

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” These are some of the most well-known words in the English language. They’ve remained nearly unchanged in every major English translation of the Bible since even before the King James Version. The astronauts of Apollo 8 – the first mission to leave the earth’s orbit and orbit the moon – read those words from lunar orbit on Christmas Eve, 1968, and this was later commemorated on a postage stamp with the first words set on the famous *Earthrise* picture taken on that mission.

What gives these first words of Holy Scripture such standing, such gravity? It’s not a mere poetic quality that they have. It’s that they call to mind the account that follows, the account of God creating everything. When we understand what it means that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, we understand who God is, what creation is, and who we are.

The first thing that the creation account reveals about God is His complete, total lordship over the universe itself. When the divine Word tells us, “In the beginning, God...” it is revealing that God already existed, already was, when the universe – matter, energy, time – were brought into being. The Lord is eternal, having no beginning and no end. He was, and is, and is to come.

God is not confined by the limitations of the world as we know it, or even of reality itself, because God is the Creator and Lord of reality. This is seen in how He creates. God says, “Let there be light,” and through His sheer unlimited power, light comes into being.

He doesn’t have to undertake some quest or go through some convoluted process to create, like the pagan myths often entail. No, simply through His will, spoken through His Word, the universe comes into existence from nothing.

This is in part why God cannot lie. Not only is He truth itself and therefore incapable of lying, but when He speaks, reality conforms itself to what He says. He says into the darkness, “Let there be light,” or more literally “There is light,” and despite the fact that that wouldn’t have been true before He spoke, the moment those words come forth, light exists, because God said it does.

In ancient times, this truth was contrasted against all the pagan myths of how the world came to be. These often involved multiple gods and goddesses, with the chief god often having to conquer some enemy or overcome some other power in order to bring the world into being as it is now. For example, in Babylonian mythology, with which the ancient Israelites would have been familiar, the storm god Marduk defeated the great serpent goddess Tiamat and then used her various body parts to construct the cosmos.

Another problem is that that god may only have a tenuous hold on power among the other gods. Just look at Zeus, who overthrew his father Cronos, who had overthrown his father Uranus. Mere mortals could never be sure of who was actually in power, or if their particular god or goddesses would be able to help them, or if what the gods had declared as divine law would remain or be replaced should another god ascend to power.

We might mock such ancient fables, but humanity is just as prone to such thoughts still in our day. In every era, there are those who think their understanding of the universe is complete and unassailable, and therefore they have power over it.

In ancient days, everyone knew that the earth was made of the basic elements, such as earth, fire, wind, and water, and that all things were some mix of these. To suggest otherwise was to show yourself a complete fool. But then along came classical mechanics, the idea of atoms and how they interacted with each other. And then all those who clung to previous ideas were fools, and everyone knew this was right. But then along came quantum mechanics, and antimatter, and dark energy, and all kinds of other understandings of the world. And again, previous understandings were relegated to the dust bin of “well-intentioned but simple” thoughts, as we now know for sure how things work.

Such progress tempts us to arrogance, thinking that we’re finally the masters of the world, but we have no guarantee that future knowledge won’t completely overturn all we “understand,” and future generations look upon us as misguided simpletons.

Against this, there is the true and only God. As He declares through the prophet Isaiah, “Before Me there was no god formed, nor shall there be after Me.” His authority over the cosmos is eternal and absolute, His word bringing all things about, upholding all things, and lasting into eternity. Therefore, we may have absolute assurance and certainty in Him, because the day will never come where He is overthrown, replaced, or defeated. He is Lord forever.

Another truth shown in the creation account is that God created the universe and everything in it with purpose and order. If you consider the account carefully, you’ll observe something. On the first three days, God creates something and then divides it from something else, making distinctions between light and darkness, sky from waters, land from seas.

On the second three days, God takes those created places and fills them with other things fit for them. He takes the light and gathers it together into the sun, moon, and stars, and gives them the purpose of marking times and seasons. He brings forth birds to fly through the air and fish to fill the waters. He creates all manner of animals, from great beasts to tiny bugs, to fill the earth and eat the plants on it, while pollinating them and spreading their seeds. Last, God makes man. Man will possess God’s image, meaning His character, and He will exercise dominion – lordship – over creation in the stead and by the command of the Creator Himself.

Note that every part of creation, everything that exists, was purposefully made by God and placed into its specific niche. The universe was not the result of cosmic battles and strife between fickle deities, as the pagans thought. Nor is it the result of randomness, accidents, and statistically-impossible coincidences, as modern science would claim. Though broken by mankind’s sin, creation still bears the marks of the infinitely wise and creative God, who formed it all according to His will and who still upholds it by His mighty power.

The third thing that the creation account teaches us about the universe is that God made it good. As was just mentioned, earth is not the result of trial-and-error by God, as though the Lord just stumbled through the whole process until He finally decided it was “good enough.”

No, as He was bringing everything into being through His will and His Word, seven times God declared what He had made to be “good.” And “good,” in biblical language, doesn’t just mean a little better than average. If something is “good,” it is exactly how it should be, aligned with the ideal. At the last of those seven, proclaimed after everything was made, God declared creation to be “very good.”

Creation was brought into being just as God had wanted it to be. The Lord had not cut any corners or compromised on His design. Nothing was out of place. There were no mistakes. There was nothing that could have been done any better. Creation was very good.

As we know, creation didn’t stay perfect for very long, unfortunately. Satan rebelled against God and brought many angels with him. The evil one then came and tempted man to join his rebellion through doubting the Lord’s love and will.

