

2. In the Beginning (1Q 2012—Glimpses of Our God)

Biblical material: Matt. 19:4; Job 38:4–7; Deut. 32:10, 11; Psalm 19; John 1:1–13; Rom. 5:12; Isa. 66:22; Col. 1:16.

Quotes

- All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- Since open-mindedness and experimentation are supposed to be the indispensable attributes of our 'scientific' civilization, it seems strange that so many scientists are reluctant to try out personally the hypothesis that God came first and man afterward. They prefer to believe that man is the chance product of evolution; that God, the Creator, does not exist. I can only report that I have experimented with both concepts and that, in my case, the God concept has proved to be a better basis for living than the man-centered one. Nevertheless, I would be the first to defend your right to think as you will. I simply ask this question: in your own life, have you ever really tried to think and act as though there might be a God? Have you experimented? *Bill Wilson*
- God can never be a definition. He is more than even the entirety of the dictionary. *Scarlett Bene*
- This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: In the beginning God created heaven and earth... [But] for the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; [and] as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries. *Robert Jastrow*

Questions

Why is the concept of God the Creator so important? Why do we spend time thinking about “beginnings”? How do the heavens declare the glory of God? What role did Jesus the Word play in all this? How do we see God’s creative role in the work of re-creation? How will God make creation “very good” once more?

Bible summary

Matthew 19:4 defines God as Creator, particularly of the human race. God asks Job where he was when God made the world (Job 38:4–7), making the vivid point that all our ideas about beginnings are speculative since we weren’t there! But God was... Deut. 32:10, 11 speaks of God “hovering” over his son Israel using the same word as the Spirit hovering over the world in Genesis 1. Isn’t it true that the heavens declare the glory of God? (See Psalm 19). Jesus the Word is there in the Beginning (John 1:1-13), and this Creator is the one on the Cross, says John. Paul in Romans takes the account of the Fall literally since it has to be addressed (Rom. 5:12). God’s creative work did not finish in Genesis either—he makes a new heaven and a new earth (Isa. 66:22). This is Jesus: for everything is made by and for him (Col. 1:16).

Comment

As we look up into the immeasurable immensity of space, and recognize our minuteness in the grand scale of the cosmos, it's easy to be overwhelmed. Add in deterministic theories that tell us we are merely the products of the interplay of molecular forces, of physics and chemistry, then it becomes even worse. For if we are just accidents, without intent or created purpose, then truly we are less than dust.

But if we are more—if we are the children of God—then we see with different eyes. “When I look at the galaxies on a clear night—when I look at the incredible brilliance of creation, and think that this is what God is like, then instead of feeling intimidated and diminished by it, I am enlarged . . . I rejoice that I am a part of it,” says Madeleine L. Engle.

The truth is that we *are* here for a reason. More than that, we were not made for this world alone. And ultimately, the heart of joy and satisfaction and meaning is in knowing that God made us, and saves us. As Christina Rossetti writes, “Were there no God, we would be in this glorious world with grateful hearts and no one to thank.”

When I reflect on those times when I have felt so close to God, I realize that my delight has not been in achievements we so often define as success. Nor is there the lasting satisfaction in the things we usually chase after for enjoyment—the physical simply does not last, and eventually every earthly pleasure cloy. Ultimately all our grasping after feeling good leaves us empty, unsatisfied.

For this life cannot be all there is. “Our Creator would never have made such lovely days, and given us the deep hearts to enjoy them, above and beyond all thought, unless we were meant to be immortal,” says Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Meant to be immortal. That's why we seem so out-of-harmony here, in this world of sin and death where nothing lasts. God planned for us to live with him forever. As C. S. Lewis writes, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

Our familiarity with the story of Genesis can lead us to miss the point. In the description of Creation we see the goodness of God at work. Why is it that after every day's creation God sees that “it was good” and at the end “it was very good”? God sounds very self-congratulatory, almost proud about his creative work. In counter to this mistaken view, we should see God as identifying the good expression of his goodness, that there is no imperfection and that creation is indeed a representation of who he is.

God's character is seen in all he does, especially as he lovingly forms matter out of nothing, and then forms every galaxy, star and planet—and us from the dust of the ground.

Genesis is as much a prime aspect of the cosmic conflict as any other biblical book. The means and perfection of creation assume even greater importance as we understand the background to God's incredible creative acts.

Yet as John shows us, the Creator of Genesis is the same as the Re-creator of John 1 and Revelation. Jesus is the agent of creation—everything was made by him, through him, and for him. God as Creator is not a long-distant role-it is a continuous one and one that guarantees our future!

Comment 2

“Theologians and philosophers, who make God the creator of Nature and the architect of the Universe, reveal Him to us as an illogical and unbalanced Being. They declare He is benevolent because they are afraid of Him, but they are forced to admit the truth that His ways are vicious and beyond understanding. They attribute a malignity to Him seldom to be found in any human being. And that is how they get human beings to worship Him. For our miserable species would never lavish worship on a just and benevolent God from whom they had nothing to fear.” *Anatole France*

Ellen White Comments

God is the foundation of everything. All true science is in harmony with his works; all true education leads to obedience to his government. Science opens new wonders to our view; she soars high and explores new depths; but she brings nothing from her research that conflicts with divine revelation. Ignorance may seek to support false views of God by appeals to science; but the book of nature and the written word do not disagree; each sheds light on the other. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 20, 1884.

Men will endeavor to explain from natural causes the work of creation, which God has never revealed. But human science cannot search out the secrets of the God of Heaven, and explain the stupendous works of creation, which were a miracle of almighty power, any sooner than it can show how God came into existence. {1SP 89}

“So God created man in his own image, . . . male and female created he them.” Here is clearly set forth the origin of the human race; and the divine record is so plainly stated that there is no occasion for erroneous conclusions. God created man in His own image. Here is no mystery. There is no ground for the supposition that man was evolved by slow degrees of development from the lower forms of animal or vegetable life. Such teaching lowers the great work of the Creator to the level of man’s narrow, earthly conceptions. Men are so intent upon excluding God from the sovereignty of the universe that they degrade man and defraud him of the dignity of his origin. He who set the starry worlds on high and tinted with delicate skill the flowers of the field, who filled the earth and the heavens with the wonders of His power, when He came to crown His glorious work, to place one in the midst to stand as ruler of the fair earth, did not fail to create a being worthy of the hand that gave him life. The genealogy of our race, as given by inspiration, traces back its origin, not to a line of developing germs, mollusks, and quadrupeds, but to the great Creator. Though formed from the dust, Adam was “the son of God.” {DG 21}

In the beginning, God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” But sin has almost obliterated the moral image of God in man. Jesus came down to our world that He might give man a living example, that he might know how to live and how to keep the way of the Lord. He was the image of the Father. His beautiful and spotless character is before man as an example for him to imitate. We must study the copy and follow Jesus Christ, then we shall bring His loveliness and beauty into our character. In doing this we are standing before God through faith, winning back by conflict with the powers of darkness the power of self-control, the love of God that Adam lost. {1SAT 33-4}