

**Almighty, Creator
Lesson 2**

Opening Prayer

PSALM 8

1 O LORD our Lord, *
how exalted is your name in all the world!
2 **Out of the mouths of infants and children ***
your majesty is praised above the heavens.
You have set up a stronghold against your adversaries, *
to quell the enemy and the avenger.
3 **When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, ***
the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,
4 what are human beings that you should be mindful of them? *
mortals that you should seek them out?
5 **You have made them but little lower than the angels; ***
you adorn them with glory and honor;
6 you give them mastery over the works of your hands; *
you put all things under their feet:
7 **All sheep and oxen, ***
even the wild beasts of the field,
8 the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, *
and whatsoever walks in the paths of the sea.
9 **O LORD our Lord, ***
how exalted is your name in all the world!

God of glory,
despite the majesty of your creation
you sought us out,
and through Christ
you crowned us with dignity and honor,
giving us dominion over your works.
Enable us so to care for the earth
that all creation may radiate the splendor
of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(Book of Common Worship, page 618)

Q. 26. What do you believe when you say: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth with all that is in them, who also upholds and governs them by his eternal counsel and providence, is for the sake of Christ his Son my God and my Father. I trust in him so completely that I have no doubt that he will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul. Moreover, whatever evil he sends upon me in this troubled life he will turn to my good, for he is able to do it, being almighty God, and is determined to do it, being a faithful Father.

Heidelberg Catechism, Question 26

^{ESV 1} In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 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. ³¹ ^{ESV} 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, 1: 1-3, 31

^{ESV} Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

Isaiah 40:28

^{ESV 1} In the beginning was the Word ...³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1: 1, 3

^{ESV 15} He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ 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.

Colossians 1:15-17

The Reformed Doctrine of Creation

The confession “I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth” is the first article of the Apostles’ Creed. It is an article of faith.

- Creation vs. Evolution – both theologian and scientist alike live by faith.
 - The most important issue at stake in the doctrine of creation is not the origin of all things but their destiny, the goal and meaning of creaturely existence (M. Jenkins, 90ff)
- The Apostles’ Creed brings together the three basic acts of God: creation, saving grace in Jesus Christ, and the actions of the Holy Spirit.
- Creation accounts were an attempt to describe within the language of human experience what clearly is beyond human experience.
- To know the creator in Jesus Christ is to know that the creator is personal and gracious, as well as powerful and intelligent.
- The doctrine of creation means that the universe is the expression of the purpose and grace of God.
- Creation *ex nihilo*

Abuses of the Doctrine of Creation

- Deism
 - People who believe in creation and creator
 - God reduced the relationship between God and humanity to a causal connection that took place in a distant past.
 - Once upon a time in a far away age god made the watch and then watches it tick with out
 - Reformed theology asserts that God is still the creator today and we can sing with the Psalmist, “Create in me a clean heart oh God and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10).
 - Deistic view reduces faith in the Creator to a theoretical proposition about something that happened a very, very long, long time ago.
 - Whenever Christian thinks of creation merely as a past event they are in danger of the deistic perversion of the doctrine of creation.

➤ Pantheism

- In pantheism everything that is real is “God.”
- God and the universe are conceived as identical; God is the world and the world is God.
- Every tree, rock, flower, star, insect, animal and person is a part of God. There is nothing that is not God – God is nature and nature is God.
- Human beings are a “small part of God”. Good and evil disappear for an evil action appears evil only because of the limitation of our insight. If we had full knowledge if we had the comprehensive rather than particular view of reality, then all evil would disappear.
- There is no creation in the sense that something came into being that was not – there is no creation and there is no end (no second coming).
- The most common form of nature worship is probably to be found in the worship of green grass – particularly the green grass of a golf course.
- Reformed faith asserts that God created and creates through his sovereign Word (Jesus Christ, see John & Colossians passage above). Creation is the result of God’s freedom.

➤ Dualism

- Dualism asserts that the universe must be explained as the result of the conflict of two eternal principles – light and darkness, good and evil, mind and matter, or soul and body.
- Two absolute co-equal principles are engaged in an eternal struggle.
- Cite Genesis 1:2 as the period of this epic struggle and that the earth is a battle field between good (humanity who worship God) and evil (Satan, demons, and humanity who follow Satan).
 - Key to life is to understand the nature of this conflict
 - Mind defeats matter; light over darkness, etc.
 - Body becomes the prison of the soul and nature as it appears is the bait of the evil one luring humanity into the struggle.
- Reformed faith asserts that God created the universe *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. All of the universe is ultimately the product of God’s creative power – the darkness of the

night as well as the shining noon day sun; our body and our soul – at the conclusion of the first “six days” God said it is very good – all of it!

