CREED SESSION 3 - “CREATOR OF HEAVEN & EARTH”

This session we see that the God we call ‘Father almighty’ is the uncreated Creator of all things. He has no rivals or equals. The Triune God created and sustains all things and so all things (and peoples) owe their existence (and worship) to this One. And so Christians are those who are now in right relationship with our Creator. We discover joyfully that it is not only right to worship him but also wise to follow his ways.

INTRO [3-5 mins] This is to get people thinking, but you could skip if time is short

How significant do you think a creation or origins story is for the way a person (or society) lives? We may not think about this much but our (functional) view of origins of universe shapes greatly what we think reality really is and so how we ought to live. E.g. Chaos or chance? >> no real rhyme or reason - do I have to create or impose my own meaning on the world? What’s the point? Cosmic battle? >> life = constant struggle (light/dark, yin/yang, karma etc) without clear hope? NB only quick starter to get us thinking and reflecting that all people usually have some implicit idea of where the world came from — and whether we realise or not — we tend to live out of its consequences.

What practical difference does it make how we think the universe came to be? Just a follow up, if needed, to ground the above discussion. Deeper questions (e.g. meaning/significance/purpose/destiny) emerge from beliefs about creation & shape every aspect of our lives. E.g. The way we think about our work (Dog eat dog, survival of the fittest? Pointless? My way of creating meaning/ significance in the world?) Or how we think about the future (fundamentally unpredictable/bleak/me against the world?) It’s ok if people aren’t really sure what to say as we usually don’t think about this. Just a chance to tee it up and say “let’s see what the Christian perspective on Creation means for us”, before watching the video.

Talk (1) “Creator of heaven & earth” [4 mins]

- Almighty God is the UNCREATED CREATOR OF ALL things
- Nothing that exists was created apart from him
- Everything that exists owes its existence to him

“From the infinite love and perfect goodness of God flows the great act of creation. Everything else that exists owes its existence and ongoing life to God. And we as Christians believe and know personally this One: the uncreated creator of all.”

Understanding the distinction between God (the creator) and everything else (creation) is absolutely basic to Christian truth and the unfolding story of the Bible. It may seem obvious but getting this foundation clear (both what it affirms and denies) is essential for living wisely and well in the world. See appendix for talk notes.

Discuss

How might this view of creation contrast with other views in our culture? It’s a bold claim - that our God (uniquely and sovereignty) created everything that exists! = Narrow-minded? Old-fashioned? Unscientific? (NB we’re not trying to get into the merits of different readings of Genesis. ALL Christians believe that the Bible teaches God is the uncreated creator of all). It challenges e.g. the views that “I can create my own identity”, “all that matters is that you’re true to yourself”, “I’m accountable to no one except myself”, “freedom is found in self-expression / material success / family approval etc”.

** Do you feel confident that the Bible’s teaching is credible and commendable? Follow up: Why? Why not? Opportunity to be honest, esp. if creation (and the debates around science) can leave us feeling very unsure or even embarrassed. Whatever our scientific views (and Bible-believing Christians have a range of views) — the big and fundamental point that God is
the sovereign creator of all — is simply vital to Christian faith and the Christian life. If people have big concerns, encourage follow up outside the session (either with you or someone else). The purpose here is to set us up to see what a dramatic difference it makes to life if we really believe our God is the creator of everything (and everyone) that exists.

Talk (2)

- God the Creator of all is worthy of all our WORSHIP
- WISDOM and blessing come from following the Creator’s design

If God is creator of ALL, then he must be worthy of all worship, but also wisdom must consist in following his ways in all areas of life (as well as being able to commend him to all people as their creator too). You’ll see we focus on worship, wisdom and witness below but you may not have time to consider each in depth. It’s worth flagging them all but feel free to focus on one or two as most helpful.

