

The Lutheran Difference Bible Study

**Knowing Why We Believe
What We Believe**

Study Handbook



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3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
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Manufactured in the United States of America

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An Overview of Christian Denominations

The following outline of Christian history will help you understand where the different denominations come from and how they are related to one another. Statements of belief for the different churches are drawn from their official confessional writings.

The Great Schism

Eastern Orthodox: On July 16, 1054, Cardinal Humbert entered the Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople just before the worship service. He stepped to the altar and left a letter condemning Michael Cerularius, patriarch of Constantinople. Cerularius responded by condemning the letter and its authors. In that moment, Christian churches of the East and West were severed from each other. Their disagreements centered on what bread could be used in the Lord's Supper and the addition of the *filioque* statement to the Nicene Creed.

The Reformation

Lutheran: On June 15, 1520, Pope Leo X wrote a letter condemning Dr. Martin Luther for his Ninety-five Theses. Luther's theses had challenged the sale of indulgences, a fund-raising effort to pay for the building of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. The letter charged Luther with heresy and threatened to excommunicate him if he did not retract his writings within sixty days. Luther replied by publicly burning the letter. Leo excommunicated him on January 3, 1521, and condemned all who agreed with Luther or supported his cause.

Reformed: In 1522, the preaching of Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, Switzerland, convinced people to break their traditional Lenten fast. Also, Zwingli preached that priests should be allowed to marry. When local friars challenged these departures from Medieval Church practice, the Zurich Council supported Zwingli and agreed that the Bible should guide Christian doctrine and practice. Churches of the Reformed tradition include Presbyterians and Episcopalians.

Anabaptist: In January 1525, Conrad Grebel, a follower of Ulrich Zwingli, rebaptized Georg Blaurock. Blaurock began rebaptizing others and founded the Swiss Brethren. Their insistence on adult believers' Baptism distinguished them from other churches of the Reformation. Anabaptists attracted social extremists who advocated violence in the cause of Christ, complete pacifism, or communal living. Mennonite, Brethren, and Amish churches descend from this movement.

The Counter Reformation

Roman Catholic: When people call the Medieval Church "Roman Catholic," they make a common historical mistake. Roman Catholicism as we know it emerged after the Reformation. As early as 1518, Luther and other reformers had appealed to the pope and requested a council to settle the issue of indulgences. Their requests were hindered or denied for a variety of theological and political reasons. Finally, on December 13, 1545, thirty-four leaders from the churches who opposed the Reformation gathered at the invitation of Pope Paul III. They began the Council of Trent (1545–63), which established the doctrine and practice of Roman Catholicism.

Post-Reformation Movements

Baptist: In 1608 or 1609, John Smyth, a former pastor of the Church of England, baptized himself by pouring water over his head. He formed a congregation of English Separatists in Holland who opposed the rule of bishops and infant Baptism. This marked the start of the English Baptist churches, which remain divided doctrinally over the theology of John Calvin (Particular Baptists) and Jacob Arminius (General Baptists). In the 1800s, the Restoration Movement of Alexander Campbell, a former Presbyterian minister, adopted many Baptist teachings. These churches include the Disciples of Christ (Christian Churches) and the Churches of Christ.

Wesleyan: In 1729, John and Charles Wesley gathered with three other men to study the Scripture, receive Communion, and discipline one another according to the "method" laid down in the Bible. Later, John Wesley's preaching caused religious revivals in England and America. Methodists, Wesleyans, Nazarenes, and Pentecostals form the Wesleyan family of churches.

Liberal: In 1799, Friedrich Schleiermacher published *Addresses on Religion* in an attempt to make Christianity appealing to people influenced by rationalism. He argued that religion is not a body of doctrines, provable truths, or a system of ethics, but belongs to the realm of feelings. His ideas did not lead to the formation of a new denomination but deeply influenced Christian thinking. Denominations most thoroughly affected by liberalism are the United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, and Unitarianism.

Creation: The Lutheran Difference Series

Alfonso O. Espinosa

About This Series

"We believe that God created everything in six, twenty-four hour days."

"You've got to be kidding! So, you don't believe in evolution?"

"Microevolution (adaptation), yes; macroevolution (Hypothesis of Evolution) , no."

"And you maintain that that position, in view of modern science, is tenable?"

As Lutherans interact with other Christians, they often find them-selves struggling to explain their beliefs and practices. Although many Lutherans have learned the "what" of the doctrines of the church, they do not always have a full scriptural foundation to share the "why." When confronted with different doctrines, they cannot clearly state their faith, much less understand the differences.

Because of insecurities about explaining particular doctrines or practices, some Lutherans may avoid opportunities to share what they have learned from Christ and His Word. The Lutheran Difference Bible Study Series will identify how Lutherans differ from other Christians and use the Bible to show why Lutherans differ. These studies will pre-prepare Lutherans to share their faith and help non-Lutherans understand the Lutheran difference.

Introduction

It may come as a surprise, but when the Bible uses the word *doctrines* (teachings) in the plural, the word is presented negatively as coming from men (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7; Colossians 2:22) or from demons (1 Timothy 4:1). Christian doctrine, however, is one. It is one teaching that comes from God, and each component of that teaching plays an integral role in conveying a singular message. Take out one component, like creation, and the whole is adversely affected.

Conversely, if we faithfully confess each component of Christian teaching, then the integrity of Christian doctrine is preserved. What does the Gospel of Jesus Christ—His life, death, and resurrection for the salvation of all people—have to do with all this? The Gospel of Jesus Christ—who He truly is and why He came into the world—makes sense only within the biblical worldview that espouses a belief in a divine Creator and His creation.

God's purpose in creation (the reason why He made us) is that He is pleased to love and to give. "God's will to create reveals a will to love by the free giving of himself and all that is his. God, precisely as the absolute Creator, relates to the world essentially as the gracious Giver." (William C. Weinrich, "*Creation ex Nihilo: The Way of God*," *Logia*, Vol. 4, No. 2 [Eastertide 1995], page 39). Creator and creation describe God's love for all that He has made! The creation is God's arena for giving His gifts of love, especially the gift of His Son. The Scriptures show us why we ought to view our Creator and His creation in this way.

In *The Science of God*, British biochemist, historian, and Christian theologian Alister E. McGrath lists several popular uses of the word “nature.” McGrath points out that the numerous definitions of nature are not only different, but also inconsistent. However, where they are homogeneous is in their denial of a biblical worldview of our Creator and His creation. As Weinrich notes, God created the world to love and to give. We know this with certainty through God’s loving and giving of His divine-human Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. By holding onto the singular doctrine recorded in Holy Scripture, which includes the teaching about God, our Creator and His creation, we hold onto Christ (John 5:39).

Lutheran Facts

All who worship the Holy Trinity and trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins are regarded by Lutherans as fellow Christians despite denominational differences.

Lutheran churches first described themselves as *evangelische* or evangelical churches. Opponents of these churches called them Lutheran after Dr. Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century German Church reformer.

Lutherans are not disciples of Dr. Martin Luther but disciples of Jesus Christ. They proudly accept the name Lutheran because they agree with Dr. Luther’s teaching from the Bible, as summarized in Luther’s Small Catechism.

Until the twentieth century, Lutherans, along with most Christians, believed and taught that God created the universe in six, twenty-four hour days. This was Luther’s view (AE, vol. 1, pp. 5, 42, 44). In his lectures on Genesis in 1535, Luther insisted that Moses’ record of creation was to be taken literally, even if respected Church fathers such as Augustine advocated for an allegorical approach (*ibid.*, p. 5).

Luther was not unaware of Greek and Roman writers such as Epicurus (341–270 BC) or Lucretius (94–39 BC). Lucretius argued that the fear of death could be conquered by viewing it simply as the cessation of bodily life in a godless, eternal universe. Ironically, this is essentially the view of Darwinian evolution. In these matters, Luther preferred to follow the Holy Spirit-inspired Moses (*ibid.*, pp. 6, 185).

