

## Creation Faith

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**Bible Text:** Acts 17:22-34; Hebrews 11:3

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Let us pray.

*Lord God, as we now turn to your holy word, it is with gratitude in our hearts that we have in this world of lies, half-truths, spin, and deceit, a word that abides forever, even your inspired word. So, Lord, open our ears to hear, and the eyes of our understanding to see the truth as you reveal it to us in your holy word today. This we ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Scripture reading is found, first of all, in the book of Acts 17. After that, I also want to read briefly from John's gospel, chapter 1. And our text will be from Hebrews 11:2. First of all, then, from Acts 17, beginning at verse 22.

22 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, in the hope they might 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." 32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this."

Thus far the reading in the book of Acts, now John's gospel, chapter 1, the first three verses only. The gospel according to John,

1 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.

And finally, our text from Hebrews 11:3. Hebrews 11:3 says,

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.

Congregation of Christ, do you believe in six-day creation? Or are you like many people today, even in Reformed circles, that don't really know quite how to answer that question? Well, our text says it is by faith that we understand that the universe was created. It also says it was created by the word of God. And furthermore it says that created means that what is seen was not made out of things visible. And if you accept that statement, I think you have to believe in six-day creation. First of all, because the source of any understanding of creation is by faith. It's not by investigation, it's not by scientific endeavor, it's not by brilliant cogitations in the human mind on the basis of so-called scientific facts because the verse before this defines faith, biblical faith, this way, it says "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

What do you hope for? I hope for the resurrection of the body. A few years ago I had the unpleasant task of conducting the funeral of my oldest daughter, a beautiful Christian lady of the age of 57. We laid her in a grave. Somebody said to me, "Well, she's not really here anymore." And I said, "Yes, she is. We just buried her." The Bible speaks about the human body as just as important as the soul and we believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. And one of the things in the future that I hope for is the resurrection of the body in the Second Coming of Christ and the renewal of all creation.

Do you hope for that? What basis do you have to hope for that? You have no other basis to hope for that than the word of the living God. There's no other way to know about it. Only God knows the future. Even the weatherman doesn't know the future for a whole week. God knows the future completely. But this is also true of things not seen and, you know, one of the things that was not seen by me or you was creation. There was no human being there when God created the world in six days and that's just as true a fact and important a fact for the most brilliant scientist as it is for you. He wasn't there either. He cannot really tell you from his own personal certain knowledge about that. And that leaves all of us with only two options. We can start with ourselves and investigate all the things we can possibly investigate in one life for all the clues we might think we can find, and then put them together and try to predict possibilities in the future or in the past; and the only other way is to receive information through the word of the living God by divine

revelation. There's only those two ways. There's never been anything more than that in the history of the world and there never will be anything more than that and I believe God has given us that in the first chapter of Genesis where he tells us that there were six days. Each of them had a morning and an evening and in each of those days he tells us what he did and then he rested on the seventh day. And when he gave his law to Moses, he said you're supposed to keep the Sabbath day because in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth and all that's in them and rested on the seventh day, and therefore he hallowed it.

Now for some people, that early chapter of Genesis isn't scientific enough to satisfy them, and do you know what that is? It's a red herring. A red herring is a phony argument that somebody drags out to give you trouble. Many years ago when I was a pastor in the state of Kansas, I got to know the number one weatherman in the state of Kansas. He had a government job and his job was to gather all the scientific information possible and then send out to the radio stations and the television stations the best guesses of the weather experts about the weather for that day or that week. And guess what? He would write down, "The sun will rise at 6:31 a.m." Is that scientific? Does the sun really rise? I always thought the world revolved and the sun didn't move at all. And then he would say, "And the sun sets at 5:35 p.m." Well, scientifically does the sun set? Where does it go? It doesn't move at all. We all know that. We have enough scientific knowledge to know that. So I said, "Why do you write it that way?" "Well," he says, "because I want everybody to understand what the weather is going to be like tomorrow. So I write it in the ordinary man's language so he can comprehend it." And if I'm out fishing with somebody and I see the sun come up, I look at my watch and say, "Well, it was 6:31 a.m." So while it is not scientific language, people, it's a good thing it wasn't because science changes all the time and the technical scientific language of one generation is different from that of another generation. It's always changing. It never remains static and absolutely fixed.

So what God does for us in chapter 1 of the book of Genesis is to describe what actually happened as a man would describe it who was there to see it, and that's a very important Reformation principle. You people do not officially subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith as we of the OPC do, but we respect one another's confessions very much, and there's a very important part of that Westminster Confession of Faith that talks about the clarity of Scripture for the ordinary believer. It says this, "Not only the learned," you know, the people with degrees, "but the unlearned," you know, people like you, "by a due use of the ordinary means can attain to a sufficient understanding." And that's right. That's why we have that text in Hebrews. We understand by faith, not by brilliance, not by our own investigation, we understand by faith.

