



03: CREATION & SIN

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. – Genesis 1:1

How did the world come into existence is a foundational question that gets asked every day; all other questions that shape our world view (and corresponding views of God and human life) come out of this question. There are many opinions on this, but there are five predominant non-Christian categories of thought:

Thought	Central Idea	Emphasis
Deism	God creates but is not present in the workings of His creation.	God's transcendence
Pantheism	God is part of His creation.	God's personal immanence
Panentheism/Monism	All in God. All is one.	God's transcendent nature
Process Theology/Open Theism	God is in process, growing in knowledge with His creation	God's personal nature
Naturalism	Matter comes forth from natural processes, without aid from any supernatural entity. In this worldview, matter and life are created by chance.	Matter is either eternally existent, or it comes into effect "ex nihilo" (out of nothing).

The above views of creation are lacking philosophically and biblically. Pantheism/Panentheism both have a god that is part of the creation, making it impossible for Him to be the creator. A God that is PART OF creation is either transcendent (Other) or immanent (Personal), but not both. He is unable to rule the creation he is part of. Pantheism usually teaches that matter is an illusion; matters of evil and good are relative (there is no true right or wrong), and we are all part of the same god nature.

Other systems of belief struggle with how the universe is created. Naturalism and/or Materialism leave us with an infinite regress of cause and effect, or the incredulous doctrine that everything we see came out of nothing with no causal force or purpose.

The biblical creation story tells us that an eternal, necessary first cause (God), created the universe, and all that is in it. The law of causality demands that all effects (Matter) need a cause, and that these changes take place in the current space dimension in which we live. God is eternal (Psalm 90:2) and is subsequently apart from His creation as the necessary first cause.

Evolutionary theory recognizes that man came from matter already existent on the earth, but it is unable to determine how that process took place. Biblically, we realize that God's power was able to do what is naturalistically impossible: bringing forth life from lifeless matter. God created the substance (matter)

of the universe ex nihilo (from nothing). The Hebrew word *BARA* is used solely in reference to when God creates, this sets God creating abilities apart from anything else. When man is made by God in Genesis 2 the text uses the word *YATSAR* meaning “formed”, depicting the formation of a substance already present (i.e. The earth or dirt). Thus, man’s first name is ADAM, meaning red clay or ruddy to show that he was made from the dirt.

The creation narratives of humanity all have similar elements to them, highlighting God’s revelation of Himself to all men of all cultures through the course of time (Psalms 19:1; John 1:9; Romans 1:18-25). It also is a by-product of oral tradition passed on from generation to generation (Genesis 11:1-11).

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT CREATION?

- Exodus 20:11 *For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*
- Nehemiah 9:6 *You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*
- Job 38:4 *“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand.”*
- Psalm 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*
- Psalm 96:5 *For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.*
- Ecclesiastes 11:5 *As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother’s womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.*
- Hebrews 11:3 *By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*