Some contemporary Lutherans, along with many Roman Catholic Church theologians and many mainline Protestant groups, advocate for theistic evolution (simply, that God used evolution as a mechanism to create species). Others find intelligent design compatible with the Scriptures. However, while being informed of competing views and even engaging in the debate, Lutherans trust in the simple Bible account of creation recorded in Genesis and affirmed by the Lord Jesus Himself.

For Luther, the Word of creation is the Word of the incarnation: our Savior, Jesus Christ. Thus, for Luther and his doctrinal heirs, creation and redemption are both vital and inseparable (*ibid.*, pp. 16–20).

To prepare for “Creator and Creation,” read Genesis 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. 4) And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. 5) God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. 6) And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7) And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. 8) And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. 9) And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10) God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11) And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. 12) The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13) And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. 14) And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, 15) and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. 16) And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17) And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18) to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19) And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. 20) And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." 21) So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22) And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23) And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. 24) And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. 25) And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 26) Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28) And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29) And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30) And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31) 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.

Creator and Creation

Materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.

— Richard Lewontin, "Billions and Billions of Demons"

Yet man, this part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee.

— St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book One

There are two radically divergent views about our origins. One is purely materialistic, maintaining that the physical universe is all that exists. The other view is theistic, holding that there is something beyond the physical universe, something spiritual. While affirming the created material world, the Bible also expresses this latter, divine truth.

1. Why do you suppose the doctrine of creation is such an integral part of Christian faith? Is the following statement problematic: "I believe in Jesus Christ, but I reject what the Bible teaches about the Creator and creation"? Why or why not?

If Creation, as a literal six-day event, is not true, then:

Either God created using death (guided evolution) or there is no god, so either way sin (sin=death) existed before the Fall, or there was no Fall and therefore no need for Jesus to die to pay for our sins. Jesus believed in a literal Creation, a literal Adam and Eve, a literal Fall, and a literal Noah and the Flood.

- **Mark 10:6** *But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'*
- **Mark 13:19** *For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be.*
- **Luke 13:14** *But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day."*
- **John 5:45-47** *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"*
- **Exodus 20:11** *For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

We should also note the way Jesus treated as historical fact the accounts in the Old Testament, which religious and atheistic skeptics think are unbelievable mythology. These historical accounts include Adam and Eve as the first married couple (Matthew 19:3–6; Mark 10:3–9), Abel as the first prophet who was killed (Luke 11:50–51), Noah and the Flood (Matthew 24:38–39), Moses and the serpent in the wilderness (John 3:14), Moses and the manna from heaven to feed the Israelites in the wilderness (John 6:32–33, 49), the experiences of Lot and his

wife (Luke 17:28–32), the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15), the miracles of Elijah (Luke 4:25–27), and Jonah and the big fish (Matthew 12:40–41).

- Jesus did not allegorize these accounts but took them as straightforward history, describing events that actually happened just as the Old Testament describes.
- Jesus used these accounts to teach His disciples that the events of His death, Resurrection, and Second Coming would likewise certainly happen in time-space reality.

2. At times, we can speak out of both sides of our mouth. One moment we confess the Apostles' Creed and in the next we refer to "Mother Nature." Why do you suppose that people tend to personify God's creation?

Perhaps some people, including unbelievers, tend to personify nature because they know in their hearts that there is a Creator (Romans 1:19–21). Corrupted by sin, the human mind transfers the "natural knowledge" of God to created things (v. 23), or even imaginary entities such as "Mother Nature."

- **Romans 1:19-21** *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

First, Colossians makes it clear that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was the one who created all things.

- **Colossians 1:16–17** *"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."*

We are also told elsewhere in Scripture how Jesus created

- **Psalms 33:6-9** *"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."*
- We see the meaning of this when we consider the miracles of Jesus during His earthly ministry. All the miracles occurred instantly—at His Word. He instantly turned water into wine in His very first miracle, which "revealed His glory" as the Creator (John 2:1–11; John 1:1–3, 14, 18). It was the instant calming of the wind and the waves that convinced His disciples that He was no mere man. So it was with all His miracles (Mark 4:35–41).

We also know that Jesus is in fact called the Word."

- **John 1:1–3** *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made"*

Jesus, who is the Word, created everything by simply speaking things into existence. Yes, Jesus did explicitly say He created in six days.

- **Exodus 20:1:** *For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.*

There is no doubt, with rare exception, that the preincarnate Christ did the speaking to Adam, Noah, the patriarchs, Moses, etc.

- **John 1:18** *"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."*

The Distinction between the Creator and Creation

1. Who or what was in existence "in the beginning"? How do these passages show that God is the sole Creator or Builder? that the Son of God, the pre-incarnate Christ, was present at and active in creation?

- **Genesis 1:1** *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*
- **Hebrews 3:4** *(For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.)*
- **Colossians 1:15-17** *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 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. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

2. Some people have a hard time distinguishing between the Creator and His creation. They want to apply the law of cause and effect to everything that exists, including God. However, what is the basic difference between the Creator and creation?

- **Psalms 90:2** *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

3. Notice how God's Word speaks of that which was before time. What did God give us before the beginning of time/before the ages began? What did God promise before the beginning of time/before the ages began?

- **II Timothy 1:9** *who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,*
- **Titus 1:2** *in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began*

4. Discuss the different ways these passages express God's eternal nature.

- **Isaiah 44:6** *Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.*
- **Revelation 1:8** *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

5. The basic cosmological argument for the existence of God goes like this: (1) Whatever begins to exist has a cause; (2) The universe began to exist; (3) Therefore, the universe has a cause. How do the Scriptures show that the first premise, "Whatever begins to exist has a cause," does not apply to God?

- **Psalms 90:2** *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

6. Suppose that someone claimed that there was another god who created God (or that there was an infinite regress of gods). How does the Lord, the Creator and true God, refute these notions?

- **Isaiah 45:5** *I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me,*
- **Isaiah 45:18** *For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the LORD, and there is no other.*

God's Purpose for Creation

Holy Scripture teaches that there are clear distinctions between the Creator and His creation. God is both eternal (beyond time) and infinite (beyond limitation), while His creation is temporal (bound to time) and finite (limited). However, this does not tell us *why* God created the heavens and the earth. Luther provides an answer in his explanation of the First Article of the Apostles' Creed: "All this [creating] He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy."

1. There is a goal or purpose for all things. How does knowing that God has a *good* purpose for His creation impact your faith?

- **Proverbs 16:1** *The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.*
- **Romans 8:28** *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

2. Psalm 104:27–28 uses the word *give* twice. What does God create and give to His creation? If God creates and then gives, what does creation actually "do"?

- **Psalms 104:27-28** *These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. 28) When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.*

3. The heavenly Father cares for both good and evil people, the righteous and unrighteous. How, then, should we treat our enemies, that is, those who do evil against us?

- **Matthew 5:44-45** *But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45) so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

4. Describe both God's activities and His attributes (see also John 3:16).

- **Psalms 115:3** *Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.*
- **Psalms 136:1-5** *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. 2) Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever. 3) Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever; 4) to him who alone does great wonders, for his steadfast love endures forever; 5) to him who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures forever;*

Creation as God's Gift

Clearly, God made us because He is pleased to give and to love. "Creator" and "creation" describe God's love for all that He has made! Creation is God's arena for giving His gifts of love, especially the gift of His Son.

1. The teaching that Jesus Christ is the world's only Savior does not conflict with the "natural knowledge of God." How can we, like Paul, share our faith with others who may believe in a supreme being but who do not yet confess Jesus as their Savior?

- **John 14:6-7** *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7) If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."*
- **Acts 17:22-31** *So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23) For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24) The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25) nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. 26) And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27) that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28) for "'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, "'For we are indeed his offspring.' 29) Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. 30) The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31) because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*
- **James 1:17** *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

2. In Baptism, God our Father gave us new birth by connecting us to the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. How do the baptized respond when confronted by various trials in their lives? What is their eternal hope?