So I don't need to depend on another source or some official interpreter so that I can understand the word of God. You don't even have to read a report written by the Synod to understand chapter 1 of the book of Genesis. You know, it was Satan who invented this idea that you've got to have an interpreter. God said to Adam and Eve, "In the day that you eat of it, you'll surely die." What did Satan say? "Well, now, wait a minute. That's one interpretation of what God said. But I'll give you a couple more. It may be good for

food. It may be one to make you wise. You're going to have to go on your own for a while and figure out which is the right interpretation. God's word is not clear in and of itself," said Satan. But Satan was a liar. The Bible says God's word is light, not darkness. It is clear, not obscure. And there are a lot of things in the Bible that are questioned today for no good reason whatsoever. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Do you understand that? Is that debatable? Jesus said, "no one can come to the Father except through me." Is that open to various interpretations? What do you think? The Bible says the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them in six days. Is that open to various interpretations? Is that hard to understand?

I heard the other day about a young OPC pastor who has decided with his wife to chuck it all in. He was trained at MARS, I believe. He's going to the Roman Catholic Church. Do you know why he's going there? Well, here's one reason: he had a meeting with a priest and the priest said, "The Roman Catholic Church is the only institution that God has ordained to explain his word. You have to have us tell you what it means or you can't know what it means." And I'm sorry to say this young pastor seems to have bought that. Maybe it's because he's tired of the confusion of the different interpretations of the six days of creation in Reformed circles: the day-age theory, the framework hypothesis, the analogy theory. There should be no theories because God told us he created the world in six days, each of them having one morning and one evening. So in effect, the Roman Catholic Church says on one thing Satan was right, you've got to have an additional interpreter. You can't make it on your own just reading God's word. And our fathers of the Reformation said, "Oh, that's not true. We believe in the priesthood of believers. The ordinary believer, if he'll use his dictionary and his concordance and his brain and his heart and will listen and think, he can know the truth." Like a woman, I believe her name was Petronila Baltus. She didn't come to church and the great Abraham Kuyper came to see her, "Why aren't you coming to church?" She said, "Because you're not preaching the gospel." A life-changing event in that man's life. He became a great Reformation leader and it was one of his unmarried spinsters in his congregation that set him right. We have to believe that sort of thing, people, if we're Reformed.

The second thing we need to look at here is what is meant by the word of God. Our text says, "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God." Does that mean that the word of God is the source of the whole creation, or is he trying to say there that the word of God is the faith, the source of the faith we have in God's creation? Well, both are clearly taught in the word of God because the word of God is in the Bible a title of Jesus' identity and of the text of the Scripture. If I say to you, "I believe the word of God," I can have in mind Jesus himself or the Bible, this inspired word, and both of them have the same source in the second person of the Trinity because John tells us that the Word was there in the beginning, and not only was he with God, but he was God, and not only was he God, but it says there was nothing made by God that was not made by the Word who is the second person of the Trinity, the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing was made that he did not make. And then he became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and that means that in him and what he did is displayed the very God of creation.

Back in about 1929, the Westminster Seminary was founded. Thank God it was. It's a great turning point in the apostasy of North American Protestant churches, in my opinion. But in any case, there was a professor there, his name was Oswald T. Ellis, and he wrote an article many years ago in which he said, "If you want to understand creation, study the miracles of Jesus because they are the proper analogy to the work of creation." And our fathers of the Reformation say, "If you want to understand the Scripture and you come to something difficult, compare Scripture with Scripture. Don't run off to the Roman Catholic Church to find out what it means. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Work a little bit in the Bible, and then you'll come to understand what it really means."

So he says, look at Jesus. Who is Jesus? Well, he's the Word of God. What Word of God? The one that was there with the Father in the beginning. The one that made everything, and without him nothing was made that was made. And what does he do? He's at a wedding feast and he creates wine. And he's on a hillside with 5,000 people and he creates food to feed them. Do you think there's any doubt about the fact that he's the one mentioned that was there with the Father in creation? If I could take a time machine, we have these imaginary things in science fiction, well, let's use a little of it, if I could get in a time machine and rush back down there to where they were having that wedding feast and get a sample and then come back and go to the FBI laboratory in Washington, they would tell you, "This wine is hundreds of years old." But the people who were there know it wasn't a hundred years old. They saw it and they drank it and they said, "This is the best wine we've ever tasted, the most aged wine we ever tasted," and it was made that day by the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you believe that? Do you accept that miracle of the Bible, that Jesus Christ created wine in an instant? Well, if you believe that, why do you have any difficulty in believing in the six-day creation that we read about in the Bible? And what do you see in that miracle of Jesus? You see two things. Time was dispensed with. And by the way, you deeper thinkers, what is time anyway? Somebody asked St. Augustine that and he said, "Well, before you asked me, I thought I knew, but now I can't tell you." What is time? Well, I'll tell you one thing: time is a created thing because everything that is not God is created. Everything. Space? Yes. What did God do before he created the world? There was no before. Where did God create the world? There was no where. Time and space are both things that God created. So don't ask questions like that.

