

## **Creator of Heaven and Earth – Psalm 104; Acts 17:24-31.**

*Apostles' Creed series*

*St Mark's Northbridge – 16/08/2020 AD*

**Pray.**

### **Intro:**

There are many ideas and stories about where our world came from and how the world came into existence. Some people think that this world came into existence when in ancient times there were many gods. And these gods were in a cosmic battle and out of it the world came into being.

Others see the world coming into being when little particles mixed with light and energy and formed atoms and as they came together they formed molecules and then stars and galaxies formed, and over billions of years the whole world came into existence. And there are probably other variations on these ideas about how the world came into existence.

Yet amidst all these different ideas and stories, Christians down through the ages have stood and declared, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth."

But when you say or read those words in the creed is there a part of you that squirms? Is there a part of you that feels embarrassed? Does this doctrine seem a bit too unbelievable or ridiculous to believe? Because the doctrine that God created the heavens and the earth and its implications puts a lot of people offside.

And yet Christians have continued to affirm this truth.

So why does it matter that God created the heavens and the earth?

Well it's because believing in God as the creator is crucial for understanding who God is and our place in the world – understanding our place in His world!

When you think about it, this doctrine of God being the creator of heaven and earth answers so many of our questions about our lives and the world. Questions like: How did this world come to be the way it is? Where have we come from and where are things heading? Why are we here and what is the purpose of this world? Who's in charge of the world? How should we live in this world?

So you see, this doctrine of God being the Creator matters!

And we're going to unpack this line of the Apostles' Creed and do that by going through those four headings on your outline. So if you've got an outline handy then that might help you follow along.

**Drama:**

- *From Creation to New Creation (Genesis 1; Revelation 21)*

And the first thing to point out is that God being the creator of heaven and earth isn't some obscure and insignificant doctrine that's tucked away in the Scriptures. In fact it's the precise opposite. It is foundational to Christian belief and threads its way all through the Scriptures.

In the drama of Scripture and the storyline of the Bible, God as the creator of heaven and earth is an overarching theme.

From the opening pages of the Bible right to the end we are taken on a journey from Creation to New Creation. And God is the Creator.

In Genesis chapter 1 we read those well-known words in verse 1:

*<sup>1</sup>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)*

**\*\*\*SLIDE w/Revelation 21:1-2**

And when we turn to the closing pages of the Bible, we read the Apostle John in Revelation who sees “a new heaven and a new earth”.

So the storyline of Scripture takes us from Creation to New Creation – from the Garden of Eden to the heavenly city which is the New Jerusalem. And the one who creates this is God – the main character in the drama of Scripture.

And yet we are all caught up in this story as God is on a mission to see people join Him in fellowship in the New Creation.

So this orients us to where we stand in the grand scheme of things. We know where we’ve come from and where we’re heading. We know God’s starting and end points for the world. And we know our place in God’s story as we are in this creation awaiting the new creation.

So in the drama of Scripture we meet the God who creates heaven and earth.

**Doctrine:**

- *Sovereign Creator (Genesis 1-2; Revelation 4:9-11)*

And what we see is that God is the Sovereign Creator.

In those very familiar opening words and verses of Genesis chapter 1 we see that God is a sovereign Creator.

That *in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)*

God's sovereignty is seen in the fact that He creates everything: the "heavens and the earth". From the heights of heaven to the depths of the earth, God created everything.

And as the sovereign creator, God creates everything out of nothing. A Genesis 1 continues we are told that the earth was formless and empty. It wasn't as if there were some spare parts lying around or some raw materials that God cobbled together to form the universe. No. God created everything out of nothing.

And this matters for our understanding of God because it shows that He was acting according to His own will. God wasn't motivated or forced to create the world because of the circumstances He was in or because He was influenced to by someone or something else. God is truly sovereign.

In one of the Bible's clearest statements about this, the Apostle John in the book of Revelation sees the elders praising God and they say:

**\*\*\*SLIDE w/Revelation 4:11**

*11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."*

(Revelation 4:11)

There is nothing or no one that influences God to create the heavens and the earth. God doesn't have to create the world, but he freely and graciously chooses to do so by His own will because He is the sovereign creator.

And God's sovereignty is seen in the way He creates by His word. We see this pattern in Genesis 1 where God speaks creation into existence. God says "Let there be light" and there is light. And this happens for everything else in creation. God speaks and by the power of His word, by his breath, everything is made.