- **Romans 8:32** *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*
- **I Peter 1:3-7** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4) to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5) who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6) In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7) so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Confession of Faith

For over 1,600 years Christians have confessed their faith in the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—by speaking together the Nicene Creed. With the exception of the clause “and the Son” (*filioque*), which is rejected by the churches of the East, this creed is still confessed by Christians the world over.

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Point to Remember

*Do you thus repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? Is not He your father, who created you, who made you and established you? **Deuteronomy 32:6***

To prepare for “Creation out of Nothing,” read Hebrews 11:3: *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.*

Creation out of Nothing

The accuracy of the declaration that God created the cosmos out of “nothing” depends on which definition of nothing the statement implies.

— Hugh Ross, *The Genesis Question*

When John says, “All things were made by Him,” he is refuting the Stoic notion which imagines that matter was not created.

—Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*

The Bible clearly teaches that God made all things and that nothing existed before God made it. But what do we mean by “nothing” and why does it matter? Picture yourself opening up a cookie jar. Upon lifting the lid you discover that it is empty. In exasperation, you might complain out loud, “Nothing!”

1. Why is the concept of **absolute nothingness (no dimensions, no matter, no energy, no space, no time, no color, etc.)** so difficult to imagine?

- As human creatures, we experience everything through our physical senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Hence, it is difficult to conceive of existence apart not only from the use of our senses, but also the need for them. To imagine God only, apart from time, matter, and space, is likewise to conceive of our own non-existence. This is difficult. In these matters, we must simply take God at His Word, which says, “In the beginning.”

2. Why do you think that some people find the concept of an **eternal, uncreated universe (such as is expressed in pantheism, Hinduism, or the New Age movement)** so appealing?

- Perhaps believing in something eternal, such as an uncreated universe, provides some degree of comfort if the alternative is nothing eternal. However, as Christians, our only sure and everlasting comfort is found in an eternal, uncreated God who shows His unfathomable love for His creation, especially through the sending of His one and only Son, both uncreated according to His divinity and created according to His humanity.

Bible Words for “Creation”

Scripture uses different words to describe the doctrine of creation. Taken in isolation, the importance of these words describing God’s work might be overlooked. However, when the words are carefully examined, we see a glorious picture of God’s almighty power and personal touch.

1. Jeremiah saw the potter “making” (ESV) or “shaping” (NIV) a clay pot (verse 4). In Hebrew, this word is *asah*, which means “to fashion” or “to shape.” By what did God make (*asah*) the heavens?

- **Jeremiah 18:1-6** *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2) "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." 3) So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. 4) And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do. 5) Then the word of the LORD came to me: 6) "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.*
 - **Psalms 136:5** *to him who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- 2. Another creation word, *yatsar*, is translated as "formed" (ESV and NIV). How does this word help us to understand the relationship between God and His people? Who "creates" such relationships?**
- **Genesis 2:7** *then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*
 - **Genesis 2:19** *Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.*
 - **Isaiah 43:1** *But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*
- 3. In Hebrew, another word for "formed" (ESV) and "created" (NIV) is *qanah* (acquired). This brings creation close to home, so to speak, by making creation very personal. Why is this aspect important to the doctrine of creation?**
- **Psalms 139:13** *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*
- 4. God's creation is described as having been "set in place" (Hebrew, *kun* ESV and NIV) and "fashioned" (ESV) or "formed" (NIV). When things are fashioned or formed and set in place, they are designed. What does this say about God as Creator?**
- **Psalms 8:3-4** *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4) what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?*
 - **Psalms 119:73** *Yodh Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.*
- 5. In Greek, "created" (ESV) or "formed" (NIV) is *katartidzo*, which means "to order, to make, or to form into a proper state." Again, we have a strong description of intelligent design. Discuss how this verse affirms God's creation of the universe out of nothing.**
- **Hebrews 11:3** *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.*

The Word That Makes Christianity Unique: *Bara'*

Many of the words we've studied thus far demonstrate the special care, wisdom, and design the Creator puts into His amazing creation. However, one particular Hebrew word truly makes the Christian faith unique: *bara'*. Occurring forty-nine times in the Old Testament, *bara'* presents the creative work of God as separate from anything already made from existing material.

1. In Hebrew, *bara'* is the word for "created." The verb depicts God bringing into existence that which never existed before—at the beginning of everything, including time. What is significant about the first verse of the Bible containing the word *bara'*?

- **Genesis 1:1** *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

2. *Bara'* is used in connection with animals and with man. Interestingly, *bara'* occurs three times in Genesis 1:27! Does it surprise you that the Bible uses *bara'* for man? Why or why not?

- **Genesis 1:21** *So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*
- **Genesis 1:27** *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

3. *Bara'* appears in both verses ("created" and "Creator") and fits well with the other descriptions of God's greatness. Read verses 29–31. How does the prophet tie God's power and strength to what He does for us?

- **Isaiah 40:26** *Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.*
- **Isaiah 40:28** *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 40:29-31** *He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. 30) Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; 31) but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*

4. The psalmist prays that God will create (*bara'*; in Hebrew, v. 12) in him a pure heart. Like the heavens and the earth, other creatures, and human beings, God alone creates our conversion. How can we apply this truth to the false claim that we must do something in order to receive salvation?

- **Psalms 51:10** *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*

Christian Faith Depends on Almighty God Alone!

The belief that there is only one source or generator of power is called "monergism." In Christianity, we know this one Source as God! In creation and in re-creation He requires no assistance or cooperation on our part ("synergism").

1. So far we've discussed how the Bible words relating to God being the sole Creator and re-Creator of all that exists. What are the practical results of a monergistic faith?

- All of this is yet another way of expressing that we are saved by "grace alone" (*sola gratia*).

2. According to each verse, how does one come to Jesus Christ?

- **John 6:37** *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*
- **John 6:39** *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.*
- **John 6:44** *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.*
- **John 6:65** *And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."*

3. The foundation for our salvation is grace alone (*sola gratia*), God's free gift of His undeserved mercy in Christ Jesus, which is received through faith. How do these verses emphasize that faith itself is God's gift? that good works flow from faith?

- **Ephesians 2:8-10** *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

4. What was Mary doing? What is the one thing needful or necessary (what exactly was Mary receiving from Christ)?

- **Luke 10:39-42** *And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. 40) But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." 41) But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, 42) but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."*

Comparisons

Eastern Orthodox: "What is expressed by the words of the Creed, *Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible?* This: that all was made by God, and that nothing can be without God. Are not these words taken from holy Scripture? They are. The book of Genesis begins thus: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* The Apostle Paul, speaking of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, says: *By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that*

are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. Colossians 1:16" (The Longer Catechism of the Eastern Church, questions 97 and 98).

Lutheran: "Our churches teach with common consent that the decree of the Council of Nicaea about the unity of the divine essence and the three persons is true. It is to be believed without any doubt. God is one divine essence who is eternal, without a body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. He is the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible [Nehemiah 9:6]" (*Augsburg Confession*, 1530, Article I, paragraph 1).

Reformed/Presbyterian: "It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good" (*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1647, chapter IV I).

Roman Catholic: "This one only true God, of his own goodness and almighty power, not for the increase or acquirement of his own happiness, but to manifest his perfection by the blessings which he bestows on creatures, and with absolute freedom of counsel, created out of nothing, from the very first beginning of time, both the spiritual and the corporeal creature, to wit, the angelical and the mundane, and afterwards the human creature, as partaking, in a sense, of both, consisting of spirit and of body" (*Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council*, 1870, chapter 1).

Baptist: "We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is JEHOVAH, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth. . . . that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" (*The New Hampshire Baptist Confession*, 1833, II).

Wesleyan/Methodist: "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" (*Methodist Articles of Religion*, 1784, I).

Liberal: "Thus the conflict between science and religion, which had grown out of this attempt to discredit modern science by an appeal to the supposedly inspired science of Scripture, drew to a close at the opening of the twentieth century. It was settled, not by the overthrow of either, but by the emancipation of both from unnatural alliances and unwarranted pretensions. Science achieved its freedom and the recognition of its value to religion in all enlightened religious circles. The way was prepared for the rational and scientific treatment of all questions between science and religion. This has become the distinguishing mark of modern Christianity" (Errett Gates in *A Guide to the Study of the Christian Religion*, 1916, pp. 448 and 450).

