

GENESIS 1:1 – 2:3

Holy Trinity, June 11-12, 2017

Smith

A MONKEY ON THE THRONE

The Beginning

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 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. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." 7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. 11 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. 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. 16 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. 17 God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 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." 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. 25 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. 26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." 29 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. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. 1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

The Holy Spirit inspired Moses to record this account of the creation for our sakes. We think of God the Father as the Creator, and rightly so – he calls himself the Creator, and Jesus calls him Creator in the Gospels.^a But God the Father did his creating through God the Son. The Apostle John tells us that “Through him – Jesus – all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made.” So just as God the Father used his Son to save mankind, he also worked through his Son to create mankind, and everything else that has been created.

And we see the Holy Spirit at work in the creation, as the witness closely watching, searching, paying attention, keeping an eye on everything. This is the nature of our Triune God; he is one God, eternal and all-powerful, compassionate and loving, and he is three holy Persons, working together, undivided, in all things, for our eternal good.

You may have noticed in this first chapter of the Bible that there is no passage, no reference at all to the creation doing anything to bring itself about. There is no accident, no gurgling or churning or belching of the elements. The universe did not create itself, not did it come into being by accident – God created it, in the way Moses has recorded it for us.

And you may or may not have noticed but there is no passage, no reference at all to Satan doing anything. At this time, Satan had not yet fallen; he and the other angels were also made at some time during the creation – Moses doesn’t tell us when.

But Satan, the devil, wants to re-write the account we have here. He wants to present his own Brief History of Time. He wants to be **the monkey on the throne**. Martin Luther often describes the devil as the one who only apes God, who imitates the Lord, and who twists and perverts God’s creation. But the devil doesn’t create anything himself apart from schemes – never things; never people. The devil has no creation, only a perversion.

But he wants us to fall into the sin of doubt, so that we might even doubt the creation. So this monkey, the devil, who wants to climb up onto God’s throne, wants mankind to misunderstand everything. He churns and spins up a whole whirlwind of misinformation so that we can become easily bewildered by it all, and then he hides his lies into the most serene settings he can find.

So if God chiseled out his word, his Ten Commandments, in stone for Moses, the devil will lie to us about other stones – the very rocks of God’s creation, and the devil like a dirty street fighter will throw dust in our eyes and overwhelm the world with his double-talk.

I’ve mentioned “a monkey on the throne” more than once now, but please don’t think I’m going to waste any of our time today debunking the theory of evolution, lie by lie. No – we’re here to give praise and glory to God, and to contemplate the mystery of the Trinity.

Take a look at the picture on the screen. You also have a grey sermon card in your bulletin – something we’ve been putting into the bulletin for several months, now. If you turn that sermon card sideways so that the front of the card gives you a grid of six squares, three on top and three on the bottom, this picture may help you to remember the order of God’s creation. And it may help you to better understand the reason God made things in the order that he did.

^a Matthew 19:4.

In upper left corner, square one, is Day One. God made light, and separated light from dark – and remember that in the beginning, both light and dark were good and served a good purpose. They were not opposites or manifestations of spiritual forces in the world – they were both God’s tools. Also on this first day, the Spirit of God hovers over the watery mass of the earth which still had no particular shape or form, and yet God saw that it was good. When God says that a thing is good, he doesn’t understate things. It was good; perfect, without flaw. But that doesn’t mean it was complete. God continued.

On the second day, in the middle upper square, God separated the waters from the waters. Water above was now fixed firmly in place, and is our “sky.” Water below was now set in its place to perform the function God intended, and is our “sea.” Today when we think of sky and sea, we think also in terms of the creatures that live there – but God made the place for them before he filled the place with them. In doing so, our Triune God shows that he had a plan all along, and that he cares about his creation. Jesus said, “Aren’t two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your father – so don’t be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows” (Mt. 10:29-30).

On the third day, in the upper right corner, God separated the watery seas by drawing out the dry land. He brought out the plants and the trees and the stones and grasses – providing a place to live for many, many other creatures. And yet those creatures aren’t there yet. Once again, God made the place for them before he filled the place with them.

As we move down into the lower squares, you will notice that in each case, God fills the space he made above with the things he now provides below. So Day One is filled up by what God makes on Day Four. He made light, and now God makes the things that give or reflect the light. He made the sun, and other suns which we call the stars, and the moon and the other things in the night sky.

The devil may tempt us into thinking that the universe was made in some other way, but all the devil’s lies are put to shame by God’s simple, inspired word. So, the star we call the North Star, *Stella Polaris*, is estimated to be 433 light-years away. That means that its light takes 433 years to travel from there to here. Does that mean that Adam and Eve could not see the North Star when they were created, two days later? No – the light from that star is a created thing, too, created along with it.

Below Day Two you will find the square for Day Five. And as God made the sea and the sky, he now filled them – filling the sea with fish and other swimming things like whales and dolphins, and filling the sky with birds and other flying things like insects and butterflies.

Finally, Day Six, saw God specially make things on land for the benefit of mankind. Our text lists three different categories of animals; categories commonly used by Moses and the Israelites, even if they don’t perfectly match the taxonomy of modern science. But there were domestic animals – the kinds that could be herded and used easily for their milk, fur and even meat. These included what God would give to the Israelites as the “clean animals,” although since Jesus kept and fulfilled the Law of Moses, all animals are clean for you and me to use and eat. God also made the “wild animals” – things like dogs and wolves and lions and things. And

finally God also made the crawling things, animals used by the wild animals for food and each of which has its place in God's grand natural scheme.

And then, on that same sixth day, God made the first human beings. And they were fully human, not creatures that would develop or evolve later on, but human. And their names given to us in chapter 2 are Adam and Eve.

Each of these days of God's creation were regular days, 24-hour days. We know that because each day had an evening and a morning. We also know it because when God gave our author Moses the Ten Commandments, he said this about the Seventh Day of Creation, the day in which God made nothing, but rested. He said,

"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." (Ex 20:9-11)

So if each day of creation was millennia in length, then our time of rest should equally be millions of years per Sunday. But no – that's not God's point. The day for resting is the same as the rest of the days of the week; each one is one of the seven days of an ordinary week.

This is God's record of how our universe came into being. It contains what God wants us to know, to give him glory. If it tests your faith, then that gives God glory, too. Don't forget that a monkey wants to be on God's throne, twisting God's truth into something else, to take away from God's holy word. But God made the world so that you would have a place to live and to grow, and to learn about your Saving God. And when the aping liar the devil caused our first parents to sin, God answered even that, by sending his own Son, Jesus Christ, to be the sacrifice that paid for our sins of doubt, of rebellion, and of mockery.

Your triune God loves you. And remember that God the Father constantly points to his Son and says, "Listen to him." And God the Holy Spirit constantly points back to the Son and says, "Believe in him." So our worship is rightly focused on Christ.

Just as in the creation, so also with heaven: Jesus is preparing a place for us, before he fills that place. But his desire is to fill up his heaven with you and me, not with nameless humans summoned up at the end of time just to fill up empty rooms as if God needs someone to keep him company. No – God wants us there. He is the one who is truly on the Throne; there is no place in heaven for the devil, but there is a place for you, made by the Father, prepared by the Son, and preached by the Holy Spirit, one God, inviting now and forever. Amen.