

## PREFACE

Because of the nature of this topic—and because of its foundational importance—I have decided to split it into two parts, two sessions. Not only is this important, but it includes concepts that may not be grasped easily in one telling. So along with spreading it out to allow time for questions and clarification, or even repetition, I have expanded the information in the handout. Perhaps more than usual, you may also benefit from obtaining the complete notes for these two sessions. I am in no way casting aspersions on anyone’s intelligence; my reasoning is that if it took me several readings of some of the source material to grasp the information there, then it is a reasonable assumption that it may not take hold for you in just one telling. The last thing I want to do is rush through this.

## INTRODUCTION

If, as Scripture makes clear, no one or no thing can add anything to our utterly complete and holy God, we might rightly wonder why He then went to the bother of creating the universe, the earth, and human beings to dwell on that earth?

To reach some understanding of *why* God created all there is—and, for the sake of this argument, created especially human beings—I will lean heavily upon the Jonathan Edwards’ classic treatise, *A Dissertation Concerning The End for which God Created the World*, published in 1765, along with John Piper’s extremely helpful discussion *about* Edwards’ dissertation in *his* book, *God’s Passion for His Glory* (1998). 📖

I must frankly admit at the top that I find Edwards’ treatise extremely dense and challenging to digest; since John Piper saw fit to publish a companion book on Edwards’ work, which does indeed assist the poor plebes struggling to comprehend it, I must not be the only one so struggling. Yet, I confess I have always found some of even *John Piper’s* books to be almost as thickly composed and reasoned as Edwards’, so his book, in some instances, is faint help. Thus, for the sake of this study (as well as my own sanity), I have done my best to whittle down the admirable work of both of these eminent scholars to their essential points—because, in the final analysis, Jonathan Edwards does indeed make a profound, well-reasoned argument for the reason God “created the world.”

We begin with something Piper writes, “**God’s moral rectitude consists in His valuing the most valuable, namely, Himself.**” 📖 This introduces a critical perspective for us to consider and adopt, to wit: that which is reprehensible conceit or presumptuous vanity in man, is, in God, nothing less than proof of His deity and holy righteousness.

## Resources

Edwards’ treatise may still be purchased, but is also available for free at a number of web sites in various forms. Perform a search to find one for your needs. Here is one: go to “<https://ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1/works1.iv.ii.html>”.

If you would like to read or download Edwards’ *complete* works, go to “<https://ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1/works1/>”.

Although it can be purchased in book form, Piper’s examination of Edwards’ treatise is also available for free in PDF form at “<https://document.desiringgod.org/god-s-passion-for-his-glory-en.pdf?ts=1439242050>”.

## “rectitude”

conduct according to moral principles; strict honesty; uprightness of character; correctness of judgment or method.

In a word: *righteousness*.


For example, were I to mount the platform on a Sunday morning to sing a solo, perform on an instrument, or deliver a sermon for the *sole purpose* of basking in the adulation of the congregation—that is, to be glorified in its midst—then you would rightly condemn my conceit, and be right to encourage my repentance for such sinful pride.

Yet that is a fairly accurate human illustration of God’s character and behavior. ***His ultimate end in all things is to glorify Himself.*** In mere human beings that is self-centered conceit; in God, it is the sublime demonstration of His righteousness—or, “rightness” (i.e., rectitude).

We can rightly agree, as did Jesus Himself, that God is the ultimate expression of every righteous quality. To the rich young ruler who greeted Jesus with, “Good Teacher,” Jesus responded, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone” (Mark 10:17–18).

By this Jesus meant that God is by nature a level of “good” unattainable for anyone else; in comparison to His, our “good” is like something one would scrape off the bottom of one’s shoe. Or, as Calvin interpreted Jesus’ reply, “Thou falsely calleth me a good Master—unless thou acknowledgest that I have come from God” (Wessell).

#### THE NATURE OF GOD

Other cosmogonies  invariably emphasize that the living beings are created *by* the gods *for* the gods. Man is little more than a useful servant of the creator’s needs, as detailed in one of the more famous pagan accounts, the Babylonian or so-called “Chaldean Genesis,” unearthed and subsequently published in 1876. Emerging victorious after a struggle among the gods is the Babylonian deity Marduk, who “compounds material of his own blood for the creation of man, the chief purpose of whose creation is ‘that the service of the gods may be established’” (Leupold).

#### “cosmogonies”

theories or accounts of the origin or generation of the universe.

Although it is true that our God created man to worship and serve Him, we see in the Creation account in Genesis, as well as the rest of God’s word, that *our* God loves and serves *man*. We see it in the progression of His creative acts: He builds a universe and earth; He outfits the earth, preparing it for the benefit of its highest creature: man. He is sensitive to man’s lack of companionship, so God creates a companion for him. We see it in His establishment and love for Israel (Isaiah 43:3-4), his longsuffering and grace throughout the span of His creation on earth.

Historically, gods, like most kings, ruled through fear; adherents would make offerings and sacrifices to appease the ever-present anger of their god. Our God, while not compromising one ounce of His omnipotence and majesty, rules through love. His wrath is reluctantly displayed only as a last resort when the good He desires for His people is repeatedly thwarted by their sinful rebellion.

Everything God is and does is “good”; it is right. Thus His Creation will be “good” (Genesis 1:4-31; 1 Timothy 4:4).

#### FOR HIM

One of my favorite verses in Scripture, and one profound in its succinct declaration, is Romans 11:36.

**For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.**

That verse says it all; we can almost place the period at the end of this session and go home to our pot roast. First, the context makes clear that the “Him” in the verse refers to “God” (Theos), also as “the Lord” (Kyrios).