Point to Remember

Psalm 148:5 *Let them praise the name of the LORD! For He commanded and they were created.*

To prepare for “Creation in Six Days,” read Exodus 20:11: *For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

Creation in Six Days

Taking the most obvious meaning of the language, the Scriptures teach in Genesis that our universe was created fully functioning in six 24-hour days.

—Jeremy L. Walter (ed. John F. Ashton), *In Six Days*

If, then, we do not understand the nature of the days . . . let us confess our lack of understanding rather than distort the words, contrary to their context, into a foreign meaning.

—Martin Luther, *Lectures On Genesis*

Often, intellectual objections to a six, twenty-four-hour day creation are sophisticated fronts for spiritual and moral problems. On the other hand, there is no doubt that among Christian teachings a six, twenty-four-hour day creation is one of the most controversial. We must ask, “What does the Bible actually mean by these six days?”

1. What do you think is the most common definition of the word *day*? What are other meanings of the word?

- We acknowledge that words such as day may have multiple meanings. As Christians we do not deny this fact. While words such as day may have multiple meanings, there are interpretive clues within a text (context) that point to a particular meaning. It is of paramount importance that we read God’s Word according to what God intends for us to understand; otherwise we abandon what is true and replace it with falsehood.

2. If God has a precise meaning for the word *day* in connection to creation, why should we stand by this meaning without changing it? Discuss your answer.

- For Lutherans, a principle of biblical interpretation is to treat the biblical text literally, that is, as it reads, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. Lutherans do not deny that there are a variety of human authors, writing styles, and types of literature. The Scriptures contain prose, poetry, and parables, for example. Nevertheless, we pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance as we seek to understand the meaning of any given text, indeed, any given word, of Scripture so that we comprehend what God wants for us to understand and believe.

What’s in a Day?

God’s Word uses the word *day* in three different ways. Let’s explore those ways now.

3. The first way *day* (Hebrew: *yom*) is used in Scripture refers to “daytime” or “daylight.” Discuss how you have used *day* this way in conversation.

- Genesis 1:5a *God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.*

- **Genesis 1:17-18a** *And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18) to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.*
4. **The second use of the word *day* is seen in this passage. “In the day that the LORD God made,” is similar to our saying, “In my grandfather’s day” or “back in the day.” What are some other examples of our use of the word *day* in this way?**
- **Genesis 2:4** *These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.*
5. **The third use of the word *day* is actually the most common. In fact, when the word *day* is used in the Bible, a twenty-four-hour day is meant over 90 percent of the time. How would any other definition of *day* affect the meaning of these passages?**
- **Matthew 4:2** *And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.*
 - **Luke 24:7** *that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”*

Why We Confess Twenty-four Hours

The Bible uses the word *day* in different ways. To discover what *day* means in Genesis 1, we must use an important principle of biblical interpretation: Scripture interprets Scripture.

6. **Perhaps the strongest reason for accepting creation days as twenty-four-hour days is that this is the most common meaning of the word *day* in the Bible. Discuss why common-use or agreed-to meanings are vital for successful human communication.**
- Without a common-use meaning of the words we use, we have no reference point for understanding what is being said.
7. **In these passages, Moses enumerates the days: the first day, the second day, and so on. How do people use similar language to refer to days until Christmas, days spent on vacation, and such?**
- **Genesis 1:5** *God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*
 - **Genesis 2:2-3** *And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3) So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.*
8. **In the passages above, the Lord describes each creation day with the phrase, “and there was evening and there was morning.” What additional evidence does this phrase provide for a twenty-four-hour creation day?**
- The Sabbath day is compared to the seventh day when God rested. These days being compared to the creation days are clearly twenty-four-hour days.

9. How does the use of *day* in verse 18, in the sense of daylight, affirm the definition of *day* in verse 19 as a literal, twenty-four-hour day? How does a figurative use of *day* in 2:4 serve as a signal or qualifier that we are no longer using the common definition?

- **Genesis 1:17-19** *And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18) to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19) And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.*
- **Genesis 2:4** *These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.*

10. God provides a powerful explanation of the days of creation. To what are the six days of physical labor and the Sabbath compared? Are either of these figurative?

- **Exodus 20:8-11** *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9) Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10) but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11) For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*
- **Exodus 31:14-17** *You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 15) Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. 16) Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. 17) It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed."*

11. Some Christians appeal to these verses as proof that the days of creation were not literally twenty-four-hour days. However, what do these verses actually teach?

- **Psalms 90:4** *For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.*
- **II Peter 3:8** *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*
- In Hebrew, the use of "day" with a definite article "the," or a cardinal number "one, two, three," or an ordinal number "first, second, third" always means a literal 24-hour day.
- However, the use of "day" with an indefinite article "a or an", means a period of time. Long periods of time have higher numbers. Psalm 90:4 and II Peter 3:8 mean a very long time for us is but a short time for God.

12. The scientific community has begun to acknowledge that the universe had a beginning, which the Bible has attested for thousands of years. Ironically, what is

evolving is better science! For the Christian, what is the relationship between the Bible and science?

- As Lutherans, we thank God for science and use and enjoy it as a great gift from God to do us good. Nevertheless, we do not use contemporary science, modern psychology, or current socio-logical trends or tastes to interpret or reinterpret Scripture. We most certainly do not claim that the Holy Spirit is revealing something different from the plain meaning of God's written Word. Helpful to keep in mind is that science is evolving over time as God allows us to increase our knowledge of creation. While some current scientific facts may remain fixed, others may quickly be discredited as our knowledge of the created world increases and our theories improve.

The Vital Order of the Days

The order in which God created the universe is not incidental to the doctrine of creation. While evolutionists may view the biblical account with great skepticism, unfounded criticism is often short-sighted and inattentive to the nuances of the biblical text.

13. Scripture presents God making the universe with wisdom, that is, according to a divine plan. How is this expressed in these passages of Scripture?

- **Psalms 104:24** O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.
- **Job 38:1-18** *Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: 2) "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? 3) Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. 4) "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. 5) Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6) On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, 7) when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? 8) "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, 9) when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, 10) and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, 11) and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'? 12) "Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, 13) that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? 14) It is changed like clay under the seal, and its features stand out like a garment. 15) From the wicked their light is withheld, and their uplifted arm is broken. 16) "Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? 17) Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? 18) Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this.*

14. This verse has been interpreted by Lutheran theologians to mean either that God created the sun, moon, and stars on Day 4, or that on this day they became visible. Either way, what do Lutheran Christians hold about creation?

- **Genesis 1:16-18a** *And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17) And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18) to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.*
- The quotation by Lutheran theologian Martin Chemnitz at the beginning of this session does not suggest that Chemnitz suspected the latter theory to be the case. Chemnitz acknowledges that we do not have absolute clarity on this point, so for someone to attack a particular viewpoint is to build a straw man. The overarching point of the order of the days is not simply to provide accurate, historical narrative of what God did, but to do so in such a way as to reveal the way in which He conducted His creating: with wisdom and power that brought clarity and order from chaos.

Comparisons

Here are some ways people have tried to make sense of the days of creation:

Day-Age Theory: Each day in the creation week is an epoch of time that may contain millions or billions of years. Christians supporting this view often cite Psalm 90:4 and II Peter 3:8 out of context for support.

Gap Theory: This view accepts six twenty-four-hour days of creation, but also maintains that a primordial earth, different than our current, ordered earth, may have been “formless and empty” for millions or billions of years before the “Spirit of God hovered over the waters.” Proponents of this view maintain that Genesis 1:2 expresses an unknown, huge “gap” of time.

Revelatory Theory: The days of creation are not real twenty-four-hour days, but days of spiritual visions given to the prophet who recorded this account, or perhaps it is a revelation seen only by angels.

