**Lecture #5 Creation in the New Testament II**

“The Jenga Effect: Creation in the New Testament—How It All Fits Together”

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**Slide 1**

Challenging the biblical doctrine of creation undermines at least eight vital biblical doctrines.

The Jenga (or Domino) effect is obvious in theology, Christology, anthropology, sin and death, salvation, ethics, marriage, and eschatology.

These 8 doctrines are central to the message of the NT and indeed to the entire Bible. We will look at how each of these doctrines is linked in the NT to Creation. Let’s start with theology. Who is God? How does He engage with this world and me?

**Slide 2**

“And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, ‘Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?” (Acts 4:24-25).

I will highlight four NT verses (and there are more) that emphasize God as our Creator.

This is part of a prayerful response of the early Christian community to the persecution of the Jewish leadership. “Heaven, earth, and sea” represents the entire created world and echoes Genesis 1 and also the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20:11. By appealing to God’s creative power they affirm also God’s protective power. The God who made the world is also the God who protects His people. If God cannot (or has not) created the earth, is He really able to protect His people?

**Slide 3**

“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:24-25). Paul speaks here to gentiles, philosophers, thinkers and leaders in Athens. Similar to Acts 4 he emphasizes God as the Creator. While he is not quoting the HB (nobody would really relate to that), he gets to the same point, by referring to God’s creative work for all mankind and “everything”.

**Slide 4**

“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” (Heb 11:3). The Greek word translated with “universe” is *aiōn* and is used here in a plural form. In singular it’s translated “age, eternity, lifetime”. Matthew 13:22 or Romans 12:2 use the word to refer to “this present age” = “this present world”. The plural encompasses all the worlds.

**Slide 5**

“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” (Rom 1:20). Paul speaks here about the sinfulness of humanity. Creation points to the Creator, he says. Design points to the Designer (“invisible attributes”). Evolution denies God’s eternal power by its very nature of slow development over billions of years. He does not have the power or else He does not have the will and His character is in doubt.

**Slide 6**

* God is Creator of all things. He is not in creation (panentheism). He is not creation itself (pantheism). Creation is separate from Him, something He invented.
* He is all-powerful. The universe is huge. The Creator of such things has to be all powerful.
* His creation points to His character. Power, wonder, beauty, complexity, incredible adaption of means to an end.
* He is the only One worthy of worship. Throughout Scripture this is the reason for worshiping God in contrast to the gods of the nations.

Remove Creation and you remove these vital aspects of the Doctrine of God.

**Slide 7**

“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 was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1-3). John 1:1-3 clearly echoes Genesis 1. It tells us that the Word was already present in the beginning, it speaks about the intimacy between the Word (Jesus) and the God (the Father), and it tells us the Word is God (1:10—the world was made through Him). God (and Christ) is not in the Creation or in all living things. He is separate from it--but He is also very close to us, since all is made through Him. Evolution, esp. theistic evolution, speaks of God as far away from us, uninvolved and unconcerned with this world.

**Slide 8**

“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” (Col 1:15-16). Christ as Firstborn (*arche*), position of preeminence, first place. NOT Christ being Created. Revelation 3:14 describes Christ as the Beginning of God’s creation.

**Slide 9**

“But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 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” (Heb 1:2-3). Notice God and Christ’s involvement not only in the original Creation, but also in **ongoing involvement in our world**. (cf. John 5:17 where Jesus parallels His healing work with God’s ongoing work in the Created order).

**Slide 10**

* Christ, the eternal Son, is the One through whom the universe was created.
* He was with the Father before the world began.
* He is preeminent over Creation.

Notice God and Christ’s involvement not only in the original Creation, but also in ongoing involvement in our world. (cf. John 5:17 where Jesus parallels His healing work with God’s ongoing work in the Created order).

**Slide 11**

“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 his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?” (Matt 19:4-5). Clear references to Genesis creation account. First part (“created them male and female”) refers to Gen 1:26-27; the second reference connects to Gen 2:24-25. Jesus took both Gen 1 and 2 as factual and historical accounts.

**Slide 12**

“With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so” (James 3:9-10). James makes an argument why it is morally wrong to curse people with our mouth, since they are all made in the likeness of God. If there is no likeness, there is no argument not to curse.

**Slide 13**

“Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, . . . the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God” (Luke 3:23, 38). Matthew begins the genealogy of Jesus beginning with Abraham and going down to Jesus – big emphasis on link to David (Son of David) and secondarily to Abraham. Luke begins from the other direction, starting with Jesus, and going back, not to Abraham only, but all the way back to Adam (Son of God). It is a genealogy. Notice the emphasis on Adam as a historical figure, the first man. If Adam were not a historical figure, then the teaching of Jesus as the Son of God is undermined because the link all the way back to the past is broken.

**Slide 14**

“Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme” (1 Peter 2:13). The Greek word translated “institution” is *ktisis* = creature, creation. All human leaders (including the emperor) are creatures, and not the Creator. Peter fundamentally undermines the claim to power and the existing power structures of the Greco-Roman world. If we are not created by God, we are not responsible to Him and power is the domain of the strongest. If we have been created by God, earthly power structures are placed in subservience to the God of heaven. Evolution posits the survival of the fittest. God’s design is not based on power but on love and relationship—vertical and horizontal.