This verse is another way of stating that God is “the first and the last,” and Edwards has something to say about that.

*Edwards: When God is so often spoken of as the last as well as the first, the end as well as the beginning, it is implied, that as he is the first, efficient cause and fountain, from whence all things originate, so, he is the last, final cause for which they are made; the final term to which they all tend in their ultimate issue. (emphasis added)*

**For from Him:** God is the source—the *only* source—of all things.

**and through Him:** God is the sole Channel through which all things are generated.

**and to Him are all things:** God is His own “end.”

**To Him be the glory forever:** God’s “end”—His ultimate end—is His *own* glory.

**Amen:** Truly! So let it be! (Bank on it.)

While this passage is Father-, or Godhead-centric, the apostle Paul states essentially the same thing about Christ Jesus specifically in his letter to the Colossians.

#### **Read Colossians 1:15-17.**

“all things have been created *through* Him and *for* Him.”

We begin with that: Why did God in His fullness create the earth, the universe, and man? For Himself. At this beginning point we can conclude that God did this because it *pleased* Him to do so. That still leaves us with questions, of course, and it is certainly not the complete answer, but it is a starting point. He *chose* to do it; it brought Him pleasure to do it. ❏

God's purpose behind His Creation goes far beyond just doing it because it pleased Him to do it. As mentioned earlier, this Creation—both the act and the product—will be intended to bring glory to Him.

Edwards does the leg-work for us to associate the phrases “for Him” (Colossians 1:16) and “for My own sake,” even “My name” with God's ultimate end, “His *glory*,” which we see illustrated so well in Isaiah 48.

### **Read Isaiah 48:9-11.**

Yahweh would curb His rightful wrath against Israel—

**“Indeed, you have not heard; indeed, you have not known. Indeed, even from long ago your ear has not been open Because I knew that you would deal very treacherously; And you have been called a transgressor from the womb. (Isaiah 48:8)**

—yet in spite of this, He would not—and still will not—release the fullness of His anger against Israel. When He does, what will that look like? Read Revelation, chapters six through sixteen, for a description of the seven-year Tribulation, a crescendoing symphony of misery on earth, culminating in its third movement with the seven bowls (plagues) of God's wrath, a period of hideous suffering accompanied by massive geographic upheaval. There will then be poured out the last of the seven bowls.

**Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the sanctuary from the throne, saying, “It is done.” And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. And the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the wrath of His rage. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And huge hailstones, about one talent each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe. Revelation (16:17–21)**

Oh, throughout history God would chastise, He would punish, He would deliver Israel off to a foreign land; He might even, to a limited extent, destroy or kill. But the *full measure* of God's wrath will be restrained until the last things. And that longsuffering restraint will be for one reason: for His glory. ❏

### **Sidebar**

In this alone we can already sense the disruptive dissonance of original sin. It brought God pleasure to do something He had never done before: create a universe outside of Himself and His own dwelling, and in that universe He created something particularly special to Him: human beings—not as an afterthought, not as insignificant playthings to observe from afar, as a child will amuse himself watching ants scurrying about. No, we will see in the early Edenic days that God created man in His own image to have a relationship with his Maker. But in even those earliest days, man will turn against his Maker, relinquishing his sweet fellowship with God for Satan's lies. This was not just a mistake, not just a stumble, but represented a cosmic tear in the fabric of Creation, something akin to what happened on the cross. In fact, even as the temple veil was being torn in two, the death of Christ was repairing the damage done by Adam and Eve in the Garden. His death meant that man would now have an opportunity to break from the consequences of that first rebellious sin.

**We will continue this in our next session.**

# SESSION 2

## Why Creation? Part One

### Primary Sources for The Next Two Sessions

Jonathan Edwards' classic treatise, *A Dissertation Concerning The End for which God Created the World*, published in 1765, along with John Piper's helpful discussion *about* Edwards' dissertation in *his* book, *God's Passion for His Glory* (1998). Edwards' treatise may still be purchased, but is also available for free at a number of web sites in various forms. Perform a search to find one for your needs. Here is one; go to

[HTTPS://CCEL.ORG/CCEL/EDWARDS/WORKS1/WORKS1.IV.II.HTML](https://ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1/works1.iv.ii.html)

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### **“God’s moral rectitude consists in His valuing the most valuable, namely, Himself.”**

(“**rectitude**”: conduct according to moral principles; strict honesty; uprightness of character; correctness of judgment or method. In a word: righteousness.)

### **God’s ultimate end in all things is to glorify Himself**

- Only God is good (**Mark 10:17-18**).
- Because everything God is and does is good, it is right. Thus His creation will be “good” (**Genesis 1:4-31; 1 Timothy 4:4**).
- **Romans 11:36** covers it all (see also **Colossians 1:15-17**).
- When God does something for Himself, or “for My own sake,” or “for My name,” it is for His glory (See **Isaiah 48:9-11**).

“For the sake of My name I delay My anger,  
And for My praise I restrain it for you,  
In order not to cut you off.  
Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;  
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.  
For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act;  
For how can My name be profaned?  
And My glory I will not give to another.”  
Isaiah 48:9–11

*Jonathan Edwards*: When God is so often spoken of as the last as well as the first, the end as well as the beginning, it is implied, that as he is the first, efficient cause and fountain, from whence all things originate, so, he is the last, final cause for which they are made; the final term to which they all tend in their ultimate issue. (emphasis added)

For complete notes and audios for each session, go to [DLAMPEL.COM/BIBLE-STUDIES/](http://DLAMPEL.COM/BIBLE-STUDIES/)