- Reformed faith says the goodness of creation means that human life has meaning and purpose; that we enjoy the universe and use it under God for the enhancement of human life according to God’s purpose.

Parallels in the Nicene Creed (4th Century)

*We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is
seen and unseen.*

Article 1.1

Historical and Theological Significance of the Nicene Creed

- The Nicene Creed was the 1st official doctrinal statement of the whole Christian Church coming out of 2 councils: Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381.
- It clarified the relationship of Jesus Christ to God and to humanity.
- It is the only creed accepted and used by all 3 branches of Christendom: Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant.

Theology of the Nicene Creed: The Person of Jesus Christ

- What is Jesus’ relationship to God and to human beings?
- The councils were arguing over an “*iota*” the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet: *homoousios* and *homoiousios* was the issue.
 - Jesus was of the same substance as the Father or only like or similar?
 - The issue is salvation – important for Christians where in the 4th century or presently.
- If God actually came in the flesh of a human being and if that God/person lived, suffered, died and rose again for our sakes, then we can be united with God. Jesus is both divine and human the eternal Word of God incarnate.

- It was at the Council of Chalcedon that affirmed that Jesus Christ had two natures: divine and human.
- We cannot still completely understand this mystery (thus faith) >
 - Central comfort and assurance of the Christian faith was said by Jesus, "Because I live, you will also live" (John 14:19).
- Nicaea also affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit and the unity of the Holy Spirit with God and Jesus (see John 15:26).

Next Lesson:

1. The Apostles' Creed, "*And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord*"
 - a. Read: John 1, and 1 John
2. The Scots Confession (read the following):

The Scots Confession

Three documents from the period of the Reformation are included in the *Book of Confessions*, each originating in a different country: Scotland, Germany, and Switzerland. These three centers of the Reformation remain significant in Reformed and Presbyterian thought to this day.

The Scots Confession was written at a turning point in the history of the Scottish nation. When the Queen Regent Mary of Guise died in her sleep in 1560, the Protestant nobility of Scotland was able to secure English recognition of Scottish sovereignty in the Treaty of Edinburgh. To the Scots, this favorable conclusion to the civil war with Mary's French-supported forces represented a providential deliverance.

The Scottish Parliament, having declared Scotland a Protestant nation, asked the clergy to frame a confession of faith. Six ministers, including John Knox, completed their work in four days. In 1560, the document was ratified by Parliament as "doctrine grounded upon the infallible Word of God."

Beginning with a pledge of unconditional commitment to the triune God who creates, sustains, rules, and guides all things, the first eleven chapters of the Scots Confession narrate God's providential acts in the events of biblical history. The kirk (church) of the present and future is continuous with the kirk of God's people going back to Adam. While affirming that the Bible is the norm by which the kirk judges itself, the Scots Confession also sees the Scriptures as a sacred history in which the present day church, through the Holy Spirit, participates until the

end of time. God's providential deliverance is a continuing, not merely a past, reality.

The Scots Confession sets forth three marks of the true and faithful church: "the true preaching of the Word of God," "the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus," and "ecclesiastical discipline . . . whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished."

"Cleave, serve, worship, trust" are key words in this document. As a call to action in a turbulent time, the Scots Confession reflects a spirit of trust and a commitment to the God whose miraculous deliverance the Scots had experienced firsthand.

3.06 The Incarnation of Christ Jesus

When the fullness of time came God sent his Son, his eternal wisdom, the substance of his own glory, into this world, who took the nature of humanity from the substance of a woman, a virgin, by means of the Holy Ghost. And so was born the "just seed of David," the "Angel of the great counsel of God," the very Messiah promised, whom we confess and acknowledge to be Emmanuel, true God and true man, two perfect natures united and joined in one person. So by our Confession we condemn the damnable and pestilent heresies of Arius, Marcion, Eutyches, Nestorius, and such others as did either deny the eternity of his Godhead, or the truth of his humanity, or confounded them, or else divided them.

3.07 Why the Mediator Had to Be True God and True Man

We acknowledge and confess that this wonderful union between the Godhead and the humanity in Christ Jesus did arise from the eternal and immutable decree of God from which all our salvation springs and depends. my God and to your God." By this most holy brotherhood whatever we have lost in Adam is restored to us again. Therefore we are not afraid to call God our Father, not so much because he has created us,

Application:

1. This week think about this: In what ways can I affirm that God is the Almighty Creator?
2. Search the internet for stories about "creation vs. evolution" in the schools in Texas; are the arguments theological or political?

3. Live into Genesis command to care for the “garden.” Pray this prayer everyday, “Lord God Almighty, help me to a better steward of the earth that you have entrusted to *my* care. Amen.

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