Phenomenological Theory: Progressive creation views the days of creation as the observation of a theoretical man standing on the surface of the earth during the appearance of the things mentioned in Genesis. That is, creation is a human’s perspective, not an actual or scientific account of how the earth or universe came to be.

Genesis as Myth Theory: The historical critical method renders the days of creation as pure myth. The days of creation communicate religious truths to people, but they do not reflect actual space-time history. In this view, Adam and Eve serve as symbols or archetypes, but were not actual, historical people.

Point to Remember

Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who has made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. Jeremiah 32:17

To prepare for “Creation That Is Orderly and Distinct,” read Genesis 1:26–28: *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the*

sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28) And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Creation That Is Orderly and Distinct

If our Creator specifically designed men and women for each other, then any other arrangement is a perversion of our design.

—Bruce Malone, *Search for the Truth*

In the absence of God everything becomes relative.

—William Lane Craig, *Hard Questions, Real Answers*

Carolus Linnaeus is famous for developing his biological classifications, which are still in use today: kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species. As humans, our species is “*sapiens*,” our genus is “*Homo sapiens*,” our family is “Hominid,” our order is “Primate,” our class is “Mammal,” and our phylum is “Chordate Phylum” or “Vertebrate.” Of course, we’ve all heard that our kingdom is “animal.” Long before Linnaeus, however, God made distinctions within His creation. According to His wisdom, His creation was and is orderly and distinct.

1. What similar phrase do you find repeated over and over again?

- **Genesis 1:11-12** *And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. 12) The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*
- **Genesis 1:21** *So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*
- **Genesis 1:24-25** *And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. 25) And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

2. No “missing link” (transitional form) between a common ape-human ancestor and a human being has ever been found. We easily recognize that species are *constant*. Fish beget fish, birds beget birds, and human beings beget human beings. What does this observable feature of creation say about its Creator?

- God is a God of order and design. His intention and will was and is to apply distinctions to plant life, animals, and humans. Although sometimes there are only miniscule

differences between created species, the constancy of species within their own “kind” is amazing and expresses God’s divine stamp upon nature.

Created but Different

1. The Hebrew word for “soul” or “living” is *nephesh*. While the Bible speaks of both man and animals having *nephesh*, what are some important differences between them according to Genesis 1:26–29 and Ecclesiastes 12:7?

- **Genesis 1:20-21** *And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” 21) So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*
- **Genesis 1:24** *And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so.*
- **Genesis 2:7** *then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*
- **Genesis 1:26-29** *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28) And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” 29) And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.*
- **Ecclesiastes 12:7** *and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.*
- The Hebrew word *nephesh*, or “living,” appears before “creatures,” “creature,” and “being.” *Nephesh* is also sometimes translated as “soul.” The important distinction between animal and human life is, of course, that humans were created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26–29). We lost God’s image in the fall, which resulted in both temporal and spiritual death. Our sin brought God’s condemnation, death, and decay into the order of other creatures and the rest of creation as well. Even those who do not trust in Christ, or who do not believe in God, can observe this. When a person who trusts in the merits of Christ dies, his or her soul (Hebrew: *ruach* or “spirit”) goes to be with God its Creator (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

2. What special creature stands out in the psalm? While the word *dinosaur* is one that man conceived, what seems exceptional and especially powerful about this creature in Job 41?

- **Psalms 104:25-26** *Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. 26) There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.*
- **Job 41:1-8** *“Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook or press down his tongue with a cord? 2) Can you put a rope in his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? 3) Will he make many pleas to you? Will he speak to you soft words? 4) Will he make a covenant with you to take him for your servant forever? 5) Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on a leash for your girls? 6) Will traders bargain over him? Will they divide him up among the merchants? 7) Can you fill his skin with harpoons or his head with fishing spears? 8) Lay your hands on him; remember the battle—you will not do it again!*
- The special creature that stands out is the Leviathan. Some believe that the Leviathan was a great alligator or other familiar creature. We don’t know exactly what it was. However, the exceptional descriptions of this creature in Job 41 are reminiscent of what we might expect in terms of a dinosaur (means terrible lizard coined in 1841).

3. What kinds of animals come to mind as you read this description?

- **Genesis 1:24-25** *And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. 25) And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

4. What is this great creature called and what seems exceptional and especially powerful about it?

- **Job 40:15-24** *“Behold, Behemoth, which I made as I made you; he eats grass like an ox. 16) Behold, his strength in his loins, and his power in the muscles of his belly. 17) He makes his tail stiff like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are knit together. 18) His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like bars of iron. 19) “He is the first of the works of God; let him who made him bring near his sword! 20) For the mountains yield food for him where all the wild beasts play. 21) Under the lotus plants he lies, in the shelter of the reeds and in the marsh. 22) For his shade the lotus trees cover him; the willows of the brook surround him. 23) Behold, if the river is turbulent he is not frightened; he is confident though Jordan rushes against his mouth. 24) Can one take him by his eyes, or pierce his nose with a snare?*
- The great creature of Job 40 is the Behemoth. Like the Leviathan, we don’t know exactly what this creature was, but the descriptions of it in Job 40 are reminiscent of other prehistoric creatures whose skeletal remains have been found.

5. God used the “earth” and the “dust of the ground” to create both animals and man. However, what does God do to man that He does not do for the animals?

- **Genesis 1:24** *And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so.*
- **Genesis 2:7** *then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*
- The earth brings forth life. The dust of the ground is related to the earth. The difference is that Genesis 2:7 records God breathing into the nostrils of the man, formed from the dust of the ground, the breath of life.

6. What is man's relationship to the rest of God's creatures? Based on Genesis 1 and 2, how would you summarize man's distinction from animals?

- **Genesis 1:26** *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*
- Unlike the other creatures, God gave man dominion (stewardship) over the rest that He had made. Aspects of man's created nature that were affected by the fall include dominion (all beasts do not obey us as they did Adam), our ability to reason (we are intelligent but we don't always think clearly or rightly), and procreation (we do not always conceive and we pass on to our children disease and death). While we continue to possess these concreated gifts, they do not exist in a state of perfection because in the fall humankind lost the image of God, that is, original righteousness. However, through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, God is restoring in us His image, that is, the image of His Son.

7. Sometime between Days 1 and 6 of creation, God also created purely spiritual beings called angels. What is the special role of these spiritual creatures?

- **Colossians 1:16** *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.*
- **Job 38:4-7** *"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. 5) Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6) On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, 7) when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"*
- **Hebrews 1:14** *Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*
- Angels are "ministering spirits" (Hebrews 1:14). According to this verse, their special role is to serve those who will inherit salvation. There are many differences between angels and human beings. As these are mentioned, guide participants to avoid unbiblical concepts about angels, including prayer to or the worship of angels, or that believers (consisting of body and soul) are transformed into angels in heaven when they die.

Male and Female

In Matthew 19, Jesus affirms traditional marriage—the lifelong, one-flesh union of one man and one woman. The complementary distinction of “male and female” (Genesis 1:27) was designed by God because the two “shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

8. *Bara'* (creation from nothing) is used three times in Genesis 1:27, the third time to describe God's creation of man as male and female. What does God command our first parents to do after blessing them (v. 28)? How is God's design for marriage described thus far?

- **Genesis 1:27-28** *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28) And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*
- God's command to Adam and Eve (and to all married couples) is “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). Marriage is between a man and a woman, who are commanded by God to have children. “The adversaries object to these arguments. They say that in the beginning, the commandment [Latin: *mandatum*] was given to populate the earth. Now that the earth has been populated, marriage is not commanded. See how wisely they judge! Human nature is so formed by God's Word that it is fruitful not only in the beginning of creation, but as long as this nature of our bodies exists. Humanity is fruitful just as the earth becomes fruitful by the Word, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed’ (Genesis 1:11). Because of this ordinance, the earth not only started to produce plants in the beginning, but as long as this natural order exists, the fields are covered every year. Therefore, just as human laws cannot change the nature of the earth, so, without God's special work, neither vows nor a human law can change a human being's nature” (Apology XXIII 8).

