

Lesson 8: Questions 12 and 13

Last time we considered how God not only decrees all things *from all eternity*, but also carries out His decree *in real history*, especially through His works of creation and providence. Today we focus on creation itself, and then on man as God's image-bearer.

12-13

Question 12: What is the work of creation?

Q. What is the work of creation?

A. The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good.

This answer is short, but it gives us a worldview. It teaches us to see the world as God's world, and ourselves as God's creatures. **Hebrews 11:3** also reminds us that creation is something we ultimately know because God has spoken. "*By faith we understand...*" does not mean "by blind leap we guess." It means we trust God's Word about the beginning. There are many things we can observe and measure in the created order, but none of us was there at the first moment. **Genesis 1** and **Hebrews 11:3** teach us to receive God's account as true and to let it set the boundaries for all our thinking about origins.

I. God's making all things

Genesis opens with a sharp distinction: "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*" (**Genesis 1:1**) There is God and there is everything else. That Creator/creature distinction is the foundation for worship. God is not the biggest thing *in* the universe; He brought the universe into being. The world is not self-originating. It exists because God willed it (**Revelation 4:11**) and it belongs to Him by right of creation. That means creation is not meaningless. Since God made all things, then creation has a given purpose. We may explore, cultivate, and study it, but we are not free to assign it whatever meaning we prefer. The most basic fact about reality is not "I think," but "God created."

Genesis 1:1 is not simply a poetic way of saying "things happened a long time ago." It is a declaration of ultimate reality: God *is*, and everything else *is created*. That means the universe is not its own cause. The created order is real, orderly, measurable, and worth studying, but never independent, ultimate, or self-originating. That Creator/creature distinction also exposes why the dominant "origins story" of our age is not neutral. Modern culture often urges us to interpret the world as if matter is all that exists, as if time and chance are the only "creators", and as if life is an accident that became meaningful only because *we assigned meaning to it*. But *that is not science*. It is a religion that rivals biblical Christianity. Genesis will not let us speak that way. Genesis, indeed the Bible as a whole, insists that the most basic fact underneath every fact is not "nature did it", but "God created".

This is why Christians *must reject* macro-evolution, the claim that all living things arose by an undirected process from a common ancestor over immense time, so that God's creative work is *either* reduced to a distant trigger *or* removed entirely. This evolutionary story, as commonly framed, asks us to treat death, struggle, waste, and survival-by-competition as the engine that builds life. Yet Scripture teaches that God made the world by His command, with purposeful order, and pronounced it "very good". Creation is *craftsmanship*, not *accident*. It is a work of the living God.

And we should say plainly: *we do not reject science*. Christians have every reason to love *true* science, because Scripture teaches that the world is intelligible: it comes from the mind of God, not from chaos. We *welcome* careful observation, honest measurement, repeatable testing, and humble conclusions. But we refuse the rule that says, "God is not allowed as an explanation." That rule is not scientific; it is a religious commitment. Our conclusions must be bounded by God's Word.

So **Genesis 1:1** is not merely the Bible's first sentence; it is the boundary stone of all our thinking. It tells us who we are (creatures), what the world is (created), who created (God), why (God's glory), and how we should study it: as servants under the Lordship of the Creator, receiving Scripture as our highest authority even while we gladly investigate His handiwork.

2. Of nothing

The catechism says God made all things “of nothing”. **Hebrews 11:3** teaches the same doctrine: “*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.*” God did not shape pre-existing matter; He called matter itself into being.

This guards us from two opposite errors. On one side is the instinct (both ancient and modern) to treat matter as eternal and ultimate, with God reduced to an organizer. On the other side is the temptation to treat the world as an extension of God, as if creation were somehow divine. Scripture refuses both. God alone is eternal. Everything else is contingent and created, dependent on His will.

3. By the word of his power

Genesis 1 is built on a repeated refrain: “*And God said...*” (**Genesis 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26**). Creation happens by divine speech. “*And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.*” (**Genesis 1:3**) That is why the catechism calls it “the word of his power”. God’s word is not merely *informative*; it is *effective*. When He commands, reality conforms to His will.

Notice also the wisdom and order of God’s speech. God *separates* and *arranges*. He *forms* realms and *fills* them. He gives the world rhythm and structure: “evening and morning”, seasons, days, and years (**Genesis 1:14**). The universe is intelligible because it comes from the mind of God. This is one reason Christians can love learning about the created order. We study it as craftsmanship, not as deity.