And as the sovereign creator, what God creates is good. Again we see this pattern in Genesis where God creates something and then declares that it is good. And God's creation is good because He is pure and good. There is no evil in God.

So as we look at our world now and see that things aren't perfect, the problem is not with God. He is good and there is no evil in Him. So God is not the problem.

With God being the sovereign creator we see that there's a clear distinction between God and creation – between the sovereign loving Creator and His creation.

God is the Creator and we are creatures! This distinction matters.

God is so different to us. We don't make things from nothing. We don't speak things into existence. We are mere creatures whom God has created.

But we are not insignificant. And that's because God relates to us as His creatures.

- *Intimate Relater (Genesis 1:28-30; 2:16-17)*

As God creates the world, he creates humans and doesn't just speak them into existence but he speaks to them and relates to them! It's interesting that in Genesis when we read about creation that a whole chapter is devoted to God relating to one part of His creation: humans.

God graciously speaks to humans and tells them of his many blessings and gifts which He has given them. He lovingly instructs them on how they are to live in their distinguished position as rulers of the world under Him.

No other part of creation has such a distinct place and intimate relationship with God. It's humans who He has made in His image and not the fish or the birds or the cows or the stars, or the mountains or the moon. It's with humans who God relates to intimately.

- *Sustainer and Provider (Psalm 104)*

And as the creator of heaven and earth, God also sustains and provides for His creation. Earlier when we read from Psalm 104 we saw that while God creates the world, he also continues to sustain it and provide for His creatures. Have a listen to these words again from the Psalmist:

**\*\*\*SLIDE w/Psalm 104:13-15**

*<sup>13</sup> He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work. <sup>14</sup> He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate bringing forth food from the earth: <sup>15</sup>wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts. (Psalm 104:13-15)*

God sustains and provides for His creation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> And in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus echoed the Psalmist by teaching his disciples not to worry about the details of their life because God the Creator is the one who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the grass of the field.

Since God sustains and provides for his creation, then it pushes against the idea that in the beginning God set the world up let things pan out with no control over what happens in the world. The Bible consistently shows that God is still intimately involved in his creation, even when it might not seem like the case.

So in the middle of a global pandemic, God is still sustaining the universe. When natural disasters and war strike, God is still sustaining the universe. When you are grieving or battling sickness, God is still sustaining and providing for His creation. And brothers and sisters, it's enormously comforting to know that God cares about His creation. That God cares for and provides for you as one of His creatures.

So when we believe that God is the creator of heaven and earth we believe that he sustains the world. He keeps this world going.

### **Discipleship:**

So what bearing does God as creator of heaven and earth have on your life? How should knowing and believing God as your creator shape your life as a disciple of Christ?

Well at its most basic, being a Christian means that you recognise God as the Creator and you as a creature. And the way we live our lives flows from that important distinction. You live as a creature in relation to your loving creator.

- *Worthy of our Worship, Not Idolatry (Isaiah 45:18-25; Romans 1:20-25)*

And this means that God alone is worthy of your worship. He is your maker and every breath you have is because of him. When the prophet Isaiah spoke to Israel he reminded them of how nothing or no one compares to God and why He alone is worthy of worship:

**\*\*\*SLIDE w/Isaiah 45:18**

*For this is what the Lord says— he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited—he says: “I am the Lord, and there is no other.”*

(Isaiah 45:18)

So God is the One who our lives must be oriented towards. The One who we worship because no one or nothing else is worthy of our devotion.

But what the Bible points out is that although we know that God is the Creator, we don't worship him as our Creator. We engage in idolatry instead. Romans chapter 1 tells us that humanity worships the created things rather than the Creator. We worship the good things God has created rather than the good Creator.

We have all placed other things above God. We have all been more devoted to the created things rather than the Creator. Whether it is being more devoted to our families, our careers, our personal ambitions and achievements, our hobbies and recreation. These things all become idols when we are more devoted to them than to God.

If you did a quick stocktake of what consumes your time, your thoughts, your money, your affections, the things that you stay awake thinking about – it would give you a good idea of what you might be worshipping.

You see, it's right for us to care about the created things which God has made and so generously given us. But we must not let anything take the place of our Creator as the one who is worthy of our worship.

- *Repentance and Faith (Psalm 104; Acts 17:24-31)*

And yet when we are caught in our idolatry, the God who created heaven and earth mercifully calls people like you and me to repent and worship Him in faith. Even when we are engaging in idolatry, the creator of heaven and earth is reaching out and desiring for his creatures to be in a right relationship with Him.