9. Another reason for marriage is addressed in these verses. What “problem” was there? What kind of companion was God about to create?

- **Genesis 2:18-22** *Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." 19) Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20) The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21) So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22) And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.*

10. After the fall into sin, procreating children and companionship are not the only reasons for marriage. What does marriage curb or control (v. 2)? When the married couple comes together, from whom do they protect each other (v. 5)?

- **1 Corinthians 7:2-5** *But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3) The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4) For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5) Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*
- Being alone (loneliness). "A helper fit for him" implies a counterpart, a perfect match to make him whole. God took a "rib" or a part of his flesh. Notice also that the man is asleep, not so as to avoid discomfort, but to emphasize the nature of this companionship: it is a gift from God.

Bridegroom and Bride

1. When we consider that marriage counters immorality, we realize that it is not simply a benefit for the married couple. Traditional marriage also benefits society. How do the above verses show benefits of marriage?

- **Proverbs 1:8-9** *Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, 9) for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.*
- **Proverbs 2:20-22** *So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. 21) For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it, 22) but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.*
- **Proverbs 6:20-35** *My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. 21) Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. 22) When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you. 23) For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, 24) to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. 25) Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; 26) for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life. 27) Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? 28) Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? 29) So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished. 30) People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry, 31) but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house. 32) He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. 33) He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away. 34) For jealousy makes a*

man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge. 35) He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts.

- Children benefit from the respective service of parents of both sexes. Society benefits from stable, lifelong marriages in which children are raised in loving and law-abiding homes. A stable home is the foundation of a stable society.

2. When a Christian husband and wife are faithful in marriage, they illustrate Christ and His Bride, the Church. Discuss how the world would benefit from a consistent witness of a man and woman living in mutual service and sacrifice.

- **Ephesians 5:21-33** *submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22) Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23) For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24) Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26) that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27) so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28) In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29) For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30) because we are members of his body. 31) "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32) This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33) However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

- Children benefit from the respective service of parents of both sexes. Society benefits from stable, lifelong marriages in which children are raised in loving and law-abiding homes. A stable home is the foundation of a stable society.

- The woman is compared to the Church. The man is compared to Christ. The Christian man and wife together are a living illustration of the relationship between Christ, the Bridegroom, and the Church, His Bride. As a faithful witness to the world, the world needs to be shown in word and deed the virtues of sacrifice, commitment, submission, and forgiveness.

3. Submission and sacrifice become mere empty words if they last but for a short time. How long is marriage to last, according to the Lord?

- **Matthew 19:4-9** *He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5) and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6) So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." 7) They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" 8) He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9) And I say to you:*

whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

- **Malachi 2:13-16** *And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. 14) But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15) Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. 16) "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."*

4. Occasionally, government actions or laws go against Scripture (e.g., abortion on demand, gay "marriage"). How do Christians obey both the civil government as God's institution and God as He has spoken in His Word?

- **Acts 4:18-19** *So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19) But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge,*
- **Romans 13:1-7** *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2) Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3) For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4) for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. 5) Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6) For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7) Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*
- The government is established by God to do you good. If the government does evil against others, then the Christian must seek to counter and correct this. In Acts 4, Peter and John were commanded to stop speaking and teaching about Christ, but they disobeyed and remained obedient to God. In Exodus 1, the midwives disobeyed the king. In Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego disobeyed the king. In Daniel 6, Daniel ignored the edict. In Revelation 13, it is clear that the saints would not worship the beast in possession of worldly authority. In this same way, we should defend what marriage is and reject what it is not according to God's good creation. Everything contrary to this reality should be resisted; governmental authority does not automatically make what is immoral permissible for Christians.

Comparisons

Our Creator instructs us on how to live in relation to Himself and the rest of His creation. His instruction is known through His Word. The Word of God, the Bible, is the basis for Christian ethics (what we understand to be right and wrong). There are, however, many competing ethical systems in our world today:

Relativism: Right and wrong is based on a person's preference. What is right for one person may not be right for another, and so forth. There are no absolutes, though such a claim is itself absolute. Ultimately, this position is self-contradictory.

Utilitarianism: What is right is based on what will do the least harm while promoting the greatest good for the most people. The big question is who or what determines what the "greatest good" is. "Right" becomes a matter of public opinion and an entire society may approve of what is immoral or evil.

Situationism: There is only one law: the law of love. What is right is doing the most loving thing in a given situation. The problem comes in knowing how to make this determination. What if in a given situation, two people disagree about what the most loving thing to do is?

Naturalism: Moral standards are attempts to apply religious values to human behavior. Since everything comes from purely natural causes, all morality is contrived. However, this view accepts agreed-to moral standards for the sake of societal peace and the avoidance of unnecessary violence and destruction.

Absolutism: There is an objective moral standard that communicates moral absolutes. For the Christian, this standard is the Holy Bible, the Word of God. For example, the Ten Commandments are moral absolutes that reveal the Creator's holiness, so that "right" and "wrong" are unchanging as God is unchanging. "Conflicting absolutism" is the view that, by virtue of sin entering into the world, there are times when no matter which way we turn in a situation, we will experience the pain of living in a fallen world. This reality makes the Gospel of Jesus Christ all the more precious to the sinner confronted by his or her limitations. What is maintained, however, is that, because of the Creator, there are moral absolutes.

Point to Remember

He answered, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'?" Matthew 19:4-5

To prepare for "Creation Fallen from the Creator," read **Romans 8:18-25:** *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19) For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21) that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22) For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23) And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the*

firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24) For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25) But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Creation Fallen from the Creator

In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt.

—Richard Dawkins, *River out of Eden*

"[The chance that higher life forms might have emerged through evolutionary processes is comparable with the chance that] a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein."

—Sir Fred Hoyle, "Hoyle on Evolution," *Nature*

God declared His creation to be very good (Genesis 1:31). However, after this declaration something happened to affect it in a very serious way. What changed within God's creation and how are we as the people of God supposed to respond to it? These are the questions we will now consider.

5. Following Adam and Eve's sin, God cursed His creation because of their rebellion. What are some examples of this "subjection" or "futility" that we see in creation today? What will eventually happen to creation?

- **Genesis 3:14-19** *The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15) I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." 16) To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." 17) And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18) thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19) By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*
- **Romans 8:20-21** *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21) that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*
- **II Peter 3:5-7** *For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6) and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7) But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*

- Adam and Eve’s sin had drastic consequences not only for them, but also for the rest of creation. Scripture also makes clear that on the Last Day God will purify forever the heavens and the earth by fire, even as He temporarily purified the earth by the flood.

6. It is hard to reconcile God declaring His creation “very good” and our experience of the sin-damaged world we live in. Despite what has happened and will happen to this world, why are such passages helpful to us?

- **I Corinthians 7:29-31** *This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, 30) and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, 31) and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.*
- **I John 2:15-17** *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16) For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17) And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*
- These scriptural revelations are good for us so that we do not become overly attached to this world, which is passing. Paul’s counsel is to live as if we are not “engrossed in” (NIV) the things of the world. Paul is not in any way contradicting the loving service we are to give to our spouses or the pleasure we derive from receiving God’s gifts. The point is that we must not be shortsighted, forgetting that these things are temporary and that we are called to prepare for the eternal things. John says categorically: “Do not love the world or the things in the world.” Do not put the passing things ahead of the eternal things!

When Sin Entered into the Word

7. At its root, sin is pride: the idolatry of self instead of the worship of the Creator. How was pride demonstrated in Lucifer’s fall? in the sins of his own heart?

- **Isaiah 14:12-15** *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! 13) You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; 14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ 15) But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.*
- **Ezekiel 28:14-17** *You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. 15) You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. 16) In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so*

I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17) Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you.

- **Matthew 15:17-20** *Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? 18) But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19) For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20) These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."*
- **I John 3:4** *Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.*
- Lucifer's heart was filled with pride, which led to his fall (see Proverbs 16:18). Likewise, out of our hearts comes prideful sin that demonstrates itself in our thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting. Only God through His grace can cleanse us from our sin and purify our guilty consciences. He cleanses our guilty hearts and forgives our prideful desires through the blood of His one and only Son, Jesus Christ.