Discuss

** 1. Read Gen 1:1-5** Don’t spend too long, aim grasp the key points as foundation. You may ask people to glance at the rest of Gen 1 but not read out loud.

a. **What do you notice about the way the creation account is told?**
   1) So simple & effortless! No battle or complicated backstory. 2) God spoke & there was. 3) Ordered (separating light/dark, pattern and rhythm of 1st day, 2nd day etc). 4) It was good.

b. **What do the details reveal about God and the world?** God is not part of the creation but sovereign over it and distinct from it. In the beginning God already was (ie eternal). He creates by his Word (“And God said”) and Spirit. The world exists solely and directly because of God’s will and creative work. ‘Heaven and earth’ encompasses everything! Not random, arbitrary, chaotic or fundamentally evil.

2. Read Rev 4:9-11

a. **According to v11 why is the Lord God worthy to receive worship?** He created and sustains all things! How does this help us grasp the horror of idolatry (cf. Rom 1:21-23)? If God = creator of all, how absurd and wicked to worship a part of creation instead of / above the creator: = Ungrateful, foolish, & destructive (to turn from the source of life).

b. **How does the setting of v9-10 help our thinking and emotional response to this God & his deeds?** Feel the awe and wonder of this heavenly worship scene! Wow!

**3. Consider together the real-life implications of this picture of God the almighty creator for our** You may not have time to cover each in depth. Either split and feed back, or focus on one or two. Far better to apply this deeply in one area than superficially in many!

a. **WORSHIP: In what specific areas are we tempted to give ultimate honour and glory to something instead of God? Why is this outrageous?** It’s worth exploring honestly which of God’s good gifts in creation we are tempted to elevate ahead of him? Or try to worship alongside him? (Work, relationships, success, sport, leisure, freedom, autonomy, comfort).

b. **WISDOM: Do we really believe that God’s ways are the best way to live? Where might we (as individuals or as a group) struggle with this?** Biblical wisdom (fearing God and following his ways) makes sense since he = our creator, knowing how life works (as well as judge to whom we must give account). But in a world that rejects him & his ways, and with hearts that are prone to wander, this is an ongoing battle. Where is it for you? Get specific.

c. **WITNESS: What difference will it make to the way we speak to all different kinds of people about God if we believe he is the creator of all?** Far from being narrow minded or bigoted or tribal - the gospel is for all kinds of people because God is the creator of all (so they owe him their worship) and, amazingly, offers life and forgiveness and blessing to all who would repent and believe the good news! No one can legitimately say “it’s not for me”!

4. How would you like to pray in response to what we’ve heard? Please make time to pray in honestly. Going over familiar doctrine is for our hearts and daily lives to be transformed!
Part 1
The Creed begins by saying, “I believe in God, the Father almighty.” How is this Father described? “Creator of heaven and Earth”.

Every culture, every civilization, every religion has its own way of describing creation. And in the ancient Near East, many of the creation stories involved a battle between various gods (quite elaborate mythologies about which God defeated another, their blood dropped down into the Earth, and it sprung up from the oceans and the world was created!). Often the story of creation was told in the context of conflict between different gods, rival deities. And of course, in our world where we still see so much conflict – that would make sense as an origins story.

But against that backdrop, the Christian faith has always told a very, very different story. Genesis 1:1. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth.” No battle, no fights, no rivals, just God creating everything. In heaven and Earth. Everything that exists was created. And the Creed says God, the Father Almighty is the Creator of heaven and Earth. Everything that exists was created. God owes his existence to no one, but everything else owes its existence to this God.

Now we see that creation here is described appropriated particularly as a work of God, the Father. But we know from the rest of the Bible (and from our previous session) that the Christian God is a Holy Trinity. And all the external works of the Trinity (creation, providence, redemption) are the work of the undivided Trinity. So yes, here is foregrounded the work of the Father in creation (which is fitting as the Father is the first person of the Trinity – the ‘principal without principal’ – from whom proceed Son and Spirit eternally). But the Scripture tells us, how did the Father create? Through his Son (Col 1:16, Heb 1:2) and by his Spirit (Gen 1:2).

