

English Transcript

Foundations of the Christian Faith – Course 2

Lesson 1 - Mankind (Part 1)

Welcome to Foundations of the Christian Faith. This is Course 2. In this course we will focus on three key doctrines, the theology of Mankind, the theology of Sin, the theology of Salvation.

As we begin each of our GTN courses, our emphasis is twofold. We always look to teach to our head, heart, and our hands. We take in biblical truth, this is Information. These truths must also impact our hearts through conviction and deeper belief, this is Inspiration. But training must not stop with just Information and Inspiration. The goal of spiritual training is ultimately Transformation. Training must impact our lives, represented by our hands. We must put into practice what we know to be true.

This relates to our second point focused on the vision of 2 Timothy 2:2. Training is not meant to stop in the classroom or as we listen to an audio or podcast. Following the example of the apostle Paul who taught Timothy, we are to take what we have learned and then train others who will train others.

The goal of spiritual training is always spiritual transformation into the likeness of Christ, through the Word of God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of God, in community with others, for the glory of God.

On pages 1 and 2 in your handout you may review the table of contents for this course. There will be three lessons on the doctrine of Man, two lessons on the doctrine of Sin and two lessons on the doctrine of Salvation.

Let's begin Lesson 1 on page 3 in your handout.

Before we begin to develop a biblical theology of mankind, with man created in the image and likeness of God, we must first establish that God is the Creator of all things. Science may contribute to our understanding, but it must never control or change our interpretation of the Scriptures in order to accommodate our personal views.

As far as man is concerned, the Bible teaches that God created the first man in his image from the dust of the ground and his own breath of life. No subhuman creature was involved, nor was any process of evolution. The purpose of this lesson is to lay the groundwork for these foundational truths before studying the theology of mankind in Lessons 2 and 3.

Based on this quote from John Mbiti, we will not take too much time to make the case for creationism over evolutionary processes.

"Africans have always believed that God is not only the Creator of humanity, but the Creator of the universe, and all that is in it. Over the whole of Africa, creation is the most widely acknowledged work of God" (African Religions and Philosophy).

Maurice Mukumba also states, *“The coming into existence of the universe is linked to the African conception of God as Supreme Being, and if Supreme, then also in charge of the being and substance of the world. This quality of God as Creator is mainly expressed in the stories and myths of African communities which were orally passed from one generation to the next”* (Natural Theology with African Annotations).

If I were teaching this course in a different context where evolution may be the predominant worldview, more time would be needed for this lesson. Because this is not a key issue in Senegal and Gambia, I will stay at a higher level and leave it to you to read through the notes in your handout for more thoughts related to the Theories of Evolution and Theistic Evolution pertaining to the creation.

We should note that in most of the religious creeds begin with the statement that God is the maker of the heavens and the earth. From the Nicene Creed, *“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.”*

In this lesson we will discuss Why God created, How God created, and When God created.

Let us first look at a few biblical ideas for Why did God create?

1. God created for his own sake.

Ultimately, Creation is for God and not for us. He wants us to enjoy his Creation and to enjoy him, but Creation is for him and his glory.

“May the glory of the Lord continue forever. The Lord takes pleasure in all he has made.”
(Psalm 104:31)

“Everyone who is called by my name, whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed and made”. (Isaiah 43:7)

“Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth.” (Psalm 57:5)

“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for in him all things were created: things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, powers, rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him.”
(Colossians 1:15-16)

God created for his own sake, for his own glory!

2. God created to express his sovereignty.

Sovereignty means that God is ultimately in charge and control of all things. God's Creation expresses his control. Listen to these few verses.

“The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth; You founded the world and all that is in it.”
(Psalm 89:11)

“The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it: for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.” (Psalm 24:1-2)

The earth is the Lord's. He owns everything we see, including you and me. We have these things on loan for a brief time while we live on the earth. We are stewards of what God has created because God owns it all! Those who believe that God is like the landlord who will never return will one day see clearly that you cannot ignore God's sovereignty. God is gracious and patient. He is the loving owner. We are simply stewards to care for what he has created and entrusted to our care for his glory.

Nehemiah 9:6 affirms, *“You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts and the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the hosts of heaven worship you.”*

God created to express his sovereignty.

