

**“Answers to Some Profound Questions
About the Beginning of Things”
Sermon on Genesis 1: 1--5, 26—29
Saint Mark's, Watertown, WI
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**Introduction: We Seek Answers to Some Profound Questions
about the Beginning of Things**

Scripture says: *From God and through God and to God are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

Dear fellow children of God himself:

We fill most of our life with triviality.... For example, don't we spend most of our life asking trivial questions? “I wonder: What's for supper?”—a supper a week from now I won't remember. “I wonder: What's on tv tonight?”—no doubt no more than some show with very little benefit to my life. “I wonder: “How long will the service go today?”—as if five or ten minutes, one way or another, is really going to make that much of a difference.

We probably do spend most of our lives asking trivial questions. But it is fun – and important! – once in awhile to ask more profound questions. I understand from you parents that many of your children have asked you: “Where did God come from?” Now, that's a profound question! “How did the universe originate?” The world's brightest minds, from philosophers to scientists, have wrestled their whole lives with that profound question. And: “Is there really something special about humanity?” Which one of us, one way or another, hasn't asked that profound question?

Well, the only thing better than asking profound questions – and more satisfying, too! – is knowing the answers. Today God himself is going to give us exact answers to some of the profound questions we all ask. God's Word to us today is Genesis chapter one: the first chapter of the Bible, beginning on the first page of the Bible. And I encourage you to turn there, because I really hope to cover all of it with you—some of it more generally, some of it more deeply.

Part One: Where Did God Come From?

“Where did God come from?” As I said before, many of you parents have mentioned to me that your children have asked you that question. It's a good one, and a profound one. It also receives its answer in the first few words of the Bible.

In the beginning... was **God**. Literally: *At the head* – of all things! – *was God*.

“Where did God come from?” God simply always was.... He existed eternally in the past. A trillion times a trillion years ago – but before there were years – and infinitely further back, there was God.

And it had to be that way, as Scripture says, didn't it? I mean: One cannot create himself. And so, he who stood at the head of all things must eternally have been there to produce what it is we see today.

God simply always was. And consider the implications of that for your life.... If God always existed, then you owe your existence to him. If God always was, he also always will be, and you had better find a way for you to be with him always. If God always was and always will be, nothing matters right now more than him. You need to ask, every moment of your existence, how is it that I can please God?

Part Two: How Did the Universe Originate?

So, God simply always existed. Well then, “How did the universe originate?” Only God can tell us, because only God was there. And thankfully, he lets us know in his Word....

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God created absolutely all things. He created them out of nothing, because there was absolutely nothing out of which to create them.

Now, in regard to the heavens – for example, in regard to the creation of angels during the next six days – God gives us only glimpses in Scripture. But in regard to the earth, well: **Now the earth was formless and empty,** and **darkness was over the surface of the deep.** So, during the next two and a half days, God is going to give the earth some form. And during the next three and a half days after that, God is going to fill the earth. And pretty much right away he’s going to handle this problem of darkness.

But first, we read: **And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God spoke.** He employed his Word. And all of these words are so much more profound than they look at first glance.

Let me back up. When it says that *God created the heavens and the earth*, that word *God* is actually plural in form (!), but the word *created* is singular. So, God, this God, the real one, who created all things—God is a singular God, but there’s a certain plurality to his existence. Hmm. Is that sounding familiar?

And then you have, in verse one: God, the Creator, the Father operating. And in verse two, you have: God the Holy Spirit hovering, almost incubating creation. And then, you have in verse three: God employing his Word. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... Through him all things were made.... That Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.* Do you see? That’s God the Son, Christ Jesus, before his human birth.

And so, it is our God, the true God, the Triune God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – who created all things. It’s not the Allah-god, or the Buddha-god, or the three hundred thirty million gods of the Hindus, or any other god that created all things—because none of them did anything. Our Triune God is the real God who at real times and real places really operated on our real world in front of real witnesses, among other things really to remove our very real sins and to reverse our very real death—through Jesus Christ.

Now, it’s that God who said: **"Let there be light," and** – by way of that Almighty Word which is operating also on your soul right now – **there was light. God saw that the light was good;** God is a personal God who can be pleased and takes satisfaction in his work. **And he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night."**

And there was evening – to my mind, the first half of the day led up to that – **and there was morning** – to my mind, the night, the second half of the day, led up to that – and so: our understanding of “day then night” seems right.

