redeem and clean up all that has been tainted and marred by sin as Romans 8 says.

This being said, what we don't hold is atheistic evolution. Atheistic evolution. Now in saying this, what we're not against is science, what we're against is materialism. Materialism is the belief that there is no God and there is no spiritual existence or domain. We're not against science, but we're against materialism, and materialism is what is compelling forward atheistic evolution.

Now in saying this as well, we do believe in micro—not macro—but micro-evolution. There's a difference between macro-evolution and micro-evolution. Micro-evolution is where there can be an adaptation of a species to its environment. So an animal could change colors to fit within its context so that it's not easily visible to predators. That's micro-evolution. I think that's a product of God's common grace. Macro-evolution is where one species becomes another species, all right? That your great-great-great-great-uncle was a monkey. That's macro-evolution.

We don't hold evolution in that sense to be true, and I'll give you some brief reasons why. You would have to assume that nothing made everything. Nothing doesn't make everything. Number two, you would have to assume that chaos made order. Number three, that though everything is well designed—and this is called the fine-tuning argument—once you stack up the variables for our planet and its ability to sustain human life and its distance from the sun and its oxygen levels and the way our bodies are finely tuned and calibrated for life, it shows that there was design, that all of this was put together by a designer, that if any of these intricate details, the fine-tuning argument postulates, were off to the slightest degree, human life would not even be possible. Atheistic evolution has to say all this design is not from a designer.

Also, atheistic evolution postulates that though we are personal, we are made by that which is impersonal. That impersonal things—matter—made personal beings, men and women. Additionally, it postulates that that which is unintelligent matter made intelligence, that we could think and reason and learn and communicate and remember and that that came from impersonal, unintelligent matter. It's an enormous assumption.

They would say, "Well, all you need is just time." It accounts for atheistic evolution over long periods of time, but the problem is we don't have transitional forms. The transitional forms are not there. We see this species and this species. We don't see the half-species in the middle in the fossil record. After a hundred years as well, atheistic evolution has not been replicable. They can't do it. You don't have any evidence of it.

And here's the big idea, if you hold atheistic evolution, you say, "Where do I come from?" Nowhere. "Why am I here?" For no reason. "Well, what will become of me when I die?" Nothing. You come from no one, you're here for no reason, and you're going to die and go nowhere. That's the logical outgrowth of atheistic evolution, and you know what that leads to historically? Suicide. If I'm not made by anyone, if I'm not here for any reason, then when life gets hard, as it invariably does, if I'm not going anywhere and won't give an account to anyone, why don't I just kill myself and get it over with?

And I would say that to some degree the great struggles that our world is having with despair and depression and suicide are in part to be blamed on the fact that if you don't know that the Trinitarian God loves you and made you, that you're here for his purposes, that he's here to help you, and that when you die, sin and its effects will be removed and you'll be with him so it's not in vain, without that kind of understanding of our existence, we lose hope, we lose joy, and ultimately we take our own life. We take our own life.

I'll close with this. There are two basic worldviews. I'll call them one-ism and two-ism. If you look at circles, think of one circle versus two. Romans 1:25 says it this way, those who

are pagans, "they exchange the truth for the lie." That's what the Greek says. Your translations will say "a lie." "The truth for the lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator, God, who is forever praised, Amen."

There are two realities, one-ism: think of all that exists in a circle, God, Satan, good, evil, matter, Spirit. One-ism, hakuna matata, the circle of life. We call this monism, pantheism, panentheism, the New Age. It is advocated by Oprah and Deepak Chopra and others. That's one-ism.

The Bible teaches two: Creator, creation; good, evil; God, people. The good news is there's someone with an objective perspective on us in the world and there's someone who can come to rescue us. There is someone who is greater than us. There is someone who made us. There is someone to redeem us. There is someone to change us.

If everything is one, then I am part of God, God is part of me. We're all imbued with the cosmic divinity, what some will call the Christ consciousness, what we call hooley. It's hooleyism is what it is. We don't believe that all is one. That's why they have a hard time distinguishing between a tree and a baby. If you chop down a tree, they get angry. If you murder a baby, they don't, because it's just all one. We see distinctions early on in Genesis; day, night; light, darkness; land, sea; animals, people; higher creation (people), lower creation (plants, trees, fish, birds, beasts); God, creation; God, people; God, Satan and demons. Two, not one. There's someone who's made us, there's someone we belong to, there's someone who's come for us. There's someone we'll be with in the end. That's the teaching of the Bible when it comes to creation.

Note: This transcript has been edited for readability.