3. God created to reflect his character.

The Bible is filled with verses that tell us God's Creation is an expression of his character. You may look up the verses listed there in your handout from Nehemiah 9, Psalm 8, Psalm 19, Psalm 104, Isaiah 43, and others.

Psalm 19:1-2 says, *“The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech. Night after night they reveal knowledge.”*

Romans 1:20 says, *“For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that people are without excuse.”*

God has revealed his character through what has been made. This is General Revelation. Let us mention just a few to get started.

- We see God's power during the rainy season with the fierce rain and winds. His power is evident in the raging seas and thundering rivers.
- We see God's beauty in the flowers and multi-colored birds. Also, in the rising of the sun and its setting.
- God reveals his goodness and grace as he sends rain and sun on the righteous and the wicked as well as the miracle of sleep that brings healing and refreshment to our bodies.
- We experience God's faithfulness from season to season, morning and evening, and the predictability of the sun, moon and stars.

When we discussed the doctrine of the Bible, we said that God reveals himself through Creation, but we need his special revelation through the Word of God to understand salvation and how to live a godly life.

4. God created to display his wisdom.

Psalm 104:24 says, *“Lord how manifold your works? In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures.”*

Proverbs 3:19 says, *“By wisdom the Lord laid the foundations. By understanding he set the heavens in place.”*

“It is he who made the earth by his power who established the world by his wisdom and by his understanding has stretched out the heavens.” (Jeremiah 10:12)

In what ways do you see God's wisdom as you consider his Creation? God asked Job four chapters of questions to consider God's power, sovereignty, his character and his wisdom.

If the earth was tilted on its axis just a degree, more or less, we would either burn up or freeze. Think of you how God caused the earth to rotate perfectly around the sun.

Think about the migrating pattern of so many animals or the metamorphosis from a caterpillar to a butterfly. God's design of the earth's gravity protects us from floating off into space or being crushed by the oppressive weight. Think about the air we breathe, the human cell and DNA, the engineering miracle of our eye, or any body part for that matter. Consider the uniqueness of every snowflake and every fingerprint as an identifier for each person who has ever lived.

All of Creation is crying out that there must be an intelligent, wise designer based on such complexity, order, and purpose in what has been created.

This leads us to the question of how did God create?

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 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. And God said, ‘let there be light. And there was light’.”
(Genesis 1:1-3)

From God's perspective that settles it. God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. That's how God created. He spoke and brought everything we see out of nothing.

Hebrews 11:3 says, *“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made of things that are visible.”*

The all-powerful God created something out of nothing. This is often referred to as *ex nihilo*. Somehow this is not enough for many though. We have an intense desire to figure out the “how” of Creation. There are three major views of Creation.

There is the Theory of Evolution, Theistic or God-driven Evolution, and there is the third view called Biblical Creation where God alone created everything we see. I will touch on each briefly and allow you to read the notes in your handout to fill in the gaps.

Theory of Evolution

Evolution simply means change in any direction. This theory states that several billion years ago chemicals in the sea acted on by sunlight and cosmic energy formed themselves by chance into one or more single-celled organisms, which have since developed through beneficial mutations and natural selection into living plants, animals, and people.

If we reduced the evolutionary process to a formula it would look like this.

$$\mathbf{M} \text{ (mutations)} + \mathbf{NS} \text{ (natural selection)} \times \mathbf{T} \text{ (time)} = \mathbf{E} \text{ (evolution)}$$

Many will say that evolution has been proven by science. Theories of evolution are impossible to prove scientifically. The scientific method is based on observation and experimentation. It is impossible to make observations or conduct experiments on the origin of the universe.

There are problems with the theory of evolution.