For a further study of the Scriptures on creation, a more comprehensive list is included in the following tables to help you mark these sections of Scripture in your Bible for reference.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 1:1-28	Genesis 1:31	Genesis 2:1-25	Genesis 5:1-2	Genesis 9:6
Exodus 20:11	1 Samuel 2:8	2 Kings 19:15	1 Chronicles. 16:26	Nehemiah 9:6
Job 9:8-9	Job 10:3	Job 10:8	Job 12:7-9	Job 26:7-13
Job 28:23-26	Job 37:16	Job 37:18	Job 38:4-38	Psalms 8:3
Psalms 19:1	Psalms 19:4	Psalms 24:1-2	Psalms 33:6-7	Psalms 33:9
Psalms 65:6	Psalms 74:16-17	Psalms 78:69	Psalms 89:11-12	Psalms 89:47
Psalms 90:2	Psalms 95:4-5	Psalms 96:5	Psalms 102:25	Psalms 103:22
Psalms 104:2-3	Psalms 104:5-6	Psalms 104:24	Psalms 104:30-31	Psalms 119:90-91
Psalms 121:2	Psalms 124:8	Psalms 136:5-9	Psalms 146:5-6	Psalms 148:5-6
Proverbs 3:19	Proverbs 8:26-29	Proverbs 22:2	Proverbs 26:10	Proverbs 30:4
Ecclesiastes 3:11	Ecclesiastes 7:29	Ecclesiastes 11:5	Isaiah 17:7	Isaiah 37:16
Isaiah 40:12	Isaiah 40:26	Isaiah 40:28	Isaiah 42:5	Isaiah 44:24
Isaiah 45:7	Isaiah 45:12	Isaiah 45:18	Isaiah 48:13	Isaiah 51:13
Isaiah 51:16	Isaiah 66:2	Jeremiah 5:22	Jeremiah 10:12	Jeremiah 10:16
Jeremiah 51:19	Jeremiah 27:5	Jeremiah 31:35	Jeremiah 32:17	Jeremiah 33:2
Jeremiah 51:15-16	Jeremiah 10:13	Amos 4:13	Amos 5:8	Amos 9:6
Jonah 1:9	Zechariah 12:1			

NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 10:6	Mark 13:19	Acts 4:24	Acts 7:50	Acts 14:15	Acts 17:24-26
Romans 1:20	Romans 11:36	1 Corinth. 8:6	1 Corinth. 11:12	2 Corinth. 4:6	2 Corinth. 5: 5
2 Corinth. 5:18	Ephesians 3:9	1 Timothy 6:13	Hebrews 1:1-2	Hebrews 2:10	Hebrews 3:4
Hebrews 11:3	Hebrews 11:10	Revelation 4:11	Revelation 10:6	Revelation 14:7	

THE TRINITY AND CREATION

The Trinity is involved in the creation of the universe. God the Father devises the plan, God the “Word” orchestrates His plan, and God the Spirit brings it forth with the power of His might. That is why the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus (John 1:3; John 1:10; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2; Heb 1:10; Rev 3:14), as well the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:2; Psalms 33:6; 104:30; Isaiah 40:12-14) is the creator of all things

WHAT IS THE FALL?

God created this world in a perfect state and upon the creation of the man and woman God declared His entire creation “very good” (1:31). This intended state of perfect beauty in all things is described in the Old Testament as “*Shalom*” (Isa. 2:2-4, 11:1-9, 32:14-20, 43:1-12, 60:1-22, 65:17-25; Joel 2:24-29, 3:17-18). *Shalom* means “peace,” but it also means so much more than our simple definition of peace. *Shalom* means everything is in the right place at the right time in the right way. When we live in God’s peace everything is well between us and God.

If we were to look around and survey the condition of our planet and human life (including death, suffering, injustice, miseries, fears etc.) it is obvious that something has gone terribly wrong. All of the individual and corporate shortcomings of God’s perfect intentions for all of creation, whether intentional or unintentional or through omission or commission, qualify as sin.

- **Sin is the disruption of shalom.** The peace and the rightness of what God created. Sin is ways we disrupt the ways God intends for us to have shalom.
- **Sin is rebellion.** We don’t like the way God sets things up so we rebel against God’s order of things claiming our way is the right way. We rebel against the world that was made and the way it was made and destroy it in the process.
- **Sin is participation in the way of death.** Sin is when we steer things in the opposite direction of God.
- **Sin is missing the mark.** Sin is an archery term of missing what you are aiming at.

The church Father Augustine said that ALL sin is pride (or stems from pride).

Scripture teaches that God clearly commanded the first man and woman not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil or they would die (Gen. 2:16-17). The man and woman disregard God’s command and sin against God. Because Adam was the head of the human race, when he sinned everyone who would ever live (other than Jesus who had no earthly father) was implicated in his sin (Gen. 3:1-6; Hosea 6:7; Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:21-22, 15:45-50).

