

9/16/2018

## “Sky Sunday: Faith & Science”

Scripture: Psalm 8; Psalm 19:1-6; Matthew 2:1-2ff

Sermon Series: Season of Creation

† **Faith and science are not mutually exclusive. They are two different ways of understanding our existence. They ultimately ask and answer different questions about creation and experience.**

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Today we continue our month long series on creation with the Sky.

From the beginning of time, peoples of every place and culture have gazed upon the skies of day and night with a sense of awe and wonder. And, from that awe and wonder have come stories of creation and revelation, or belief in existence of life beyond the earth.

In more recent centuries with the dawn of the scientific method and an age of seeking to understand more critically that creation and existence, the theories and knowledge discovered and revealed have sometimes challenged long held and sacred beliefs.

But, that does not mean that **faith and science** are mutually exclusive. **They are two different ways of understanding our existence. They ultimately ask and answer different questions about creation and experience.**

Let's watch and listen to how Trace of TestTube Plus begins his video of “Why So Many Scientists Believe in God”.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stwHtAjMVF4> . . . (show video to 2:18)

And, while some people of faith may interpret the creation accounts of the Bible literally, some see them as myth (a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events). And, still others, including myself, see them as a revelation from God, using language that was understandable given the knowledge of those receiving it at the time.

Adam Hamilton, the lead pastor of United Methodist Church of the Resurrection has said: “Let's begin with what Genesis 1 is not: this magnificent opening chapter of the Bible is not a science lesson. Those who read it as science often want to explain how the universe really was created in six literal days 6,000 years ago. But, Genesis 1 is not written as an article for a scientific journal. It is written as poetry with a beautiful rhythm. It is a liturgy that serves as a creed, outlining several foundational beliefs upon which the rest of Judaism and Christianity are built. The point of Genesis 1 was not to tell us about the **how** of creation, but to tell us the **Who** of creation and the **why**.”

“Every culture I'm aware of in the Ancient Near East had creation stories. Among the best known are the Enuma Elish, The Epic of Gilgamesh, and the Atra-hasis epic. . . . What is most interesting is to see how Genesis 1 differs from the others.

“For instance, the other stories hold that there were multiple gods—at least two, and in some cases an entire pantheon. Genesis tells us there was only one God, called Elohim in Genesis 1 and Yahweh in Genesis 2-3. In some of the other stories’ creation comes from conflicts between the gods. In Genesis creation occurs out of God’s creativity and grace. In some of the other accounts, the gods create human beings as servants or slaves whose job is to feed the gods and to meet their needs. In the Bible, God creates the world to sustain and bless human beings. In some of the creation stories, the kings alone are created in the image of the gods and given authority over creation. In Genesis every human is created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth....

The Genesis 1 account offers a picture of God who creates Paradise as a home for human beings, whom he cares for. A home that is beautiful and very good.... Genesis 1:3 reads, “God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.” This is the poetry of Genesis 1: God speaks and calls forth some element of creation. In response to God’s words, the thing itself is brought forth. Then, God sees that it is good....

There are three fundamental assertions in this creation account:

1. **Everything owes its existence to God.**
2. **The garden and everything in it, at its inception, was good and beautiful – reflecting God’s beauty and goodness.**
3. **Our lives and all of creation belong to God and are a gift from God.**

This calls for a specific response from us. We’re meant to live lives of gratitude. Our fundamental posture in life is thanksgiving. None of us knows how long we will live, but we’re grateful for life today. Life may be hard and challenging at times, but it is still a gift. Throughout the Bible, we’re told to give thanks. Paul captures it in 1 Thessalonians 5:18: “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (In the Beginning: The Garden of Eden; 3/12/17)

And as he stated in his book When Christians Get It Wrong,

**“The creation stories in Genesis were not meant to teach us *how* God created, but *that* God created.”**

(Chapter 2; Abingdon Press, 2013)

**With regards to the sky and the heavens above,** David instructed the leader of worship to sing this mysterious truth in praise . . .

### **Psalm 19:1-6**

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament<sup>[a]</sup> proclaims his handiwork.

<sup>2</sup>Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

<sup>3</sup>There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

<sup>4</sup>yet their voice<sup>[b]</sup> goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens<sup>[c]</sup> he has set a tent for the sun, <sup>5</sup>which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

<sup>6</sup>Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them;  
and nothing is hid from its heat.

And in praise to God, and the relationship we have with God and creation, he also declared:

### **Psalm 8**

Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory in the heavens.

2 Through the praise of children and infants

you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,

4 what is humankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?

5 You have made them a little lower than the angels  
and crowned them with glory and honor.

6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under their feet:

7 all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,

8 the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

9 Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Have you ever felt the wonder that David expresses? I know I have.

When speaking on creation and evolution, I like the way Adam Hamilton puts it. He says: “To many Christians, evolution is simply a way of describing process that God established for creating the magnificent forms of life we have today. Henry Ford designed the automobile assembly line. He approved the designs of his cars. His name appears on every car. Yet, he did not personally build each car. They were his design. His fingerprints were all over the process. . . If there had been no Henry Ford, there would have been no Ford Automobile Company. Think of creation in this way: God created the process and the plans for progression of life on our planet. God is still the Creator. Whether each species was individually crafted by God, or the result of a process God designed, matters little to me. God remains the Creator either way.”

He adds: “Science and faith are two different ways of understanding our existence. Science helps us understand the physical processes – how the universe works. This is hugely important and. . . no threat to genuine faith. Theology and faith, on the other hand, aim to teach us what our existence means. While science asks the questions *what* and *how*, theology seeks to answer the questions *why* and for *what purpose*. Both sets of questions are important.”

I think about Matthew’s gospel account of the birth of Jesus. It was a “star” or some other heaven light that led the Magi to the place of his birth. We may never truly know just *what* appeared in the night sky to lead them there. But, we know *why* it appeared and led them there.

I am thankful that I grew up in a home environment which regarded both faith and science as valuable to learning, understanding, and appreciating the gift of God’s wonderful creation. . . . May you be blessed in knowing and experiencing the God of all the universe!

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**Questions for Reflection:**

**Have you ever looked up at a sky full of stars at night? How did or do you feel, and what did/do you think of?**

**Have any “sounds” or “words” come to your mind or heart at such times?**

**What do you think, or how do you feel about faith and science, and the relationship between them?**