8. God warned Adam about eating any fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Obviously, Adam conveyed that command to Eve. How did the devil tempt Eve (reread Genesis 1:26–27)? Who was with the woman and committed the same rebellion?

- **Genesis 2:16-17** *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17) but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*
- **Genesis 3:4-6** *But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5) For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*
- **Genesis 1:26-27** *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*
- The devil tempted Eve with the lie that she could become "like God," (that is, the devil tempted her based on his original evil desire revealed in Isaiah 14). Yet, Eve (and Adam) had already been created "in the image of God." What more could there be except to take God's place? That sin of pride was in Eve's heart, and in that of Adam, who accompanied her and committed the same sin.

9. God's nature is love. Created in God's image and possessing original righteousness, Adam and Eve had total freedom to love God. In their rebellion of unbelief, however,

they chose not to love God. They disobeyed him. How is love tied to obedience (see I John 5:3)?

- **I John 4:16** *So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*
- **1 John 5:3** *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*
- God is love. Again, people were created in God's image and likeness. This original righteousness meant, among other things, that man freely chose to love God. When Adam and Eve sinned in unbelief, they chose to disobey God, which is not an expression of love from creatures to their creator. Love serves the other. As creatures, Adam and Eve refused their service of love by disobeying God's express command and words: "you shall not eat."

10. The ground was cursed because of Adam's sin. What was going to happen to the earth? Was the cause of the flood the inherent evil of the earth, man, or something else?

- **Genesis 3:17-19** *And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18) thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19) By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*
- **Genesis 6:17** *For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.*
- The ground was cursed because of Adam's rebellion. According to Genesis 6:5, "every intention of the thoughts of his [man's] heart was only evil continually." This condition grieved the Lord, who decided to blot people and animals from the earth. This was going to occur not because of anything inherently wrong with the earth, but because of humankind's rebellion.

11. How do these verses describe the condition of the human heart? What is God's solution to this heart problem? How does He accomplish this (see 1 Peter 1:23; 3:21)?

- **Jeremiah 17:9** *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*
- **Ezekiel 36:26** *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*
- **1 Peter 1:23** *since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;*
- **1 Peter 3:21** *Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,*

- God's solution to our "heart problem" is to give us a new heart. It is important to note that God is not going to fix the old heart, but completely replace it with a new heart. God does this through His Word, specifically the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is applied to us through preaching, reading, and sharing the message of the cross and through the Sacraments. Adam and Eve trusted in the first Gospel, God's promise of the One who would be victorious over their enemy, Satan (Genesis 3:15).

The Ways People Turn from God

12. What was God's reaction following the golden calf apostasy? Who or what motivates the worship of creatures instead of the Creator?

- **Exodus 20:3** *"You shall have no other gods before me."*
- **Exodus 32:1-10** *When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." 2) So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3) So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. 4) And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" 5) When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD." 6) And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. 7) And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. 8) They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" 9) And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. 10) Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you."*
- **Romans 1:24-25** | Commandment and committed gross idolatry (the worship of false gods). God's reaction to this was burning wrath and the intention to consume all of them with fire. In this case, the people worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. Ultimately, all worship of false gods is "communion" with demons (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).
- The Hebrews violated the First Commandment and committed gross idolatry (the worship of false gods). God's reaction to this was burning wrath and the intention to consume all of them with fire. In this case, the people worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. Ultimately, all worship of false gods is "communion" with demons (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

13. Rejecting the Creator while glorifying the creature is a sign of sin and rebellion. In fact, one of the leading contemporary examples of this is Darwinian evolution. How does Darwinian evolution put created things over the Creator?

- Darwinism does indeed perpetuate the pattern of creature over Creator in that natural selection replaces special creation.

14. Through modern genetics and the study of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), “neo-Darwinism” has been able to answer a question Darwinism couldn’t: How are certain traits inherited? What challenges might neo-Darwinism present to the Christian faith?

- Classical Darwinism was unable to answer how traits were inherited among species. Through the study of DNA, we now know on a chemical basis how traits are passed down intergenerationally. However, neo-Darwinism is still dependent upon the theory of vast amounts of time being needed in order for macroevolution to take place. In six thousand years of human writing, this has not been recorded.

Idols Do Not Live!

11. What had Ahab done to merit a “showdown” between the true God and the false god Baal? How did Baal respond to the pleas of his prophets? Why was Baal unable to respond?

- **I Kings 18:16-29** *So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. 17) When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?” 18) And he answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. 19) Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.” 20) So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. 21) And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word. 22) Then Elijah said to the people, “I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. 23) Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. 24) And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God.” And all the people answered, “It is well spoken.” 25) Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it.” 26) And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. 27) And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, “Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” 28) And they*

cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. 29) And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.

- **Jeremiah 51:17** *Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them.*
- Ahab troubled Israel and his father's house, because he abandoned the commandments of God. Four hundred and fifty false prophets gathered against Elijah. Baal's response was sheer silence—no response. Idols have no breath in them

12. Life must come from life. If one does not have Christ, what does one also lack? When one has Christ, what does one also have?

- **John 1:4** *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*
- **I John 5:12** *Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*
- In Jesus is life. Jesus is Life. When one does not have Him, one does not have life, but when one has Him, one has Life itself.

Comparisons

Here are additional arguments against Darwinian evolution that have been put forward:

The Anthropic Principle (the design of the universe is fine-tuned for life on earth):

Guillermo Gonzales and Jay Wesley Richards, in *The Privileged Planet* (Regnery, 2004), and Hugh Ross, in *The Creator and the Cosmos* (NavPress, 2001), show the just-right nature of all of conditions in the universe for making earth habitable. The expansion rate of the universe, the velocity of light, the average distance between stars, and such all show design (see Psalm 19:1, Romans 1:20).

Irreducible Complexity (complex biological systems cannot be reduced): Michael J. Behe, in *Darwin's Black Box* (The Free Press, 1996), argues that design is not mystical, but can be logically deduced from the physical structure of a system. He also notes that both Darwinists and non-Darwinists agree that aspects of biology appear designed. Irreducible complexity shows that life must begin as life, and that there must be an intelligent cause.

Specified Complexity (we can recognize design in complex systems): In several of his works, William A. Dembski argues that intelligent design is identifiable (see for example, *The Design Revolution*, InterVarsity, 2004). The logical possibilities for causality are limited: necessity (the result is contingent, caused by the law of gravity, for example); chance (even if something appears complex, it may have been caused by accident); and design (if something is not necessary and is not accidental, it must be now *specified*). Specified complexity is seen when chance does not sufficiently explain the emergence of multipart, tightly-integrated complex biological systems apart from design.

Point to Remember

For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Romans 1:20

To prepare for “Creation and the Gospel,” read John 1:1–4: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2) He was in the beginning with God. 3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

Creation and the Gospel

In the beginning were the particles and the impersonal laws of physics. And the particles somehow became complex living stuff; And the stuff imagined God; But then discovered evolution.

—Phillip E. Johnson, *The Right Questions*

In the beginning was the Word . . . All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

—John 1:1–4

If life comes from life, then the life we continue to see all around us, as well as the new life conceived in the womb, is coming from life! “Creation” is too often spoken of as an ancient event, as if it has ceased. It hasn’t! Creation is *ongoing* and in more ways than one!

1. God’s creation and His providence (or preservation of His creation) are connected. How is this evidenced both by divine revelation and through the natural law, which is expressed in creation?

