

God Creates

SCOTT HOEZEE

Those of us who go to church a lot are probably familiar with the song that says: As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. We also know of Jesus as both Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end. How things were in the beginning at the creation of all things is an important theme in the Bible. It has also long been a key touchstone in the theology that came out of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century. Today on *Groundwork*, we will consider the role that creation plays in Reformed theology, and where we find this theme in scripture. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, this is now the first program of a four-part series where we are going to look at some of the key pillars of Reformed theology; and we realize that not everybody who listens to *Groundwork* is specifically in this or that branch of the larger Reformed tradition; but really, even though we are going to be looking at the pillars of Reformed theology, no matter what part of the Christian Church you are in, these are vital parts of almost all types of Christian theology; and Darrell, the four areas we will focus on will be: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and so, there are a lot of people who are trying to make sense of the world, Scott, and how things are the way they are; and Reformed theology actually gives us these four movements of or four phases to help us get a better understanding of how we got here and what happens now, and how we live in light of it. So, I am really glad that it gives language to the ability to understand how the situation works and how we are living.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and even though we are talking about theology here, Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation...those are four of the major themes of the Bible. I mean, we get this right straight out of scripture. So, that is what we are going to be looking at, and maybe we should just note up front, Darrell, you know, some people maybe get put off by the word *theology*, and they think maybe theology is only academic, intellectual, ivory tower stuff; and I think, Darrell, we hope to show in this series that theology has practical, everyday implications and applications in our lives, too; and that is going to begin in this program as we look at the theology of creation.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, if you think of the word *theology*, I mean, it really is the study of...you got an ology on the end of a word, it means the study of...and *theo* is the word for God; so basically, it is studying God. You study God by the scripture that he has revealed; you study God by the creation that he has displayed; and so, everyone should be in some way studying God, and this is the way we want to study God today.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; now, Darrell, especially in the last century or so, I think a lot of the time when we hear the word *creation*, we tend to think it refers only to God's original creating of the cosmos as we read it in Genesis 1 and 2; and given the various disagreements, we could even say battles, over questions of cosmic origins and the age of the universe, whether anything in the theory of evolution is true, these days, we tend to narrow down the word *creation* to only the precise when and how of God bringing the universe into existence; but I think we want to show on this program, Darrell, creation is a much bigger and broader term than just that past moment.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, it is, Scott; and so, I think that creation can be thought of in two aspects: One is, how everything got here. So, what—the what of actually what happened; but also, the divine character of the Creator, capital C. We need to talk about who God is; what is God's nature; and why God made things the way he made them. So, not only what was made, but who made it. That is what we want to talk about.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; but we will begin in Genesis 1 and 2: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. And from there, Darrell, we are off and running.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, we are. I love this whole pattern of "let there be", and there was. You see that going on through the first six days: "Let there be", and there was; and God actually had an intention behind why he made it this way. It is really interesting to unpack.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And as Genesis 1 presents it, day 1 is the day for light; day 2 is sky, dry ground, gathering of the water into the seas; day 3 is the creation of vegetation and plants; day 4, the making of the sun, moon, and stars; day 5, the creation of all the creatures in the seas and the oceans; and finally, day 6, the creation of land animals; and then, at the apex of it all, the creation of humankind: the man and the woman made in the very image of God. God calls everything good; but when he is done on day 6, and the man and the woman are there, then he says it is all very good.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is a beautiful thing. So, we've got the sky on the first day; on the fourth day we've got birds; on the second day, we have water, and on the fifth day, we have sea animals; the third day, we have the land and the sixth day, we have the animals and creatures and then humanity. So, God creates the environment on the first half, and on the second half he actually puts the creation of the things in the environment he created.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Let's take a few steps back, Darrell. What can we learn...what are the traits...the characteristics of God that emerge from this Genesis account? First, God is a God of order. Before God created, we are told all was chaos. In Hebrew it is this great phrase: Tohu va-vohu; I like saying it: Formless and void. It was disordered; it was chaotic; but God removes the chaos and he replaces it with cosmos. So, God and the works God produces are known for their orderliness; there is a logic and a reason to it all.