Everyone (except Jesus) is, from conception, sinful by nature and corrupted to the very core of their being and therefore incapable of doing anything that pleases God (Psalms 51:5; Rom. 3:10-18; Rom. 8:7-8). Thus, everyone (except Jesus) sins (I John 1:8) by breaking God’s holy laws (Ps. 14:1-3; Isa. 53:6; Rom.3:10, 3:23; I John 3:4) because they are sinners by nature and are simply showing forth their hearts (Pr. 4:23, 17:19, 20:9; Matt. 6:21; Luke 6:45).

The fall was the descent of the human race and the rest of God's creation (Romans 8:18-27) into a state of rebellion against God. It is also important to note that despite his depravity, man continues to have dignity because He still remains an image bearer of God even though that image is marred by sin (Gen. 1:26, 9:6; Jam. 3:9).

IS EVERYONE SINFUL?

This is where we make the difference between total depravity and absolute depravity. Absolute depravity would mean mankind could never do anything that resembled good deeds, this leads us to say that while people are not absolutely sinful (they could do evil things with greater degree and frequency) all people are totally sinful in that their every motive, word, deed, and thought is for their own glory rather than God's (Ps. 29:2; Romans 3:23, 11:36, 16:27).

There *is* a vestige of moral sense in people because of the conscience that God gave them (Romans 2:14-15). However, even the seemingly good deeds done from the moral conscience are mere filth to God if done apart from loving obedience to Him because they are attempts at proving and attaining our own righteousness (which is the heart of pride). These attempts are an enemy of the humble grace in which one receives the righteousness of God as a free gift (Is. 64:6).

Man is also totally sinful in the fact that all of his person is marred by sin. This includes the mind (Eph. 4:18), the will (Rom. 6:16-17), the emotions (Titus 3:3), and the physical body (Rom. 8:10).

DOES GOD CAUSE SIN?

The Bible is clear that God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all (I John 1:5). The Bible is also clear that God does not take any delight in sin (Ps. 5:4), He hates and detests sin (Pr. 6:16; Zech. 8:17), He hides His face from sinful people (Is. 59:2, 64:7). Therefore, God does not in any way cause sin and sin is a stain on and a twisting of His good creation and a contortion of His beautiful and glorious perfect works.

WHERE DOES SIN COME FROM?

God does not tempt us to sin, but instead the temptation arises from within our own hearts. Because sin comes from inside of us simple behavioral change is not sufficient to remedy the human condition, instead we need a new heart and nature if there is to be any true victory over sin in our lives.

- James 1:13-15 *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is fullgrown, gives birth to death.*
- Proverbs 27:19 *As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man.*
- Proverbs 4:23 *Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*
- Matthew 12:34b *For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.*
- Proverbs 20:9 *Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?*
- Jeremiah 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*
- Mark 7:21-23 *For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'*
- Luke 6:45 *The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.*

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN?

- Genesis 2:16-17 *And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*
- Matthew 13:14 *In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."*
- John 8:43 *Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say.*
- Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- 1 Corinthians 1:18 *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*
- Ephesians 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...*
- Colossians 2:13 *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.*

HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH OUR SIN?

- **Conviction** – recognizing our sin through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and truth of Scripture (John 16:7-11)
- **Confession** – agreeing with the Holy Spirit and Scripture regarding our sin (I John 1:5-9)
- **Repentance** – a turning from the sin and to God and obedience to Him out of love (Luke 17:3; Acts 3:19, 5:31, 11:18)
- **Restitution** – seeking to make amends as much as possible for our sins (Ex. 22:3; Pr. 6:31; Ezek. 33:15)
- **Forgiveness** – asking for grace from those you have sinned against, or giving grace to those who have sinned against you (Matt. 6:12-14, 18:35; Mark 11:25; II Cor. 2:10; Eph. 4:32)
- **Reconciliation** – once all parties have resolved their sins they can be reunited (Matt. 5:24; Eph. 2:14-16; II Cor. 5:18)

HOW CAN I STOP COMMITTING A SIN?