- **Psalms 104:10-28** *You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills; 11) they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. 12) Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches. 13) From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. 14) You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth 15) and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart. 16) The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. 17) In them the birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees. 18) The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers. 19) He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. 20) You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about. 21) The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. 22) When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens. 23) Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening. 24) O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. 25) Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. 26) There*

go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it. 27) These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. 28) When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

- **Acts 17:26-28** *And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27) that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28) for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring.'*
- Psalm 104 describes a present, continuous, and ongoing creation. It gloriously praises God's on-going work of providence, that is, God's divine care for all that He has created. In Acts 17:27–28, Paul quotes ancient poets such as Epimenides, Aratus, and Cleanthes, who, either through the Law written in their hearts or by observation of the created order, taught about a single creator who preserved his creation. This does not mean, however, that these poets intimately knew the one, true God, who can be known, believed in, and worshiped only through faith in His Son, Je-sus Christ. Paul is simply using the reputable teaching of known Greek philosophers to appeal to the Athenians and to "win their ears" for a clear presentation of the Gospel. Later (v. 32), some obviously heard more about Jesus.

2. How do these verses put God's creation and God's preservation side-by-side? Would you say that both are necessary for life? Why or why not?

- **Colossians 1:16-17** *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.*
- Creation is clearly indicated in verse 16. In verse 17, preservation is expressed in the words "in Him all things hold together." Both are absolutely necessary for life, since life cannot begin or continue without them.

God's Providence Shows His Love and Mercy

1. These passages extol God's continuing work in and for His creation through His Son, Jesus Christ. How should this affect how Christians view the earth and their stewardship of it?

- **Nehemiah 9:6** *"You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.*
- **Hebrews 1:3** *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*
- Knowing that God and Christ are always working to preserve and protect God's creation should assist Christians in seeing more clearly their vocations as the earth's stewards (see

Genesis 1:28–29; 2:15). Enabled and renewed by the Gospel, they can work to preserve and protect the earth.

2. What does God do for the earth and animal and bird life? Does He show partiality among the righteous and unrighteous? What promise can we as believers claim when it comes to God providing for all our needs?

- **Psalms 147:8-9** *He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. 9) He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry.*
- **Matthew 5:45** *so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*
- **Matthew 6:25-33** *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26) Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27) And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28) And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29) yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30) But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31) Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32) For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33) But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
- God prepares rain for the earth and He makes grass grow on the hills. God gives food to the animals. God gives all people the sun and the rain. If God cares for the birds of the air, He will also care for us, especially since we are more valuable to Him than they. All things will be added to us as we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

3. To what extent does God extend His creative Word and providential care to even the unborn? How does this speak to the intrinsic worth of each unborn child?

- **Psalms 139:13-16** *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. 14) I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. 15) My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. 16) Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*
- God's creation of every child is amazing. It is characterized by meticulous care and detailed de-sign. For God to give such attention to the unborn proves the intrinsic worth of each child. If an unborn child is this important to God, how much more should we invest in their care and protection! To this we add God's unfathomable love for each human

creature, which was expressed totally and fully in the sending of His one and only Son, Jesus, to the cross for the sins of the whole world (John 3:16–17). We should never forget that Jesus died and rose again for the sins of each member of the human family, the born and the unborn.

Christ Is Making All Things New

4. Jesus identifies Himself by pointing to His and His Father’s ongoing work. How does this help to answer issues raised by deism and theistic evolution?

- **John 5:17** *But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”*
- The ongoing work of the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—in the created order rules out the “watchmaker god” of deism, which theorizes that God stepped away from His creation after making it, allowing it to “run” on its own, and the god of theistic evolution, who is employed for sentimental reasons.

5. Part of Christ’s ongoing work for us is to intercede for us before our Father in heaven. On the glorious Last Day, when He returns, what will He do for us?

- **Romans 8:34** *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*
- **Revelation 21:1-5** *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2) And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4) He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” 5) And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*
- John paints a beautiful picture of life in heaven when Christ returns. The new heaven and the new earth will be without defect. Our physical bodies having been raised in perfection, we will enjoy life with God and with Christ and all those who have trusted in Him forever. God will wipe every tear from our eyes, because “the former things have passed away” (v. 4).

6. In Baptism, God gives us new, spiritual life. He makes us His “new” creation. How does our new identity as His baptized children express itself in our daily lives?

- **John 3:5-7** *Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7) Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’*

- **Romans 6:4** *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*
- **II Corinthians 5:17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
- In Baptism, God gives us new, spiritual birth by water and the Spirit. In Christ, we are a new creation that walks in newness of life. Allow participants time to discuss how this "newness" expresses itself in daily living.

7. God grants faith through the hearing of the Gospel of Christ crucified and resurrected for the forgiveness of our sins. How can you support the "ministry of reconciliation"?

- **Romans 10:17** *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*
- **II Corinthians 5:18-21** *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19) that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- Faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17), that is, the Gospel of God reconciling the world through His life, death, and resurrection. The word is Christ's Word, which is spoken by His ambassadors. Christ makes His appeal through them. When a person listens to such a messenger, they are actually listening to Christ. While all people are given the opportunity to be the "salt" and "light" of the world and to share the Gospel with others, Christians should support the "ministry of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:18).

8. In the Sacrament of the Altar, our Savior feeds us with His body and blood. Discuss how Christ uses this Sacrament to continue His work of forgiving our sins and re-creating us in His image.

- **I Corinthians 10:16** *The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?*
- **I Corinthians 11:29** *For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.*
- In the Lord's Supper, we participate in the body and blood of Christ (I Corinthians 10:16). In the Lord's Supper, we are to recognize Christ's body in the bread (11:29) and blood in the wine (real presence). Guide participants in confessing that Christ applies His saving work, the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, as well as impacts His image to us through this Sacrament as well as the Gospel and Baptism.

Creation Vital to the Gospel

Ultimately, false teaching about how the universe came to be undermines the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The theory of evolution attacks the very need for the divine, invisible God. The divinity of Christ—and ultimately our salvation through Him—is implicitly denied by Darwinism.

9. It is impossible—according to philosophical materialism—that Christ could be any more than a mere man. But if Christ is no more than a man, what of the Gospel?

- If Christ were a mere man and not also the divine Son of God, then He would have neither the power nor authority to save us. To deny Christ's divinity is to empty the Gospel of its power.

10. How are God's creation and His salvation of His people tied together in this passage? How is the Trinity's work in creation, redemption, and sanctification reflected in the Creed?

- **Jeremiah 32:17-27** *'Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. 18) You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, 19) great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds. 20) You have shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day. 21) You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror. 22) And you gave them this land, which you swore to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey. 23) And they entered and took possession of it. But they did not obey your voice or walk in your law. They did nothing of all you commanded them to do. Therefore you have made all this disaster come upon them. 24) Behold, the siege mounds have come up to the city to take it, and because of sword and famine and pestilence the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it. What you spoke has come to pass, and behold, you see it. 25) Yet you, O Lord GOD, have said to me, "Buy the field for money and get witnesses"—though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.'" 26) The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 27) "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?*
- The prophet Jeremiah confesses God's amazing creation and also His saving work of rescuing the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. Like Jeremiah, we confess both God's creation and His salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ, who rescued us from the bondage of our sins. The integrity of the Christian faith is tied to the scriptural account of creation, which is verified by our Savior in the Bible and expressed in the ancient Christian creeds.

Comparisons

There are many worldviews that confuse the creation and thereby reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

Atheism (along with Darwinism, Naturalism, and Materialism): God is denied altogether. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is irrelevant.

Agnosticism: There is no way to know with certainty whether or not God exists. The Gospel is indefinitely put off.

Polytheism: There are many gods. Since the Gospel of Jesus Christ is exclusive, it is resented.

Panentheism: God is always changing as the world changes. The Gospel is inflexible.

Finite Godism: God is not identified with the world, but He is finite and limited. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is unreliable.

Pantheism: God is the world, and is therefore not personal. The Gospel is nonsensical.

Deism: God does not interact with the world, is impersonal, and doesn't perform miracles. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is contradictory.

Monism: All reality is one ("God" is too limiting a concept). The Gospel is meaningless.

Monotheism: There is one personal God who created all things. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is either accepted or denied depending on the type of monotheism.

Christianity: God is the Almighty Creator who has uniquely revealed Himself through His one and only Son, Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the only way the one true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—saves us from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

Point to Remember

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 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." **Colossians 1:15–16**