- God is left out of creation. There's no place in evolution theory for the divine or the miraculous. Charles Darwin, one of the fathers of evolutionary theory, stated, *"I will give absolutely nothing for the theory of natural selection if it requires miraculous additions at any stage in the process."*
- There is a problem with mutations. Mutations are rare and almost always harmful. Where do new genes come from? No mutation has ever produced a new species or even a new organ or system in an existing species.
- There is a problem with natural selection. Natural selection does not guarantee improvement in a random environment. It would not recognize the worth of a single mutation while waiting for the other mutations to happen, which would be necessary for the production of a new system in the organism.
- There is a problem with the length of time required. It is statistically impossible that just one usable protein would have been produced by chance in all the history of the earth using all the atoms of the earth. You can read more about this on page 6.
- There is a problem with the second law of thermodynamics. This law of science states that though energy in the cosmos remains constant, the amount available to do useful work is always decreasing. Everything is moving from a state of order to disorder unless acted upon by an outside force. The only response from evolutionists is that there must be an exception to this second law to allow for evolution to take place. This exception would be equivalent to a miracle, and evolutionists do not allow the miraculous to enter into their theory of the origin of life.
- There is a problem with the lack of evidence for species to species evolution. Charles Darwin conceded that not one change of species into another is on record. We cannot prove that a single species has been changed. New breeds of animals have

been created through mutation or microevolution. These are small adaptations, but never a new species changed into another. The Bible tells us that God created each animal after its own kind, after its own type, its own species. The fossil record offers no proof of species-to-species evolution.

Since the probability of evolution occurring on its own is so low, is it possible that God somehow helped the process along? In other words, could God have used the process of evolution as a means for which he created?

This leads to the second major theory of the origin of life called Theistic Evolution.

Theistic Evolution

Theistic Evolution theorizes that God directed, used, and controlled the process of naturalistic evolution to create the world and all that's in it. This view typically includes the idea that the days in Genesis chapter 1 were really long periods and that evolutionary processes were involved in the creation of Adam. This implies that the earth and pre-human forms are incredibly old, maybe millions or billions of years old.

There are also problems with the theory of Theistic Evolution.

- The Bible pictures God as being intimately and actively involved in each aspect of creation. Psalm 33:6-9 says, *"By the word of the heavens, by the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, their starry hosts, by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars. He puts it deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be. He commanded, and it stood firm."*
These verses do not give you a picture of a God who started the process of creation, walked away, and just let it continue on its own.
- The problem with any form of Theistic Evolution is that it is designed by chance. That's like a square circle. There's no such thing. Blending evolution with Creation is like putting a square peg into a round hole. It doesn't fit. God still preserves and sustains the universe. He is not like a watchmaker who makes a watch and then withdraws, leaving it to function totally on its own.
- On the contrary, God is still actively involved in the universe. He created. *"He is sustaining all things by his powerful word."* (Hebrews 1:3)
"And in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:17)
- *"If God were to withdraw his upholding word, then all being, spiritual and material, would instantly tumble back into nothing and cease to exist. The continuation of the universe from one moment to the next is therefore as great a miracle and as fully the work of God as its coming into being at the beginning."*
(Bruce Milne, Know the Truth)

- Some read the Genesis 1-11 as poetry rather than historical narrative. The book of Genesis is the foundation of the entire Bible. Genesis tells the story of the beginning of the universe, the solar system, earth, life, man, sin, Israel, nations, and salvation. A proper understanding of Genesis is crucial to our understanding of the rest of Scripture. For example, Genesis chapters 1-11 are quoted or referenced more than 100 times in the New Testament. Every New Testament author refers to Genesis chapters 1-11.
- Be careful when you claim that God's Creation and God's Word are equal forms of revelation from God. The heavens do declare the glory of God, but this is just general revelation. Special revelation comes from God's Word and is held over and above all else.
 "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God endures forever."
 (Isaiah 40:8.)
 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."
 (Matthew 24:35)
- God's Word is more authoritative than creation because it will outlast Creation. Nature is designed to reveal the existence of God, but the Bible is designed to lead us to the God about whom nature speaks.

Although there are variations within this broad category of Creationism, the principal characteristic of this view is that the Bible is its sole basis. Science may contribute to our understanding, but it must never control or change our interpretation of the Scriptures in order to accommodate its findings.

Creationists hold to different views regarding the days of Creation, but to be a Creationist, one must believe that the biblical record is factually historical, and that Adam was the first man. There are some presuppositions of Creation.

- We believe the existence of God.
- We believe in the eternality of God. For God so created, he must himself exist prior to anything else.
- We believe in the reliability of Scripture as God's Word. We know about the Creation of man and the world through the Scriptures which God revealed at least 17 times in Genesis 1 and then throughout the scriptures. God is said to be the Creator.