**Slide 15**

* People are created in the image of God.
* Adam and Eve were historical figures.
* A person is a whole, a combination of earth and the breath of life.
* We are creatures, no the Creator.

Undermine Creation and you remove these essential biblical concepts of anthropology.

**Slide 16**

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Rom 5:12). Sin came first—then followed by death. Sin is the cause of death according to Paul. If evolution is right, death comes first, then sin and Paul got it all wrong. Paul assumes the literal historicity of Genesis 1-3.

**Slide 17**

“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, Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things” (Rom 1:21-23). A nice description of idolatry, echoing Jeremiah and Isaiah’s satire about idol worshippers. When we worship an idol we adopt the characteristics of the idol, for we become what we worship. Idolatry is the primal sin. Evolution highlights the fact that humanity is the pinnacle of development, the measure of things. We are the focus and we begin to worship ourselves.

**Slide 18**

* Sin and death are closely linked.
* Death entered the world through sin through the choices and actions of the historical Adam and Eve.
* The primal sin is idolatry—we worship ourselves.

When we remove Creation we undermine the biblical concept of sin, which means we undermine the need for a Saviour. Death becomes not an enemy but a friend.

**Slide 19**

“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator” (Col 3:9-10). This is a clear reference to the creation account of Gen 1:26-27. If we have not been created in the image of God, how can we be restored to it? One cannot restore what was never lost and never existed. If God is not the Creator, there is no Imago Dei to consider as a paradigm for our character renewal.

**Slide 20**

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Cor 5:17). Creation = *ktisis.* Notice the way that Creation serves as the paradigm for restoration.

**Slide 21**

* Salvation is the restoration of the image of God in humans.
* Creation is one of the paradigms used to describe salvation.
* Redemption without creation and the fall does not make any sense.

**Slide 22**

“With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so” (James 3:9-10). Cursing or mistreating others is wrong because they are made in the image of God. Image of God = our Alien Dignity – from outside of our realm, linked to God. Worthy of respect regardless of what a person has done.

**Slide 23**

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). We were created for “good works”, for service and blessing and uplifting others. Creation thus becomes the paradigm for ethics and lifestyle. Creation and new creation are interlinked. Evolution denies a new creation because it is not needed. Evolution teaches progress upward, while Scripture teaches an original perfection that was lost and needs restoration.

**Slide 24**

* We treat people ethically (and God’s way) because they, like us, were made in the image of God.
* The new creation requires us to live to bless others.
* Without creation there is no *imago dei* and we are not bound ethically to respect all people.

**Slide 25**

* Jesus’ response to the question of the Pharisees about divorce in Matthew 19:3-6 is rooted in Gen 1 and 2
* Jesus assumes the historicity of the first pair.
* Without creation the notion of permanence in marriage fails

Evolution teaches that marriage is simply a contract between two individuals, one for the benefit of the individual and something that can be left when the contract no longer helps the individual’s development. Creation also speaks clearly to divinely-ordained sexuality. Marriage is the union of a man and a woman—not two men or two women.

**Slide 26**

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 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” (Rom 8:19-21). Notice the link between creation and eschatology (or last things). If nature was never chained in corruption and death, then it cannot be set free.

**Slide 27**

“Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor 15:49). Again, the linkage between beginning and ending.

If we were not in the image of the historical Adam then the parallel to bear the image of the Man of Heaven is undermined. If there is no definite beginning then there seems to be no definite end. This is the message of Evolution – a slow gradual upward development, where death brings beauty and the individual is unimportant.

**Slide 28**

* The end is intricately linked to the beginning.
* What went wrong at the beginning will be corrected at the end.

**Slide 29**

* “What if” is a relevant question. What if there was no literal creation?
* We need to help answer this question for our students, fellow church members or patients.
* What if…

Theology

God is not all powerful

God is arbitrary, uncaring

We may worship ourselves

Christology

Christ is not the Creator

He is not preeminent, nor the Savior, we can ignore Him

Anthropology

Humans arose from lower forms of life.

Humans are not made in the image of God.

Respect for others is rooted in what they do, not in who they inherently are

Sin and Death

Death preceded sin.

Death is the means of development.

The world is progressing upward not downward.

Salvation

Man is progressing and needs no salvation.

Progress is measured in human and naturalistic terms not in comparison with Christ.

Ethics

Since people are the end product of evolution they are the measure of all else.

Other people can be used as a means to an end.

There is no right or wrong, might makes right.

Marriage

Marriage is a contract between people. It can be broken at will.

Marriage can be anything people want to make it.

Eschatology

Since there is no definite beginning, there is no definite End.

The world is getting better, not worse. We are only small cogs in a great progression toward evolution’s goal.

**Slide 30**

Here comes the good news: God’s personal love letter to us in Scripture and through Jesus tells us loud and clear that life had a beginning, that the Creator’s love was right at the beginning, that He was willing to pay the ultimate price so that we could have a future. With John we can only say: “Come, Lord Jesus, come!”

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