Darrell Delaney;

That is a beautiful thing, because I have noticed that I hang around certain people and they seem to have a knack to make things orderly and organized, and my wife is one of them. She is very gifted at organizing; and not just strategically planning and administrative gifts, but like decorating and things of that nature. If

you have that, then you might have taken a page from your heavenly Father, that he likes to organize and order things; and that is a good character trait from our Father.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; God is doing a lot of separating, we see; and then also he doesn't just make, you know, birds...different *kinds* of birds; and not fish...different *kinds* of fish. God does it all; and so, God does everything in a highly organized, methodical, and thoughtful way; and that is a key characteristic to spy of God already in Genesis 1, even though now we live in a world that is sinful; and what did sin bring back into the world, Darrell? Chaos, right? Confusion. That is the opposite of God's creation.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; you know, confusion and disorderliness and all these things that are happening now happened after the fall; and in the next episode, we are going to talk a lot about the implications of the fall; but originally, God's plan...and his character remains the same; he is one of order and clarity, and he wants to bring that in every environment that he finds himself.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, one thing we sometimes forget in the modern world is that what we now call science actually emerged from the Church, because Christian people who believed that God was a God of order and that God had created an orderly universe, concluded that: Well, if we investigate the universe through science in an orderly way, it is going to open itself up to us; and indeed, it does. So, God is a God of order; but the other thing, Darrell...the other thing we can draw from Genesis 1 is that God is a God of love.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; God is a God of love; and the fact that God decided to create something, and it was so good that he wanted to include every part of creation, including humanity into this, that is a loving act, because God could have kept it to God's self...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

And God could have just decided: No; I will just enjoy it myself. But because God wanted to share...that is part of his nature...he wants to share his goodness.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He didn't have to create. By definition, God is not beholden to any external obligations. He didn't have to create, but out of love he wanted to. You know, we believe as trinitarian Christians, that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had existed as a community of vibrant love from all eternity; and what was the creation, Darrell, except a chance for God to share that love with the whole universe of other creatures. Creation was an act of loving hospitality. When you do hospitality in your home, what do you do? You make room for other people to come in, right? That is what God did in the creation. He hospitably made room for all of us, so that he could then love us.

So, those are a couple of things we learned about God, but in just a moment, we are going to move to another key insight of creation that contributes to our larger theology; so, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are looking at the theological theme of creation, Darrell, in this first of a four-part series summing up the Bible's major themes of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation. So, another insight, Darrell, that

we can come to involves God's original intentions for the creation; especially Reformed theology, what God intended for his creatures, and most especially for his image bearers...human beings...that is really the baseline of how we think things ought to go even now.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, God has an intention to create, and what his intention was, was for it to be good; for it to continue to give him glory by how it functions and the way it functions; and to show that his intention was for it to be blessed and be a blessing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And then, there is something else I have only kind of learned about myself in recent years, and learned it mostly from a theologian who has long taught at Wheaton College, John Walton; and John Walton has pointed out that ancient readers of Genesis 1 would have seen something right away that we modern readers miss; and that is that on day 7, when God rests, what all ancient readers would have known is that that means only one thing: Where does a divine being rest? In a temple. And so, what the seventh day of creation and the resting of God tells us is that the whole creation is one giant temple, and we are supposed to live with God in that temple, which means, among other things, Darrell, we were created to worship.

DARRELL DELANEY

We were created to worship; and being that the heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool, God shows that this whole creation is in fact his temple, and we are called into that; and it says here in Psalm 132: ⁷Let us go to his dwelling place, let us worship at his footstool, saying, ⁸“Arise, Lord, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. ⁹May your priests be clothed with your righteousness; may your faithful people sing for joy.” ¹³For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling place, saying, ¹⁴“This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.”

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, this connects the temple in Jerusalem...Solomon's temple...with that seventh day of creation rest...Sabbath rest. They are connected; and you know...we don't have time to go into it right now...but if you look closely at the description of how they built the temple, it is kind of a miniature version of creation. The sea is represented; vegetation is represented; animals are represented; and again, it tells us we were created to worship God in his temple, and that is where you get that resting place in Psalm 132. It is also why the Bible ends the way it does: Revelation 21, when John of Patmos sees the new Jerusalem and the new creation, he observes this:

²²I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

So, in other words, the Bible comes full circle. Genesis 1 says: Look, God made the creation and the whole creation is his temple. Revelation 21 says: And that is how it is going to be again.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, you see in the beginning of creation, you have the temple allusion, and then in the end of creation, you see the temple of God dwelling with the people; and in between those times, the Holy Spirit has been sent here, and he indwells the temple called the body; and so, the Bible says that the body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. So, not only does God continue this language, and then show it throughout Israel and the Church's history, but he is also giving us the opportunity to be closer to God, and change the way we behave and how we live by indwelling his Spirit in our body; and that body is the temple. And so, it is another reminder of this.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; in another *Groundwork* series on major images from scripture, we did a whole episode on the temple; and we noted that, yes; so, originally the whole creation was the temple, and then, after the fall into sin, then the temple was in Jerusalem; but eventually that got destroyed; and then there was the second temple, and

that got destroyed. So, by the time John wrote his gospel, the people were saying: There is no temple, and John says: Yes, there is; it is Jesus. Jesus is the temple. That is a major theme in the Gospel of John; and then right; after Pentecost, we are all mini-temples, right? The Holy Spirit lives in us. But back to Genesis now. In the creation account, Darrell, the other big, big thing that we get is that we were created in the image of God.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, here it says in Genesis 1:26: Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” ²⁷So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

And Scott, you see it where in that it says: Be fruitful, fill the earth, rule over the fish in the sea? You got *be*, you got *do*, and you got *have*. God is calling us to *be*, *do*, and *have*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; being made in the image of God means we have stuff to do; we have stuff to be and stuff to do. Sometimes, you know, people have taken that rule over the other creatures and they have said: Well, that means we can treat fish and birds and animals however we want; but of course, that doesn't make sense. We need to care for them the way God would, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

God rules over us, too, and we sure hope he is not going to be harsh or cruel to us. And that is why, you know, if you jump to Genesis 2:15, when the Lord God took the man and the woman and put them in the Garden of Eden, he said to work it and take care of it. That is the *tend and to keep*; and the verb to keep there in Genesis 2 is the same one in that great benediction: The Lord bless you and *keep* you. It is the Hebrew *shamar*—keep you. Well, we want God keeping us to be something good...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And so, if we are to keep the creation, we want to treat it well; and we take care of and we shepherd and we nurture all the other creatures with whom we share the planet.

The other thing you mentioned, Darrell, is that *fruitful and multiply* line. That is somehow part of the image of God in us, too.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; be fruitful and multiply. So, God is calling us...and he is actually...I love this about God; when God tells someone to do something, he not only commands, but he also empowers; and he gives them the ability to get that done; and we know that it extends beyond just childbearing, doesn't it, Scott?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; well, we do create little images of God with procreation when we have children...when we have babies. They, too, are born in the image of God. Now, after sin, born tainted. The image of God is damaged in all of us, but the image is still there; but right, there are other creative things that humans do. In fact, human beings are highly creative. We create works of poetry and novels and books and symphonies and all manner of music. We create cultural artifacts...art works. We harvest the fruits of creation. We come up with all kinds of amazing cuisines and recipes and delicious food to enjoy. You know, Darrell, all of that creativity

is finally the spark of the divine image in us.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is a beautiful thing. We had a series on the book of Revelation, where we talked about how all of these things will be brought into the new aspect of renewal...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

The cuisines and the creativity that humanity displays. It is not going to just be thrown in the trash. So, we are really grateful that God is going to use that to preserve those things; but there are two more large Reformed theology themes that we want to talk about as we close out this program, so stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Darrell, we said at the outset of this program that these days the word *creation* often makes people think of the act of creation long ago. You know, when was the universe created? And we do that in the past tense. God created once, and then God was done with creation. God has been there, done that long ago...one and done; but actually, Darrell, the Bible teaches something more interesting, and it is referred to in theology in the Latin phrase: *creatio continua*, which means there is continuing...there is *ongoing* creation.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, God is not just going to punch in the clock and be done. There was a false teaching called *deism*, where they thought God was kind of like falling asleep at the chair; he is distant; he is not relative; and he is not involved in creation; but that is not what Reformed theology teaches. Reformed theology teaches that God is presently and actively involved in creation, even now; and so, just because that one event of creation happened, doesn't mean God is done. God is continuing to work even today.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that includes, you know, helping more children to be born. Psalm 139:13: For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well.