Rom. 8:13-16 "For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death [mortify] the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry "Abba, Father."

"Mortification" is Spirit-enabled conviction (not self-loathing or mutilation) that man needs to change based upon God's word that results in repentance and grace-centered living (Hebrews 4:12-13).

1. **Repentance** – I want to change. Based upon the good, perfect, and acceptable nature of God's will. (Romans 12:1-2)
2. **Faith** – I can change. Based upon God's faithfulness to His promises made possible by His power. (I Corinthians 10:13)
3. **Worship** – I have a plan to change. A realization that virtue goes beyond merely changing a vice to repenting and doing good works because life is now focused on Jesus.
 - Clearly identify your goal of replacing a sinful habit with a godly one. (Ephesians 4:28-31)
 - Clearly identify your resources (i.e. prayer, Holy Spirit, Scripture, elders, Christian friends, books, etc.)

- Clearly identify your plan for using your resources:
- Recognize how sin is birthed → external stimulus (world and Satan) + internal reaction (flesh) = sin
- Recognize how obedience is birthed → reduced external stimulus (world and Satan) + reduced internal reaction (flesh) = obedience.

4. **Discipline** – I am working my plan.

5. **Perseverance** – I am never going back. Use any failures as learning opportunities to grow in your sanctification.

FOR FURTHER READING

On Creation

- **Evolution: The Challenge of the Fossil Record** by Duane Gish
- **Darwin on Trial** by Phillip Johnson
- **Scientific Creationism** by Henry Morris
- **Evolution: A Theory in Crisis** by Michael Denton

On Man's nature

- **The Problem of Pain** by C.S. Lewis
- **Fearfully and Wonderfully Made** by Paul Brand and Philip Yancey
- **Created in God's Image** by Anthony Hoekema
- **Man: The Image of God** by G.C. Berkouwer
- **The Christian View of Man** by J. Gresham Machen
- **The Hunger For Significance** by R.C. Sproul

On Sin

- **Not The Way It's Supposed to Be** by Cornelius Plantinga Jr.
- **Original Sin** by Henri Blocher

FAQ: WHAT IS THE UNPARDONABLE SIN?

This question has baffled commentators since the days of Jesus and we see this sin mentioned only once in the Scriptures in Matthew 12:31-32. This sin appears to be the rejection of the Holy Spirit of God. Man's proclivity is towards this rejection, and in need of regeneration in order to "choose" God (Acts 16:14). Man freely chooses to reject God.

When the Pharisees were confronted with the choice to attribute Christ's miracles to the Holy Spirit or Satan, in their disbelief they chose Satan. Their choices were congruent with their belief (cf. Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:29). It is the Holy Spirit who testifies on behalf of Christ (John 15:26; 16:14,15), therefore any rejection of Him is a rejection of Christ and the only sin that cannot be forgiven is unbelief in Jesus Christ.

FAQ: WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE FOR OUR SINS?

BLOG POST WRITTEN 1/26/16
BY AARON CARLBERG

Last week our Gospel Community was meeting to discuss the previous week's sermon and someone asked, "Why did Jesus have to die?" I asked what they meant, because I knew this person trusts and believes in Jesus and His sacrifice for us. They said (I'm paraphrasing), "Why couldn't God just say, 'All's forgiven' rather than have Jesus die?" This is a really good question.

I mentioned it to our staff two days later in staff meeting, and someone asked how I responded. They suggested I share my response in a blog post, because this is something that has come up in multiple Gospel Communities during Notes Night. I had no idea this was a common occurrence. If you have been wondering about this question, are a GC leader who has been asked this question, or never even thought about it until now, this post is for you.

It is hard to start answering this question in any other place than the book of Genesis. In Genesis, God creates everything, including man, and lays out what is good in front of man. The Hebrew word for good is *tov* (or *tob*); the word refers to everything good, in the broadest sense possible. God determines what is good and beneficial and He imparts that knowledge and wisdom to the man He creates. God fashions man with His hands, He makes man in His image, He breathes His very own breath into the man to make him alive, and then He instructs the man on what is good and right and places this man in the garden.