But the key thing we see is that creation – all of creation – was an act of God. God, the Father Almighty is the Creator of heaven and Earth. And that is just the basis, the baseline, for the whole of Christian truth and the biblical story that comes afterwards. We heard that before the foundation of the world, God was Father, Son and Holy Spirit in perfect relationship of love. But then that love – like a fountain – was prone to overflowing. And from the love and perfect goodness of God ‘flows out’ the great act of creation.

And from that moment on, everything else that comes into existence owes its existence and its ongoing sustaining to God, the Creator of all. So when Christians declare our faith: “I believe in God.” Who is this One? Our God is the one uncreated creator of everything.

Everything exists only because of him. Revelation 4:11 expresses this wonderfully: “You are worthy our Lord and God to receive honour, glory and power. For you created all things and by your will they were created and have their being.”

What a thing it is to know the creator of everything! “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and Earth.” Nothing that exists was created apart from Him. Everything that exists was created by Him. Therefore, everything owes its existence to God.

Part 2
Now we thought that God is the uncreated Creator of all as a basic statement of Christian truth. But what difference does that make? What are the implications for us who declare faith in this Creator God? There’s so many. And the Bible picks up so many different threads of where this leads. Two big ones:
1) God is worthy of all our worship. He's the creator of all, has no rivals. No one else made this world. No one else made even part of this world.

So as the creator of all, He is worthy of all worship. That verse in Revelation 4 again: “You are worthy our Lord and God to receive glory and honour and power. For you created all things and by your will they were created and have their being.” Why is idolatry (false worship of things that are not God) so wrong, so evil, so destructive to human life? Because God is the Creator of all things.

And in fact, Rev 4:11 tells me He's not just the creator. He's the sustainer. The one who made all things is the one who sustains all things moment by moment. “In Him we live and move and have our being,” (Acts 17:28). It’s an amazing thing. God, therefore, rightly deserves all our worship.

We’ll think through what that might look like say to day. Of course, it’s worth thinking. “What are the other things that compete?” But when we realise God is the creator of all things, it centres our minds and it centres our worship upon Him. He’s worthy of all our worship.

The other thing we see: If he is the creator of everything, is it not true that

2) Wisdom blessing comes from following the creator's design. The Bible tells us in many different ways how life works. How to be wise, how not to be foolish tells us about our time and our money and our bodies and our Church life. So many things, the Bible teaches about how to live well in the world. Why is that the case? Why should we be confident that living God’s way is the right way? Well, he’s the Creator of heaven and Earth – of everything.

When I get something new out of the box – for example, I was trying to wash the front drive the other week – and you get out the instructions and you’re thinking “Oh, why do I need to bother reading this? I’ll work it out myself.” No, that didn’t work very well. After a lot of mess and a few slightly ill-fitting parts ... you read the instructions. And you think “Ok, the person who made this knows how it’s supposed to work. I should probably listen to them.” And eventually I did!

That’s what it is to follow the God of the Bible.

Wisdom and blessing is found in following his design because he really is the Creator of heaven and Earth. And what confidence that gives us to commend God and his ways to the world around us. Doesn’t matter where you come from. It doesn’t matter what country you come from. Doesn’t matter what area of life we’re thinking of.

Who is the one in whom we find wisdom, who is the Creator that we can look to for that wisdom, what is the right way to live well? Ultimately, all those answers find the same answer. Namely, God, God is the Creator and the sustainer of all things. So not only do we worship Him with all our hearts and all our lives, actually, we follow his design. We follow his wisdom and we commend that wisdom to the world because there is no other Creator, there is no other sustainer (and as we’ll see in future weeks there is also no other saviour when it all goes wrong because of sin.)

But what a difference it makes to live day by day in this world. No, it is not random. It’s not a product of chaotic forces, of battles, of light vs dark and good vs evil. No, there is one Creator, the Father Almighty, who created all things by his powerful word and sustains all things by that powerful word. And we – day by day – live in his world his way. That’s the best way.