As man had dominion over creation, when he fell into sin and death, the consequences of sin corrupted all of creation as well. As the Lord declared, the effects of man’s fall would be seen in things such as thorns and thistles. Creation would no longer be a paradise for man, but rather would be something he would have to fight against, suffering from thorns and thistles as he sweated to get food from the earth. Man’s lordship was no longer a joyful task but rather a difficult chore, and at the end of life man would return back to the dust from whence he had first been made.

But God, who had made everything very good, didn’t just sit back and watch as creation headed toward disaster. The final destiny of the world is not to be swallowed up as the sun expands into a red giant star. The universe will not go into heat death, with everything perishing in impossibly-cold darkness.

No, God made everything good, and God will remake everything good once more. God tells us in His word, “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits 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; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” At the Last Day, all of creation will be remade in perfection, “very good” once more, a paradise for man to dwell in with the Lord God Himself.

Now, you may have already picked up on it, but these three points that are made in the creation account don’t just teach us about the universe as a whole. What God teaches us as He describes the creation of heaven and earth and everything in them applies to each and every one of us. Knowing the truth about creation teaches us the truth about who we are as humanity.

So, the first point about all of creation applies to people as well. Just as God is Lord over all creation, so He is Lord over each and every person. He alone is the One who brings every single person into existence in his mother’s womb. He alone grants life when and where He chooses, knitting children together and establishing their days before their parents even know they exist.

This is, in part, why abortion is such a heinous sin. When people abort a child, they are ending a life that God has given. God is the one who wonderfully created that little boy or girl, joining his or

her body to his or her soul. And this is true for every child conceived: even the ones that don't fit into the parents' plans, even the ones whose bodies are afflicted with birth defects, even the ones conceived in rape or incest.

To end the life of such a child is to tell God that He, the Perfect One, had an error in judgment. It is to say that we know better than God and have to fix His mistake. And that is great wickedness, not to mention putting to death a person who has committed no crime. God is the Lord of all people, including the unborn, and those who would call Him a fool and murder the innocent will face His wrath, unless they repent.

That God is Lord of all people also means that He is the only God that a person can rightly have. There are no other gods, only demons. That means that every other religion besides biblical Christianity is untrue, and those who follow other religions are at best deceived by lies and at worst willfully following the teachings of demons.

Contrary to the current pope's recent heretical statements – that every religion is a way to arrive at God – only repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will bring a person to eternal life. Every other road is a path to hell. People do not have “their own truths;” they just live in delusions.

Now, can we force people to believe? Of course not. Only God can change the heart. Only an individual can choose to resist His grace. But we can, and must, speak the truth that God is Lord of all, and that His Word is true for all. To try to compromise and find middle ground between God's truth and whatever errors that are out there is just to land in other errors.

God doesn't want people in error, which ties into the second point, that, like creation, God makes each and every person with purpose and meaning. No human being is a mistake. No one is on this earth by accident. As the Lord says in the familiar words spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” This was true for those exiles in Babylon; it is true for people today.

God has not made anyone for the purpose of destroying them in hell forever. No, God has made each and every person out of love, and desires that they dwell with Him in paradise forever. Men push God away through their unbelief, but God continues to reach out to them. And for those He has brought into His Kingdom, He guides all things so that they might be kept in the way of truth and used to bring others to the way of truth as well.

This is wonderful comfort for us as Christians, because we know why we're here, why we exist. We exist to be with God. That's the point of life itself – being joined to the Lord and His boundless love. Sometimes our sin tempts us away from that. And sometimes God must use trials and tribulations to discipline us and bring us back to Him.

But no matter where we are, what we're going through, how hard things might be, we know that God has eternity with Him as our final destination. We know that this is God's desire, not just for some, but for all. Yes, many will resist His grace and mercy and continue in unbelief, to their own destruction. But that doesn't mean we should stop proclaiming God's desire for them, or cease calling them to walk according to God's Word.

We do this for the reason tied to the third lesson the creation account teaches: that God creates all people to be good. Again, this isn't "good" in the sense of "better than okay, but not great." Nor does this mean that people are to be "good" in the sense that being kind enough and doing enough good deeds will earn you a place in heaven. No, this means that God, our Lord, has created us with the purpose of making us into just who He has designed us to be. As He says through Moses, "You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

Now, just as sin has broken the creation, sin has broken each and every person. As St. Paul writes in Romans, quoting the Old Testament, "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God." We are all born in sin; we are all conceived in sin. Temptations to sin are a constant reality in our lives. The devil would try to get us to affirm such sin, even to find our identity in it.

In our time he has greatly succeeded in this with respect to sexual sins. People are told that being gay, or lesbian, or transgender, is just who they are; it's part of their identity. But this simply isn't true, no matter how loudly and how often our culture declares it. Rather, the truth is that people are attacked with the temptations of same-sex attraction, or their minds are afflicted with gender dysphoria. These are crosses they are given to bear.

Our job as the people of God isn't to say that these, or any other results of sin, are good things. To do so is to deny the truth of who God has created such individuals to be and to harden such people against His Word. Rather, we must speak the truth in love, calling sin sin and pointing to God's Word to establish what is truly good.

We must come alongside those who struggle with sins. We must help them to walk in the ways of God, even as we admit that we too are sinners reliant on the grace and mercy of God in Christ for us. We must all look to Jesus, who bore our sins in His body on the cross, and fight against them by the Spirit He has given to us. We seek to lead all to repentance and faith, and walk in these things ourselves, looking to the day when our Lord will recreate us in His goodness.

This will be a difficult path to walk, but we have comfort because our God is the Lord: Lord of all creation, Lord of all people, possessing infinite power and majesty. Our God has made all creation, all men, each and every one of us, with purpose and meaning. And through His Word, and the blood of His Son, shed for us, we know that He will come again to remake creation, and all who believe in Him, to be once more "very good."

May God hasten the day. Amen.