We saw this in our Bible reading from Acts 17 as Paul preached in Athens about the creator God who is not domesticated but who created every person from every race for the purpose of knowing Him.

And as Paul concludes his sermon he says:

**\*\*\*SLIDE w/Acts 17:29-31**

*29 "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. 30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:29-31)*

The Creator calls on people everywhere to repent. Everyone is accountable to their creator for the way they live and the judgment day is set with the man Jesus Christ as the judge. And so God mercifully calls on people to stop worshipping the created things and worship Him as the creator. Through Him there is forgiveness and reconciliation so that in the words of 2 Corinthians 5, people become a new creation through faith in the man Jesus Christ.

And God calls on us as His creatures to trust that He is the One keeping the world going and providing for us. When times are tough we can be tempted to doubt whether God really cares and whether He is really in control. But we know that even in times of great uncertainty, in times of societal breakdown, in times of higher unemployment, in times of sickness and grief, in all things we know that our loving creator continues to sustain and provide for us as His precious creatures.

- *Morality and Ethics (Genesis 9:6; Matthew 19:1-12; 1 Timothy 2:8-15)*

And trusting in our creator God will affect the way we live our lives. Our morals and ethics are shaped by our Creator.

Since God is the creator of the universe then He knows what is best for how we live. And the way we live our lives and the way we relate to others matters because God is our creator. He defines what is good, not us.

So the reason why human life matters is because God the creator says that human life matters. We have been created in His image and have dignity – both humans who have been born and those who are yet to be born. Human life is precious and humans have dignity because of God. That's why murder is such an affront to God.

The reason why marriage between one man and one woman for life matters is because God has made it that way. God as the creator made marriage and knows how it works best. In Matthew chapter 19 when Jesus was asked a question about marriage, he directed his questioners back to Genesis and the fact that God is creator and he created and designed marriage a certain way.

Similarly, when the Apostle Paul instructs Timothy about how men and women are to relate in the family and the church, directs us back to the created order in Genesis and the way God made man and woman to complement one another.

You see these are just a few examples where the fact that God is the creator of heaven and earth makes a difference to how we live and relate to others. And when we go against God's good design, we do so at our own peril.

God isn't a cosmic killjoy but He is our loving Father Almighty who knows what is best for His children.

- *Thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:3-5)*

Still one of the biggest ways that God as creator of heaven and earth should affect us as disciples of Christ is that drives us to thanksgiving. When we truly understand that God

is the creator of heaven and earth then it should lead us to thanking him for his good gifts to us.

Paul reminds Timothy:

**\*\*\*SLIDE w/1 Tim. 4:4-5**

*<sup>4</sup> For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, <sup>5</sup> because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:4-5)*

It is right for us to enjoy the good things that God gives us. The delightful food. The picturesque scenery. The soothing music that we've listened to. The gripping novel or movie. The freshly mown lawn or cultivated garden. The company of good friends. Time with family. A restful day-off or holiday. These things are all good. But we mustn't forget to thank God for them lest we start idolising these gifts that our creator God has given us.

Gratitude is a key part to being a creature in God's world. When we thank God for his good gifts to us then we remember that they come from Him and we aren't tempted to think that they come from us.

And our thanksgiving to God also results in praise to our Creator. Or if you like bigger words, then it results in 'Doxology'

**Doxology:**

We saw this earlier in Revelation chapter 4 that God alone is worthy of all glory, honour and praise because He created everything by His own will.

And what's amazing about this scene in Revelation is that you have creatures laying down their crowns before the Creator. They recognise that they aren't the ones in charge but God is.

We praise our God the creator of heaven and earth for who He is and what He has done. He has made this world and we get to live in it, work in it, subdue it, play in it – and God continues to provide for us.

Our God created us in His image and made us for relationship with Him. And God has made the New Creation – the place where we get to dwell with Him and be in our true home – a place with no more tears and pain and COVID-19. And we get to share in this because of the Lord Jesus – the eternal word who came to earth in the flesh. He is the one in whom all things were created and the one for whom all things were made. And that's just a taste for next week when we see more about why we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

All these things and many more are why God, the creator of heaven and earth is worthy of all praise.

**Let's now pray to our Heavenly Father Almighty who created the heavens and the earth.**