

## **“I Believe in God, But What About Evolution?”**

**September 17, 2023**

**Pastor John Mars**

This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! Good morning, Church! I want to read a familiar passage of Scripture, if you've been hanging around the church for any length of time: Genesis 1, beginning with verse 1.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day” and the darkness He called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning--the first day.

And God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.” So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning--the second day.

And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters He called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seeds according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the third day.

And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky, to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth. And it was so. God made two great lights--the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the fourth day.

And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let the birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” And there was evening, and there was morning --the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.”

And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the ground." So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth, and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground-- everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.  
May God bless the reading of His Word.

The mighty army of God, which has the potential of more power than any army that has ever existed, has the unfortunate propensity to get distracted by simple things. Last week we talked about how we allow differences of opinion about inspiration of Scripture to divide us, instead of allowing the Spirit of God to touch us with the words of Scripture, changing them into the Word of God for us, and changing our lives. Today we're going to talk about another one of those distractions, let's say: Creation. Differences of opinion about how Creation happened divide us, I would say, unnecessarily. As we get started this morning, there are three things that you need to know. Number one: If you believe in a literal six-day, 24-hour-day Creation, praise God! And if you believe in a six-billion-year Creation, praise God! You are both welcome here. You are both loved here. You are both cherished here. You are both accepted here. And I agree with both of you. And some of you are going, "Uh-uh, you can't do that! You've got to choose!" Yes, I can. I just did. Which brings me to number two: There are five words in the Creation story that for me are non-negotiable, five: "In the beginning God created." And everything else is negotiable. Okay? That's number two. Number three: Relax. Relax. We're not going to argue. We're not going to debate. You're not going to be condemned by your belief. I want to give you a different perspective, that I hope and pray that the Spirit of God will be able to take the words of God, of Creation, and touch your life and change you. And isn't that what it's about?

I choose these first words very carefully. There are three major ways Christians view Creation. I said three. There's lots of minor ways and there's lots of combinations and variations, but there are three major ways Christians (these are people who believe in Jesus Christ, who claim Christ as their Savior), three major ways Christians view Creation. First of all, there's the Creation Science, also called Young Earth Creationists, who believe in a literal Genesis account. They start with their faith and find explanations for the biological and geological evidence. They believe that Earth is around 6000 years old; that the flood happened about 5000 years ago; and the flood explains the fossil record, the geological record, and the ice ages. They believe Creation occurred in six 24-hour periods. They read Genesis literally and see Genesis as a scientific text. That is Young Earth Creationist. There's a group, also, that falls into what is kind of known as Intelligent Design. They disagree vehemently with evolution: evolution that states that life development was unsupervised, unplanned, impersonal, and occurred by chance. Intelligent Design believes that life developed with guidance. There was and is a plan,

God-designed and God-supervised. They believe that Creation is far too complex to be explained by anything less than divine intervention. One of their quotes that I loved, when I first read it years ago, says that thinking that Creation started with a big bang at some point is like believing that a tornado can blow through a junkyard and leave behind a fully functioning 747 jet. I like that. They see Creation as being divinely inspired, divinely planned, and divinely designed. That's Intelligent Design. Then there is a group who fall into the Theistic Evolutionist. They reject the idea of pure evolution as being unsupervised, impersonal, unplanned, and purposeless. They see evolution as God's plan and God's design, that God created the laws of nature that gave rise to the universe in all of its magnificence. They believe that the Bible tells us that God spoke, and life developed. They see evolution as the "how."

All of this deals with the "how" of creation. There are a few of you out there that are older than I am, but I don't believe you were present at Creation! My opinion is: When we get stuck in the "how," we miss the point. The point is not the "how." The point is the "why." And our Creation story tells us about the "why." And it reveals something about ourselves, and it reveals something about God. And oh, by the way, there isn't one Creation story. There are two Creation stories. Those stories unfortunately often get melded together, and we lose the second story in the first story, but the two stories are very different. And they communicate different things about ourselves and about God. The Genesis 1 account is poetic. It is majestic. It tells us of God's intentional plan to create the universe as we know it. There is a start and a completion of each phase of Creation. And when God finished each phase, He looked at it and said, "Man, that's good! That's good!" In this Creation story, we learn about a God who is good, who is glorious, who loves us, and has provided for us in Creation everything we need to live and to thrive and to do well. He created us male and female, in His image, so that we might have a relationship with Him. We were created in the image of God for the very purpose of having a relationship with God. And when God put everything together, He looked at it and He didn't say, "That's good." He said, "That is very good!" And, by the way, that includes you. God looks at you and says, "That's good!" You.

