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The Christian Worldview as Master Narrative: Creation

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Download date	2026-05-19 10:55:32
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10392/2656

The Christian Worldview as Master Narrative: Creation

Once we know that God is the solitary explanation at the beginning, we can be confident that he will be the one who brings this story to a close in a way that brings him no less glory.

Wednesday, December 15, 2010

One of the hallmarks of the postmodern age is, as one of its main theorists has explained, “incredulity toward metanarratives.” This reflects the postmodern suspicion of any master explanation of world reality and human experience. But, from beginning to end, biblical Christianity is a master narrative. Biblical Christianity is not only a faith that involves essential truths; it is the story of God’s purpose to redeem humanity and to bring glory to himself. This narrative is revealed to us as a comprehensive master story that is as vast as the cosmos and so detailed as to include every atom and molecule of creation.



Even as the postmodern age has rejected the metanarrative, most postmodern thinkers accept the fact that human existence is essentially narrative in terms of our consciousness. This is an important insight, for it is impossible to give an account of our individual lives without using the structure of a story. The postmodern resistance to a master narrative is the fear that such a story would be inherently repressive. But the Christian gospel is the most liberating narrative ever heard, and the Bible presents the story, not merely as one account of reality to be put alongside others, but as the one definitive account of God’s purposes.

Indeed, the Christian gospel is the story to which all other narratives are accountable. The Scripture narrates the story in the unfolding of God’s plan and purposes. The very God who reveals himself as sovereign and holy—the only true God—is the God who has generously shared the knowledge of himself and his purposes with his sinful creatures.

Creation—The Beginning of the Story

Every worldview and metanarrative has a beginning. Without exception, every worldview must give an account of how the cosmos came into being and must answer the question of its meaning. The very existence of the cosmos requires an answer to this question, and this answer determines so much of what follows in the narrative.

The Bible begins with the declaration that “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). The doctrine of creation forms the starting point for our understanding of the cosmos and our place within it. The Bible’s straightforward explanation for the existence of all things is traced to God’s own intention to create the cosmos as the theater of his own glory. The Bible rejects all forms of dualism or polytheism, leaving the God of the Bible as the sole explanatory principle of the universe. Nothing that exists does so outside of his sovereignty and intention. The God of the Bible creates *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) and is not dependent upon any preexistent matter or conditioned by any external force.

As Creator, God takes responsibility for his creation. Furthermore, the Creator remains directly involved with his creation, ruling over all times, places, and authorities. He exercises his rule through a scrupulous providence that includes, as Jesus made clear, even the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:26, 28).

The Bible also makes clear that the Creator is pleased with his creation. Having created all that exists, he declared his

creation to be good. This verdict on creation is a refutation of any worldview that denies the goodness of creation or slanders the material world as unholy. At the same time, the Bible condemns any worship of nature as an end in itself.

The creation of human beings is the climax of the creation narrative. Having created everything else that exists, God crowned his creation when he created human beings as the singular creature made in his own image (Gen. 1:26-27). The Bible clearly and unambiguously reveals that human beings are special creatures—the only creatures made in the image of God. Even as we face contemporary efforts to dethrone humanity from a position of privilege within creation, the Bible makes clear that human beings are made in God’s image precisely, so that we, alone within all creation, may consciously know and glorify God. Therefore, the human creature is given the ability to fabricate and to manipulate the material world. God gave human beings the ability to till the soil, reap a harvest, and bring the earth under dominion. At the same time, God invested human beings with a crucial stewardship in our responsibility to use, enjoy, and care for creation as a matter of essential stewardship.

The Bible also reveals that gender is a part of the goodness of God’s creation. God made his human creatures as male and female and invested these creatures with responsibility to enjoy his guests and to reproduce within the context of marriage (Gen. 1:27-28). Marriage, too, is part of the goodness of God’s creation. While other creatures merely mate, humans are called to enter into a covenant of marriage whereby one man and one woman come together to form a union that is pleasing to God.

The biblical portrait of the creating God demonstrates a God of love whose character issues naturally in his creation. The loving character of God is woven into the warp and woof of his creation and the creatures within it. The substance of the biblical teaching focuses on God’s creation of the universe and all within it by the power of his word. The product of God’s creative activity is a universe of seemingly infinite variety, complexity, and mystery.

Thus, creation is not a brute fact without meaning. It derives its meaning from the divine character and will. As the theater of God’s redemptive activity, creation is not static, but is moving toward that goal established by decree before the foundation of the universe. Without the knowledge of divine creation, we would be left to ourselves in terms of discerning or discovering the very purpose for the existence of the material world and the means by which it came to exist.

All worldviews start with this great question and must give some account of beginnings. The naturalistic worldview insists that this account of beginnings must be comprehensively limited to natural and material causes and effects. Such a worldview runs into direct collision with the worldview of the Bible, for the Bible does not flinch from claiming and explaining that all that exists owes its existence ultimately to God himself (e.g., John 1:3).

One interesting aspect of worldview analysis is the recognition that, for the most part, everything that follows is contained within the account of origins. Once we know that God is the solitary explanation at the beginning, we can be confident that he will be the one who brings this story to a close in a way that brings him no less glory.

I am always glad to hear from readers. Write me at mail@albertmohler.com. Follow regular updates on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler.

For background reading, see:

R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “[The Glory of God and the Life of the Mind](#),” Friday, November 12, 2010.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. “[The Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God: Starting Point for the Christian Worldview](#),” Friday, December 3, 2010.

