

Lesson 6 CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

6.1. Creation

Creation involves calling into existence those things which do not exist. The LORD created the heavens and the earth out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). The motivation, cause and initial moment of creation can only be found in the eternal will and good pleasure of God. In His counsel and will, He created all worlds, (see the Nicene Creed), that is, the heavens above and the deepest seas. All things were created by the power of His Word, Hebrews 1:1,2. Note that all Persons of the Trinity are active in creation, Psalm 33:6; John 1:3; Colossians 1:15, 16; Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30.

6.1.1 Creation of angels

Angels were created by the LORD to be His servants and messengers. Angels are also servants of man, Hebrews 1 and 2. The Bible has special names for them, for example, cherubim, seraphim, holy watchers, sons of God, heavenly host, and so on. We read of specific angels in the Bible, for example, Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer or Day Star, Isaiah 14:12, Daniel 10:13, 12:1; Luke 1:26.

6.1.2 Creation of the world

The world was created in six days, according to the following pattern:

Day 1: light	Day 4: luminaries, seasons
Day 2: division of waters	Day 5: fishes, birds
Day 3: division of dry land	Day 6: animals and man

The theory of evolution says that all present things evolved from original cells through a process spanning millions of years. Although we cannot deny the process of limited change and micro-evolution, we must rule out the possibility of a change from one species to another (macro-evolution). While we cannot accurately determine the age of the earth, an evolutionary process of billions of years does not accord with the testimony of Genesis 1-3 and its relation to the rest of Scripture.

6.1.3 Creation of man

Man was created last as the crown of all creation. He was created in the image of God in true righteousness and holiness, to be God's representative and viceroy on the earth. The LORD immediately forms a covenant with man, and the calling to be His image in the world is a call in the context of the covenant. In the beginning, in paradise, the LORD promises the gift of eternal life, and requires that man obey Him in every word (faith and trust).

The calling to be the image of God still applies to all men, Genesis 1:26-28. But we can only be God's image by being renewed after the image of Christ Ephesians, 4:24.

6.2 Providence

God's providence is a constantly present power by which all things are governed and upheld. The word literally means "to foresee", in the sense of taking care of, providing for someone or something. Nothing happens without God's will, and He governs all events, activities and decisions, Acts 17:28; Colossians 1:17.

We distinguish two elements in God's providence:

6.2.1 Upholding

The LORD maintains and upholds the ordinances He has set from the very beginning, for example, Psalm 89; 119:89f. In spite of the fall and its devastating effects, the LORD remains faithful to His Word. He does not forsake the work of His hands, Psalm 138:8.

6.2.2 Governing

The LORD actively governs all things that happen, and overrules the counsel of the wicked, Proverbs 16:4, Genesis 50:20. The LORD does not rule out human responsibility, but He actively leads and governs all events so that the plans and counsels of evil are thwarted, the wicked are duly rewarded for their sin, and the righteous are exalted.

We also may speak of two **kinds** of providence:

6.2.3 Ordinary Providence

The LORD always uses the means, governing all things through the ordinances He has set. Thus, we may also observe and rely upon the regularity in the world and in the laws of nature, Genesis 8:22; Psalm 145.

Man is a responsible agent in God's providence. The LORD in His righteous permission allows people to make their own decisions and so reap the fruit of their own actions in history. This is all part of His judgments and His government of the world. Even devils and fallen angels are subject to Him in their counsels and plans, Article 13, Revelation 12.

6.2.4 Extra-Ordinary Providence

At certain times the LORD reaches into the regular pattern of events and laws, and alters them for the sake of His purpose. He grants miracles through His prophets, and later through His Son and the apostles; He sends His angels; stops the course of the sun, Joshua 10:23; leads the wise men by a star, Matthew 2:2. All these things are signs of the LORD's sovereignty and the absolute truth and power of His Word.

Note the following heresies:

1. Deism

Deism (England, 17th century) teaches that the LORD, once having created the world, leaves it to run according to its own laws without any interference. Defenders of this theory promote the ideals of natural law, natural rights, and related theories.

2. Pantheism

This philosophy teaches that God is not **above** creation, but **in** creation, and thus in the material and movement of all things. There is no divine plan or goal in this mystical philosophy, but only a continual evolution to greater levels of good.

In opposition to both of these heresies we are called to be:

- a. patient in adversity, James 5:7.
- b. thankful in prosperity, 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.
- c. confident regarding the future, Philippians 1:6

Exercises Lesson 6

I. Reference Passages

Study and Review: Belgic Confession, Article 12, 13, 14a.
Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 9, 10.

II. Review Questions

1. What does the word "to create" mean? How did God create the world?
2. Are all Persons of the Trinity involved in the work of creation? If so, prove your answer from Scripture.
3. What is God's providence? How is it connected with God's eternal decree?
4. What attitude should the knowledge of God's providence create in us?
5. What is the place of Jesus Christ in God's providence?

III. Extra Questions

1. Explain the relationship between God's providence and government of all things, and our human responsibility for our actions.
2. What is the theory of evolution? How is it against the Scriptures?

3. What role do the angels play in the providence of God?
4. What is the relationship between God's providence and His counsel of redemption?