God is still creating children; God is still creating all kinds of things. In fact, in the book of Job and elsewhere in the Old Testament, there are references to some well-known stars and constellations and star clusters, like the Pleiades and Orion, but in some of those things that we see in the night sky, there are nebulae, which are actually star nurseries; and as my friend the astronomer, Deb Haarsma often notes: It is so exciting to realize God is still making new stars right now. God didn't just make the stars back on, you know, day 4 or whatever it was in Genesis 1; he is still making new flowers, new clouds, new stars. It never stops.

DARRELL DELANEY

We are reminded of this, Scott, every season. I mean, the leaves die and fall off of the branches, and then in the spring, God brings new ones. He creates every season. He creates every year. So, we do see this; and you know, you have places in the country where you have four seasons. You see God changing and adding new things each and every time. Those leaves are not the same as they were before; and the snowflakes are not the same as they were before. God is continuing to create those things.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I love this quote from the great theologian, G. K. Chesterton. He said: The thing I mean, can be seen, for instance, in children, where they find some game or joke that they really enjoy. A child kicks his legs rhythmically through excess, not absence of life. Because children have a bounding vitality because they are in spirit fierce and free; therefore, they want things repeated unchanged. They always say: Do it again! And the grownup person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grownup people are not strong enough to exalt in monotony; but perhaps God is strong enough to exalt in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again," to the sun; and every evening, "Do it again," to the moon. So, in other words, God is continually creating and is involved, like you said, not deism, with God being kind of an absentee landlord, an active God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and so, you know, one of the tenets of the Reformed faith is perseverance of the saints, where it talks about how God preserves and keeps people in their walk with him; and also, the providence of God that we know about is that God is the one who oversees everything that is happening, but he is seeing it *through*...not just overseeing it; and I love that, because that is a renewal of what it means to be Jehovah-Jireh. A lot of us think it just means that he is the provider; but it really means that he oversees and sees it through; and he has been doing that with all creation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Hebrews 1: In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. (And now this:) ³The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. The powerful word of Jesus, who is at the right hand of God the Father Almighty right now, he is sustaining the whole world, which is something we read also in Colossians 1.

DARRELL DELANEY

In Colossians 1 it says: ¹⁵The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He is before all things, (and here it is:) and in him all things hold together.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Christ is the key to the whole of creation, and he is continuing to sustain it. We are about at the end, here, Darrell. What does it all mean? Well again, you know, if we look to creation, we can learn about the very nature of God; that God is a God of order, of love, of goodness, cosmos not chaos; we look to the creation to learn that we were created to rest with God in the very temple of the whole creation. We were created to worship God; to fellowship with God; and to see God's abundant vitality that he keeps creating stuff right now, too.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, the *ing* of the sustaining is something that I actually add to my prayers. Those things give me peace in a world that I feel sometimes I am out of control of. I thank God that he is creating and sustaining even now; and that gives me peace when I am looking at the news and everything else that looks like it is a little topsy-turvy.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; well, it is. I mean, sin...we are going to be talking about that in the next program of this series. The fall into sin has ricocheted all the way down history; and yes, as you just said, Darrell, the world doesn't look like it is being ruled by the sustaining, powerful word of Jesus; but by our faith we believe it is, and that God is slowly but surely moving everything into place to end where this series will end, which is the *consummation*

of all things.

Then, the last thing as we close out this program, Darrell. That whole thing about the image of God. Everything that we do and say is supposed to be reminiscent of God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; there are a lot of things that we do as far as co-creators with him; he has created us, so he has given us the power to create things. Sometimes we can lose sight of that when things are going wrong or when things don't seem to be going our way; but the power of the Holy Spirit has given us...he has given us the ability to love one another; he has given us the ability to serve one another; and also, that helps us to remember who our Creator is.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That Hebrews 1 verse we read a little while ago, that Jesus is the exact representation of God's being. In other words, Jesus is the express image of God, par excellence. The image has gotten smeared and bleared in us due to sin, but Jesus is the perfect image of God; and the closer we get to being more like Jesus, the closer we get back to being who God created us to be in the very beginning in that divine image. So, as we said at the beginning, theology...yes, it can be pretty intellectual, heady stuff; but at the end of the day, it always translates into very practical, day-to-day things we can do and say; and by the grace of God, the goodness of that original creation can still shine through us. Thanks be to God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee; and we hope you will join us again next time as we study the scriptures to help us understand the fall of humanity, the second major theme in the Bible's story.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

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