The second Creation story is a very different story. The writer had a very different purpose in mind. In the second Creation story, humankind is created and placed in a beautiful and bountiful garden that provided everything they needed to thrive and be happy. God Himself visited with Adam and Eve personally, walked with them on a daily basis in the cool of the morning. And He gave them but one rule: "Do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that is in the midst of the garden. You can eat everything else. You can do anything else. Just don't eat of that one tree." And I don't care if you know the story really well; I don't care if you don't know that there were two Creation stories; I don't care if you don't know that there is a Creation story; you know how this story ends, because this is the story of humanity. This is your story. This is my story. We have that little demon on our shoulders that says, "I wonder what it tastes like!" There's that temptation. And we find out in this story, there is a penalty for sin. Sin cost us. It cost us innocence. It cost us paradise. It cost us perfection. It hurts our relationship with one another, and it hurts our relationship with God, and we're banished from perfection forever. But the story doesn't end there. It teaches us of a God who forgives, a God who wanted a relationship with us in spite of our imperfections, in spite of our rebellion, in spite of our sin, still loves us, still cares for us, still wants a relationship with us, and will go to the ends of the earth to have that. These Creation stories teach us about ourselves. They teach us about our God. And this is the beginning of the story of all Scripture: God wanting to have a relationship with us and

teaching us how far He's willing to go to do that, despite our rebellion, despite our imperfections, despite our sin. You see, that's the point! Don't let the details distract you!

Now, I know that I have scientists out there, especially nuclear scientists, and details are your world. And from me to all of you nuclear scientists, I am so glad you pay attention to details! But for today, put them aside and remember the point. The point of the Creation story is not the "how," it's the "why." My humble opinion is that God and science are not at odds. That's my opinion. My opinion is you don't have to choose between your faith and your brain. My opinion is that you don't have to choose between believing in different theories of Creation. They're not at odds. I think of it kind of like what we experienced with our kids earlier. I would not preach this sermon to them, but I'd share with them some rocks. You know, you deal with children differently at different stages of their life, do you not? This story was passed down for eons before it was written down. And it was written down in what we call the Bronze Age. That's a long time ago. God deals with us where we have the ability to understand. So, what I would say to you today is that Creation was supervised. It was planned. It was designed by God. And how long God took to do that is God's business. Let us not get distracted.

And I choose these words very carefully for this congregation: God engineered Creation. Now, if I were in the South this morning, I would say, "You can't swing a dead cat in this church without hitting an engineer." But since I'm not in the South, I won't use that phrase. God engineered Creation. Now I understand there are lots of different types of engineers. But even if you are not a structural engineer, I bet if I challenged you to create a functioning chair, you could do it. It may take you a while; it may not be that great, but you could create a functioning chair. But could you create a chair that could redesign and remake itself according to the needs of its changing environment? That's what God did. That's what God did in Creation to take care of you and I, because that's how much He cares for us. And that's how much He loves us. So, He placed us in this wonderful Creation and says, "You have everything you need. Now enjoy it. Take care of it. And know that I love you and I will be here with you." And, my friends, I believe that is the point of the Creation story. So don't get distracted. Let us pray.

God, You have gone so far and done so much to communicate to us how much You care, how much You love, how much You desire to have a relationship with us. And forgive us, Lord, when we miss the point and we don't see that, and we don't claim that, and we don't live that. Forgive us, Lord, when we argue about stuff that's not going to make a difference. Help us, God, to see with Your eyes and hear with Your ears. And Lord, help us to love one another and accept one another the way You love and accept us. In Jesus' name, amen.