When we consider of the process of Creation, it is *by faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made of things that are visible (Hebrews 11:3).*

"Creation is distinct from God yet is always dependent on him. God is both transcendent and immanent. This means materialism (no God), pantheism (all is God), dualism (God and matter are eternal), and deism (God is not involved in the world now) are all unbiblical views of creation. When all the facts are rightly understood, there will be "no final conflict" between Scripture and natural science." (Wayne Grudem)

In your handout you can read more about the Creationist views related to the timing of Creation. These deal with The Gap Theory, The Day-Age Theory, and The Literal Six-Day or Young Earth view.

As you consider each of these views, any idea of Creation that theorizes the death of humans and the fall of God's Creation before the sin of Adam and Eve is contrary to the clear teaching from God's Word.

Let us conclude this introductory lesson with a summary from Charles Ryrie regarding doctrinal issues related to Creation.

There was an actual, factual, historical, supernatural creation of the heavens, earth, and man by God. To deny, adjust, or compromise this by casting doubt on the reliability of Genesis does not do away with this truth, for the original creative activity of God is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. If Genesis is untrustworthy, other parts of the Bible must be also.

A worldwide flood in the time of Noah did actually occur. That it was worldwide is attested to more than a dozen times in Genesis 6 - 11 and in 2 Peter 2:5 and 3:6. The Lord confirmed the actuality of the flood in Matthew 24 and in Luke 17.

The flood would have caused drastic changes in the climate of the world after the flood. This would affect the dating methods used to estimate geological ages. The flood destroyed all life that was not in the ark that Noah built, accounting for the fossil remains in the earth.

The "beginning" of Genesis 1:1 apparently refers to the beginning of the Creation of the world. The first verse is an absolute statement not a dependent clause related to verse 2. Even so, the statement does not set the time of God's creative activity.

- Some Creationists hold to a young earth or recent creation, both of the earth and man.
- Others agree that man was recent (4,000 to 10,000 years) but the earth is older. The Gap Theory and the Day-Age Theory support this view.
- Fewer make distinctions between man represented by the fossils who were incredibly old and lived and died before Adam while Adam was a more recent creation.
- Theistic Evolutionists regard man as ancient and the result of evolutionary processes by which the pre- and subhuman eventually produced humans.
- A few understand Genesis 1:1 as an original Creation that was judged by God that was then followed by what we read about in Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

An original Creation prior to Genesis 1:1 may be possible but seems unlikely. If there were such and if it contained plant and animal life, then fossils may have come from that period.

Genesis 1:3 records the beginning of events on day one, because of the phrase "Then God said, "Let there be light ...", which also appears at the beginning of the succeeding days. This means that we do not know how long the unformed and unfilled condition of the earth

of verse 2 lasted before the days began but however long or short that condition did not involve plant, animal, or pre-Adamic human life. Thus, the original, un-fashioned earth might have been old, but fashioned earth, vegetation, animals, and man all of which were created during the six days of Creation cannot be older than solar days and genealogical tables allow.

Obviously, there is no complete agreement as to the time of Creation. However, it seems clear that the more recent appearance of man is well established in the Scriptural account.

Even assuming the Day-Age Theory, Adam was created on the sixth day-age which would have been relatively recent. The genealogical tables in Genesis 5 and 11 (even with some gaps within them) also argue for the recent creation of Adam.

In summary: Ultimately, we believe what God has revealed about Creation. No human being was present when it happened but the revelation of it was given by God, who is true, given to Moses, who was an educated and reliable writer. Though not all details are included in the record, many facts are and they should be exegeted or interpreted in the same way as other Scriptures. Furthermore, the truths revealed in Genesis are attested to in other parts of the Bible and by the Lord Jesus.

In your handout on page 11, I have listed a few scriptures that will help to guide your worship and praise of God for his amazing work of Creation. I'll leave those to you to read on your own as you worship God as the Creator and the Maker of heaven and earth.

Here is Psalm 95:1-7 ...

- ¹ *Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.*
- ² *Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.*
- ³ *For the Lord is the great God,
the great King above all gods.*
- ⁴ *In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.*
- ⁵ *The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.*
- ⁶ *Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;*
- ⁷ *for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.*

When we come back, we will continue with Lesson 2 the Theology or Doctrine of Mankind.