4. In the space of six days

The catechism’s phrase, “in the space of six days”, is not an incidental detail. Rather, it’s a straightforward echo of what Scripture itself presents in **Genesis 1-2**. The repeated cadence of “*evening and morning*” (**Genesis 1:5,8,13,19,23,31**) reads like ordinary days, and **Genesis 2:1-3** crowns the account by showing that God finished his work and then rested on the 7th day, setting a real pattern into the fabric of the world. Later, when God gives the 4th commandment, he explicitly grounds Israel’s weekly rhythm in God’s own Creation Week: “*For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*” (**Exodus 20:11**) In other words, the weekly Sabbath command *is not built on a metaphorical week*, but on God’s own 6-day work followed by a 7th-day rest. The catechism is simply teaching believers to receive that biblical pattern as it stands: a genuine, historical Creation Week — 6 normal days of divine work, followed by a 7th day of rest.

And that truth shapes more than our timeline; it shapes our theology and our lives. God is not hurried or improvisational. He creates with purpose, order, and completion. He speaks, it is done; He finishes, and then he rests, not because He is weary, but because His work is perfect and complete. That means our limits are not defects. The day-night cycle, the week, the rhythm of labor and rest, these are gifts, woven into pre-Fall creation itself. We learn to live as creatures under a wise Creator: working diligently within the boundaries he gives, resting gladly when he commands, and refusing the old temptation to live as though time, structure, and dependence are problems to overcome rather than mercies to receive.

5. And all very good

Finally, the answer ends where **Genesis 1** ends: “*And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.*” (**Genesis 1:31**, emphasis mine). Before sin enters, the creation is good. Matter, bodies, marriage, fruitfulness, and work are all good. The world is God’s gift, not a mistake.

This matters because many spiritualities despise the physical world, as if holiness meant escaping matter. Scripture goes the other way. It teaches us to receive God’s gifts with gratitude, and to use them rightly. Sin will distort what God made good, but it does not make creation itself evil. That is why redemption is not God throwing creation away, but God restoring what He made. (**Romans 8:18-25**)

So Question 12 teaches us to confess the living God as Creator: making all things *from* nothing, *by* the word of His power, *in* the space of six days, and *all* very good (**Genesis 1; Hebrews 11:3**). That confession fuels worship, humility, and gratitude.

Question 13: How did God create man?

Q. How did God create man?

A. God created man, male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.

Genesis slows down when it reaches humanity. God has spoken many creatures into being, but when He comes to man He speaks as if He is marking something special: *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”* (**Genesis 1:26**) The catechism summarizes five key truths.

Notice, too, that **Genesis 1:26** uses the plural: *“Let us make man...”* We should not press that line as if the doctrine of the Trinity rests on it, but we also should not ignore it. By the time we reach the full light of the New Testament, we learn that the one God eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Remember Question 9. Here at the beginning, the language fits comfortably within that later clarity: the Creator is not solitary and lonely, but personal and rich in fellowship.

1. God created man

Human beings are creatures. That means **dependence**: we **receive** life; we do not **originate** it. It also means **accountability**: the One who made us has authority over us. But it also means **dignity**. If God created man, then human life has value that **cannot be earned or lost** based on usefulness. The unborn, the disabled, and the elderly all share the same ground with us: they are made by God.

2. Male and female

Genesis 1:27 states, *“male and female he created them”*, and **Genesis 1:28** immediately connects that to God’s blessing and commission. Two truths must be held together.

- **First**: male and female share **equal dignity as image-bearers**.
- **Second**: male and female are **real created distinctions, not interchangeable parts**.

Scripture treats our bodies as gifts to be received, and our sex/gender as part of God’s wise design for human life and fruitfulness. ***God does not confuse male and female and neither should we!***

This is not **merely** a “biology lesson”. It is a theological foundation. Since God made us male and female, then we learn something about God’s wisdom and goodness in design, and we learn something about ourselves: we are not self-defining. We receive ourselves from God. That is both humbling and relieving. Humbling, because we are not autonomous. Relieving, because ***we do not invent or determine our identity***; we are to live in ***joyful alignment*** with what the Creator has given.