God then tells the man the consequence of sin—he will die. You sin, you die (simple, right?), and yet we have made it so much more complicated today. To make this as simplistic as possible, death is separation. Death is not the stopping of our hearts, or the blood in our veins turning from red to blue (it's all still red anyway), and it is not the synapses in our brain no longer firing impulses to our bodies. Death is separation from life. God is life and He tells us that if and when we sin, we are/will be separated from Him. Death is separation, not just from life, but also from all that is good.

In Genesis, God **separates** for the man what is *light and dark*, *truth and lies*. God makes the distinction between *life and death* for the man. This explanation of what constitutes life and death includes the idea that man is free to live and love God and His creation in any way the man sees as most useful. The man is not part of the garden; he was fashioned and placed within the garden to nurture and take care of its beauty because beauty is *good*.

When man decides to go his own way in the garden, without God, and do what he *feels* is right, he sins. In Genesis 3 you see that as soon as the man and woman sin, they tragically died. The scriptures use words like "shame" and "exposed" to illustrate what has happened. Their sin made them lose their innocence and their connection with each other and God; they became separated, they died. They, like us, no longer know the beauty of innocence, the *good* that

allowed them to face one another without shame was now gone. They also lost true life that came from being in connection with God, the world around them, and each other.

The saddest part of all comes in Genesis 3:8. *“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”* They hide from God. Adam was the head of the human race and because he died, we are all born into life with a deep-rooted propensity to sin and seek our own “good.” However, man cannot know good apart from God showing us what it is—He alone makes that definition. To this day, sin runs rampant in our lives and causes us to be separated from others, our Creator, and eventually our own flesh.

How can God restore us to the place of understanding and knowing His definition of good? In the rest of Genesis 3, you see God comes walking into the garden, this place of rebellion and death, and He calls out to the man. It is not that God couldn't see Adam hiding behind a bush trying to cover his baby-making parts; the point is that God comes looking for the man because the man could never find God on His own. God is on a rescue mission to redeem His people from death.

God then makes a promise, in His holiness, that He would provide Himself as a sacrifice to remove man's sin and restore relationship. We see the first sacrifice when God slaughters an animal to clothe Adam and Eve's shame. We can oftentimes gloss over this verse, but it is devastating—blood is spilled as the cost of man's sin. The fact that God made this sacrifice Himself shows how important and necessary it was. Sinful people cannot dwell with a holy God. Eventually, this leads to the whole Old Testament sacrificial system, which ultimately points towards the final sacrifice for our sin, Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews sums up the entire Old Testament by saying in Hebrews 9:22, *“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”* So God Himself provided Jesus, His son, at the appointed time to be the One that dies for us, in our place, as our substitution. God could not just wink at sin and say it was no big deal, like when our kids do stupid things and we act like it is okay. God is holy, just, right, and true. If He brushed sin off, He would cease to be God. Because He defined the consequence of sin as death, He had to follow through because His words are true. This is why blood, which is related to life, is required for the sin we commit.

The problem is that we could never pay for our own sin, because our own lives, our blood, are tainted because of our sin. What is taught through Scripture is clear - either you *die*, forever separated from God, or you *trust* in the provision of God through His Son, who has died for you. Your death for His life, your sin for His righteousness—Martin Luther referred to this as The Great Exchange.

I am trying to keep this blog on the shorter side, but the idea of our regaining life is rooted in the idea of sacrifice—more specifically, His sacrifice for us. Why did Jesus have to die? Because we are so evil, and the cost of sin is death. Why DID Jesus die? Because He is that good. Don't let this get you down. There is a reason it is called “good news” or the Gospel; it is the only hope we have ever had. Our God has sought us and bought us with Himself. We don't live in despair because of what it cost Him; we live new lives of joy because He has first loved us and given us a reason for great joy.

We are not dead. We are redeemed.

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