And the second thing you notice in the miracles of Christ is the appearance of age. When he made that wine, instantly it appeared to be very old, and that's the very thing that's used against the six-day creation view of creation. "Well, you know, there are many things in the observable universe that we see today that make it hard to believe that it's not millions of years old. It looks old. So how can it be young?" My answer is, for the same reason that wine could seem to be old and not be old at all. It's because God is almighty. He's the Lord over time and over space and over creation.

A few years ago in the OPC, a ruling elder brought his discipline case to the General Assembly. This man was on the faculty at Calvin College, and he wanted to be allowed to speculate about the possibility that Adam may have had pre-human ancestors, hominoids

they call it, and by the way, you'll read some of this today in some scholar's work. So he wanted to do this, and his Session said, "No, you cannot hold that view and be an elder in the OPC, and you cannot teach it." So he appealed to his Presbytery, and they agreed with the Session. So then he appealed to the General Assembly. He wanted them to overthrow that so he could be allowed to teach that Adam may have had a pre-human ancestor. And it was my privilege to be there at that General Assembly and hear the debate and I'll never forget the moment that, to me, was incomparably important. In the middle of that debate, somebody asked him, he said, "Well, Professor, what about Eve? What do you believe about Eve? Where did she come from? Do you believe that the Lord God put Adam to sleep and took a rib out of his side and made a woman out of it?" "Yes," he said, "I do. I believe that." Can you put those two things together? I certainly couldn't. You don't believe Adam was immediately pre-created by God out of the dust of the earth immediately but you believe that his wife was created out of his rib in an instant by Almighty God? There's no way that you can really work out any other coherent, understandable view of creation other than that which takes the first chapters of Genesis to be a description of history as it really unfolded.

Brothers and sisters, the God of the Bible is an Almighty God. He is able to do more than we can ask or even think, and what is needed today in the Christian church is belief, faith, that he is such an Almighty God, and that brings me to the last point which is this: there is no possible room for evolution because, says the writer of Hebrews, by faith we understand that the universe was made by the word of God and that what is seen was not made of things visible. Evolution is all about making something out of something else. Progress by evolution is from something to something all the way through. And the biblical view is, no, it came from nothing. Creation ex nihilo, out of nothing, is the historic Christian view. We just sang it a moment ago,

"Let all the earth Jehovah fear,  
Let all that dwell both far and near  
In awe before Him stand;  
For, lo, He spake and it was done,  
And all the sovereign power begun  
Stood fast at His command."

He said, "Let there be light," and there was light. He said later on, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus got up and he was alive again. Instant results from the almighty power of the Word of the living God. No wonder the psalmist goes on to say,

"O truly is the nation blest  
Whose God before the world confessed  
Jehovah is alone;  
And blest the people is whom He  
Has made His heritage to be,  
And chosen for His own."

The Word of God is the Lord Jesus Christ. The word of God is what Jesus said. You know, when Paul went to stand on Mars Hill, by the way, it was my privilege a few years

ago to stand on that very spot where Paul said those things to the unbelieving Athenians. In their earlier histories, the Athenians had believed in one God. His name they gave him was Zeus and they believed he created the world. But then, as Aristophanes said, "Vortex drove out Zeus and came to reign in his place." You know what Vortex is? It's something that's always spinning around. He's talking about the thinking and the experimental thoughts and so on of the people in Greece. And a later Greek philosopher said, "The worm striving to become man mounts up through all the spires of form." That's 2,000 years ago and we're in the same spot. We face a culture today that thinks Greek. We're evolutionists in our culture today and we also believe that Vortex drives out Jehovah, and we also believe that the worm striving to become man mounts up through all the spires of form. I can't see any difference in principle whatsoever between what Paul the apostle faced in Athens, Greece and what we face in 21st century America.

Scientific thought is always in flux. It is constantly changing. How great the folly then of the Christian church to put that above God's everlasting word. One of the professors that served at Westminster recently said we have to accept evolution or we're going to become irrelevant. I'll tell you how to become irrelevant: hitch your church to the latest science and you'll be irrelevant very quickly. Read the four gospels. Always take note of what Jesus says about Genesis when he talks about the creation of Adam and Eve, for example, and you will see that Jesus Christ was not exaggerating when he said to his disciple, Philip, who wanted to see God, he wanted to see God, he said, "Have I been so long with you and you still don't know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. So how can you say, show us the Father?" Well, look at Jesus, look at what he did, look at his acts of creation, and I'm sure that you will be convinced of six-day creation.

R. C. Sproul, for many years, said he was tolerant of these other views of creation. In a recent book he said, and I quote, "I have now changed my mind. I now hold to a literal six-day creation." And he went on to say, and he was also right about that, in my opinion, "One must do a great deal of hermeneutical gymnastics to escape the plain meaning of Genesis 1 and 2." Our Catechism says, "What is the work of creation?" And the answer is, "God's work of creation is making all things of nothing by the word of his power in the space of six days and all very good." I long to see churches like yours and mine absolutely trumpeting that to our culture today in perfect union with one another. May God grant it. Amen.