In our own day, this bears directly on the rise of transgender claims. When a person professes to be “transgender”, they are not discovering a hidden truth about themselves, but contradicting the Creator’s design and seeking to redefine what God has given. That is not liberation but rebellion, an attempt to be self-made, a refusal of creaturely limits imposed by the Creator.

At the same time, we must not respond with mockery or disgust. Those who struggle here are not sub-human, nor outside the reach of Christ. Even when someone rebels against God’s design, they still bear God’s image and therefore retain real, inviolable dignity. This dignity cannot be **earned**, cannot be **lost**. And we speak the truth precisely **because** we love our neighbor and want them to be reconciled to God and restored to joyful alignment with what the Creator has given.

3. After his own image

To be made in God’s image is to be made to reflect Him. In the ancient world, an “image” represented the king’s authority; it marked out what belonged to him and displayed his rule. In a creaturely way, humans are appointed to represent God on the earth: to live before Him, to reflect His character, and to steward His world. We humans are His vice regents, His representatives.

The image of God is not a single human ability, like intelligence, as if those with lesser mental capacity bear less of God’s image. The image is tied to humanity itself. It includes our moral responsibility, our rational and relational life, and our calling to worship and stewardship.

4. In knowledge, righteousness, and holiness

The catechism specifies that the image includes “knowledge, righteousness, and holiness”. The New Testament helps us see why. **Colossians 3:10** describes the believer’s “*new self*” as being “*renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*” **Ephesians 4:24** describes the “*new self*” as “*created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*”

That language is profoundly instructive. Salvation is described as re-creation and renewal “*after the image/likeness of God*”. That implies that man, as created, possessed a true knowledge of God, and an upright moral orientation — real righteousness and holiness — before sin entered. The fall did not **erase** the image, but it **defaced** it. We still bear God’s image, which is why every human life remains dignified; yet our minds are darkened and our hearts are bent.

And this is where the gospel becomes immediately practical. If you are in Christ, God is restoring what sin has damaged. Sanctification is not merely learning better habits; it is the Spirit renewing you after the image of your Creator, growing you in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. That means repentance is never pointless. God’s goal is not to make you **less human**, but to **heal your humanity**.

5. With dominion over the creatures

Finally, God created man “with dominion over the creatures” (**Genesis 1:26,28**). Dominion is part of the image: God rules wisely, and humans are appointed to rule under Him as stewards. Dominion is **delegated**, so it is **accountable**. Dominion is **stewardship**, so it is **not exploitation**. It includes the call to cultivate, order, and care for the world God has made, through work, family life, and the faithful use of our gifts. In a fallen world, that stewardship will be frustrated and imperfect, but the vocation remains: to live **under** God’s authority, **for** God’s glory, **in** the world He made.

Practically, this means Christians should resist two equal and opposite sins: **indifference** and **idolatry**.

Indifference treats the material world as disposable.

Idolatry treats it as ultimate.

Dominion-as-stewardship treats creation as a **gift entrusted** to us. We work, build, organize, and care, not to prove ourselves, but to honor the One whose image we bear.

Conclusion

Questions 12 and 13 anchor us. God made the world; therefore reality is not an accident. God made it good; therefore creaturely life is not shameful. God made man in His image; therefore human dignity is non-negotiable. And God gave man dominion; therefore our lives are meant for responsible stewardship, not self-indulgence.

These truths also set up the next questions. If creation was “very good”, why is the world now so broken? If man was created in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, why do we now find ignorance, guilt, and corruption in our own hearts? Scripture will answer that through the Fall and then, by mercy, through Christ.

For now, let the New Testament’s language give you hope. The “*new self*” is being renewed “*after the image of its creator*” (**Colossians 3:10**), and it is “*created after the likeness of God in... righteousness and holiness*” (**Ephesians 4:24**). The Creator Who spoke light into existence is able to restore His image in sinners. So worship the Creator, receive His gifts with gratitude, and, if you belong to Christ, lean into the Spirit’s renewing work as God remakes you into what humanity was created to be.

As you go into the week, consider taking two simple steps:

1. Read **Genesis 1** slowly and notice how often the text says, “*And God said...*” Let that repetition rebuild your sense of who is actually in charge.
2. Choose one ordinary sphere — your home, work, online speech, or habits — and ask, “What would it look like to bear God’s image here, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness?”

Then pray for grace to live as a faithful steward in that area.