

# Systematic Theology: Theology Proper

Creation

(From Dr. Stephen Wellum's notes on Systematic Theology)

## What does GCBC teach?

We teach ... that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days. ... [God the Father] is the creator of all things. As the only absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption.

## What has the Church throughout history taught?

"The Church Fathers (AD 100–600) were theologians after the apostles. Based on Scripture, they opposed naturalistic theories of origins. Some, including Clement of Alexandria (c. 152–217), Origen (c. 185–254), and Augustine (c. 354–430), interpreted Genesis 1 allegorically. To them, the six days were a symbolic presentation of God's creation in one instant. ... Augustine believed the earth was created instantaneously, not progressively, and was, according to Scripture, less than 6,000 years old.

Most of the Church Fathers interpreted Genesis 1 in a plain and straightforward way, as actual history. The six days were 24-hour days. Ephraim (Ephrem) the Syrian (306–373) and Basil of Caesarea (329–379) argued for the literal sense of Scripture against the distortions of allegory. Basil said twenty-four hours fill up the space of one day. Even Ambrose of Milan (330–397), mentor of Augustine, believed each day consisted of twenty-four hours, including both day and night. In addition to this, the Fathers believed that the earth was less than 6,000 years old."<sup>1</sup>

## What does the *Bible* say?

### 1. *Creatio ex nihilo*.

a. *Meaning of creatio ex nihilo*: God created '\_\_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_\_.'

b. *Scriptural Testimony*.

i. *Specific textual data*: Heb 11:3; Rom 4:17. What do these verses indicate about what God made the earth from?

ii. Unique Use of *Bara'*. The word is the Hebrew word used in Genesis 1:1, God created (*bara'*) the earth.

Here are some further points:

1. In Gen 1:1 – grammatically and contextually, the best translation is the sense of absolute beginning – "In the beginning, God created..."

2. *Bara'* (in the Qal stem) is utterly different from other ancient pagan creation stories.

3. Other verbs speak of a 'relative' creation.

a. *Bara'* (in stems other than Qal) – Gen 1:21, 25; 5:1; Isa 45:7, 12; 54:16; Amos 4:13. It also speaks of what comes under the providential control of God (Ps 104:30; Isa 45:7-8; 65:18).

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. James Mook, <https://answersingenesis.org/christianity/church/the-early-church-on-creation/>

- b. *Asa'* (*poieo*) – “to form something that is already there” (Gen 1:7, 16, 26; 2:22; Ps 89:47). In Ps 74:17 it refers to providential bringing forth.
- c. *Ya'ad* (*plassein*) – Gen 2:7, 19; Ps 104:26; Amos 4:13; Zech 12:1. The idea of providential bringing forth is found occasionally when this verb is employed in Deut 32:18; Isa 43:1, 7, 21; 45:7.

iii. *Theological arguments based upon exegetical data.* John Frame’s argument:<sup>2</sup>

1. The world had a \_\_\_\_\_ and God is the \_\_\_\_\_ of all things (Gen 1:1; Job 38:4; Ps 33:6, 9; 90:2; 102:25; Is 40:21; 41:4; 46:10; Jn 1:1; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24-25; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16; Heb 1:10; Rev 1:8; 4:11; 21:6; 22:13).
  2. Creation encompasses \_\_\_\_\_ in the entire \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. God creates as the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. *Creation is a \_\_\_\_\_ of God.* Because God is a sovereign-personal being, He was not \_\_\_\_\_ to create. Eph 1; Rev 4:11.  
*Creation is a \_\_\_\_\_.* Father reference: Genesis 1:1; Son references: John 1:3, 1 Cor 8:6, and Col 1:15-17; Spirit references: Genesis 1:2, Job 33:4.

## What does this mean?

1. *God: Creation tells us about God.* Psalm 19:1
2. *Self: Creation tells us about ourselves.*
  - (a) *As created in the image of God, human beings enjoy a unique role in creation as well as affirming our \_\_\_\_\_.*
    - (i) We are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
    - (ii) As creatures of God, we are \_\_\_\_\_ to him because he is our Lord.
    - (iii) Our creation in the image of God ensures that we are \_\_\_\_\_ if we suppress or deny the truth of creation.
  - (b) *Being made in God’s image ensures that \_\_\_\_\_ of him is possible.*
  - (c) *Creation is both our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.*

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<sup>2</sup>John Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 301-02.

3. *World: Creation tells us something about the world.*

(a) *Since creation is the result of the free choice of the personal-sovereign Lord, it too is \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.* But in its structure the creation is never to be viewed merely in mechanistic terms.

(i) We reject an \_\_\_\_\_ universe

(ii) We reject a \_\_\_\_\_ universe

(iii) In fact, on both accounts – *open* and *closed* – \_\_\_\_\_ is not possible.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ universe:

2. \_\_\_\_\_ universe:

(iv) Scripture presents us with a \_\_\_\_\_ universe.

1. God is both the creator/sustainer of the world.

2. On this account \_\_\_\_\_ is possible (e.g. induction/uniformity, rationality – subject/object relation, etc.), human beings now have \_\_\_\_\_, and God \_\_\_\_\_ in the world.

(b) *Because of the doctrine of creation, the world has value.*

(i) This is introduced by the value judgment in Gen 1 – “*It was \_\_\_\_\_*” (repeated 5x) and the summary evaluation “*it was \_\_\_\_\_*” (Gen 1:31).

(ii) *Good* indicates that it was just what God \_\_\_\_\_.

(iii) *Implications:*

## How does this doctrine relate to the Gospel?

Romans 4:16-18 *What does the Gospel require us to believe about God in relation to Creation?*

## What difference does it make?

*Doctrine of creation is \_\_\_\_\_ in the Bible's \_\_\_\_\_*  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## How should we respond?

## ANSWER KEY

What does the *Bible* say?

'out of nothing.'  
Beginning, Creator,  
Everything, universe  
Lord

Free Act, constrained  
Triune Act

What does this mean?

**responsibility.**  
Significant, important  
responsible  
endlessly restless  
**true knowledge**  
**home environment.**  
designed, ordered, structured, and law-governed.  
open  
closed  
science  
Open  
Closed  
controlled  
science, purpose, acts  
good, very good  
purposed

What difference does it make?

Foundational, unfolding story line.