



Two Ways to Live: Study 2

God as Creator and Ruler

In a world where there are “many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’” (1 Corinthians 8.5) we can’t simply assume that everyone has the same idea of God that the bible presents. When talking about ‘God’ we need to make it clear *which* God we’re talking about. This week we’ll think through in more depth how the Two Ways to Live outline introduces God in **Box 1**.

a) What would you say is something that sets the God of the bible apart from any other God people might worship?

The bible itself begins to describe God in the first verse of Genesis where it says:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

The bible tells us not only that God made the world – he made it very well:

God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good. Genesis 1.31

Not only at its beginning, but right throughout the bible, one of the key ways the true and living God is identified is that he is the one who *made* everything. The chief reason *God* should be worshipped (rather than anyone or anything else) is that he is the creator. Let’s have a look how this is shown in a part of the bible known as ‘the Psalms’.

The Psalms & Creation

Read Psalm 148 as an example of an appropriate response to God as creator.



b) What’s the subtle (!) instruction to readers of this Psalm?

c) Why should God be praised? (v5-6)

d) Who should praise him? (v11-12)

Everyone and everything should *praise* God as the one who made them. But actually, humanity in particular has a special reason to praise God as our creator.

Read Psalm 8.

e) Humanity is such a small part of God's creation that it's surprising how much he cares for us (v3-4). What surprising thing has God done for us? (v5-8)

f) What is David's response to this? (v1 & 9)

When we realise that God has created *everything*, we face the fact that we're a very small in comparison to all that he has made. The amazing fact is that, though we shouldn't expect anything special from God, he has entrusted us with the privilege and responsibility of authority over the world in which we live. And God's interest in his creation did not end when he had finished making the world.....

Read Psalm 104.5-23.

g) How does God's activity in the world extend beyond his original act of creation?



So, to summarise, God made everything and he made it all to be good. He also sustains his creation, keeping it running as it should. The fact that he made everything and sustains everything is why he *continues* as creation's loving ruler. That's why **Box 1** of the Two Ways to Live outline says "God is the loving ruler of the world. He made the world."

It says "He made us rulers of the world under him" because God has given us a special authority over the world in which we live, while still making us responsible to exercise that authority in the way he wants us to, following him.

The Two Ways to Live verse says:

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being — Revelation 4.11

This verse aptly summarises what we've already looked at: that God should be praised and given glory for creating all things (it's a good one to memorise!). But notice the words "honour and power" which further clarify how we should relate to God, our creator.



h) In practical terms, what would it mean for God to receive "honour and power" from us?

Just as we came into existence by God's will so we should continue: honouring his will and living the way he wants us to.

Shopping in the Worldview Supermarket

We live in a world of not only “many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’” but also many general worldviews. Some views of the world are explicit alternatives to the ideas that God made everything and sustains it all, that he made it to be good and that he wants us to show him appropriate honour. We can actually see the bible’s view in sharper focus by comparing and contrasting it with these other views, so let’s look at some examples.



Naturalism (or Materialism)

Nothing exists in the universe except what is natural, nothing except physical matter. There is nothing that is supernatural, so there is no ‘God’, no creator of the natural. We are here, not because God made us, but simply because we are here. In this universe, any apparent design is actually accidental and meaning is only imagined, not real.

Mysticism (or Idealism)

The non-physical or spiritual world is all that matters. In some versions the physical world is evil, in others it is merely an illusion. ‘God’ or ‘the gods’ did not make the physical world, or it was not made to be good. The key idea is that the physical world is something to be avoided and transcended.

Deism

God created the universe, but now has no intention of being involved with it. He created it to run by itself with no intervention from him or relationship to him. The universe is like a clock that was made, then wound-up and left to run by itself.

For each of these views, discuss the following:

a) Where does this view differ from the Bible’s?

Naturalism	Mysticism	Deism

b) What might people find attractive in this view?

Naturalism	Mysticism	Deism

c) Are there any aspects of life that this view cannot account for?

Naturalism	Mysticism	Deism

d) Do you know anyone who holds something like one of these views (though they might not know the label)?



An important aspect of the 2WTL outline is that it helps us understand not only the content of the Christian message, but also how the various ideas fit together *logically*. In preparation for looking at that, take time now to practice the diagrams and remind yourself of the basic ideas that the diagrams represent. You can use the next page to practice.

What would be missing from the outline if **Box 1** was left out?

For Next Week:

Revise the diagrams. **Revise the statements and bible verse of Box 1.**

Try to **memorise the statements and bible verses of Boxes 2 and 3.** Next week we'll spend some time in the study learning the first three Boxes, so don't panic if you can't learn them all by rote in the first couple of weeks!

This week we've seen the bible's view that God is the good creator and sustainer of a good world and that we should give him praise and obedience because of that. But many object to this view when confronted by the horror of death and disaster that we see around us.

As we'll see next week though, the bible gives full acknowledgement to this. In fact, it's part of its central message. It holds that the world was created good but is now corrupted. Next week we'll look at how this came to be and God's response to it. For now though it's important to see that if we are to introduce people to God, we should do this as the Bible does – we should begin with God as the good creator of an originally good world, which retains its goodness only because he continues to sustain it.

Two Ways to Live Outline
Practice the Diagrams & think about what each diagram represents