This was **the first day**: twenty-four hours, evening and morning, day and night.

And at this point, it would be worth it briefly to glance through the next four days of creation....

Verses six through eight: day two, twenty-four hours—God creates an expanse, “sky”, separating waters below the sky from waters above the sky. And don’t think of it in exactly the same way as our present atmosphere. No, it appears that back then there really were substantial waters above the sky that did not rain down until during the flood,

fifteen hundred or more years afterwards—and that, instead, springs watered the earth, as chapter two will say.

Verses nine through thirteen: day three, twenty-four hours—God divides land from seas and fills the land with vegetation. Notice that the land is singular. Maybe it was all one connected continent at the time. Undoubtedly it was at the time of the flood that God ripped apart the continents, and raised the highest mountains, and dug the deepest canyons and trenches.

Verses fourteen through nineteen: day four, twenty-four hours—God creates the sun, the moon, and the stars. How could there be light before these heavenly bodies came to be? God is all-powerful. He could accomplish it.

Verses twenty through twenty-three: day five, twenty-four hours—God creates the fish and the fowl, actually all sea creatures and all flying creatures.

And then, verses twenty-four through thirty-one: day six, twenty-four hours—God creates the rest, that is the creatures that dwell on land.

Of course, we'll want to take a more careful look at day six. But before we do, consider that question: "How did the universe originate?" And the answer is that God created all things: in six twenty-four hour days, and: considering the rest of the Scriptural evidence, especially the genealogical listings, he did it only six or seven thousand years ago.

God created all things: so vast that a ray of light, which could circle the earth seven times each second, would require hundreds of millions of years to traverse the universe. God created all things: so intricate that all matter consists of dozens of varieties of subatomic particles, none of which can our eyes see. God created all things: so richly that there's more than enough food, more than enough clothing, more than enough shelter for the six or seven billion humans alive today, and many more, and that's not even considering ...what? trillions of animals!?

Part Three: Is There Really Something Special About Humanity

So then, with a God this great, in a universe that vast, "Is there really anything special about humanity?" Listen in to verses twenty-six and following....

Then God said, "Let us.... Let us? Yes: Let us!—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, remember? *Let us make man – humanity*, it includes both man and woman – *Let us make humanity in our image, in our likeness*—whoa! And what does that mean? Well, contrary to doggies and kitties and fishies, God was giving to each member of humanity a personal soul, just as God is personally Spirit—and not only so: God was, at this point, giving each member of humanity a perfect personal soul, Adam and Eve's spirits would be entirely holy.

He did it so that they would **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 along the ground**—really: they would rule over all the earth and all its contents. Of course, that means that to this day: we really are supposed to utilize the earth's resources. We shouldn't be ashamed of doing so. But it also means that we consider ourselves stewards, gifted with God's resources, which we also don't want to misuse in any way.

So God created man – humanity! – **in his own image, in the image of God he created him** – with a perfect, personal soul – **male and female he created them.** And they needed to be one male and one female, because listen to this: **God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth"**—you need male and female to do that. And God wanted, and God still wants – he's never taken back these words! – God still wants humanity to multiply and to fill and enjoy the earth. Don't look down on big families! God also wanted humanity to **"subdue creation. Rule over the**

fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

And finally, interestingly, we read: *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"*—a promise he made to the rest of the creatures, too. But do you notice what food group is missing from their food supply? ...Meat. Back then – not now, but back then – neither people nor animals ate meat, because meat requires death, and death is the wages of sin, and at this point, there was no sin.

So then, “Is there really something special about humanity?” Yes, absolutely!

You see, we didn’t just “happen”. We couldn’t just “happen to happen”. It cannot be – as scientists say – that twenty billion years ago there was a ball of all matter, and it exploded in a big bang, and sixteen billion years later, four billion years ago, part of it cooled off and coagulated into the solar system and the earth, and more billions of years passed, and a hundred million years ago there was a puddle of highly developed amino acids, and lightning hit it, and boom! there was an amoeba, and after millions of years amoebas turned into mosquitoes, and after millions of years mosquitoes turned into salamanders – or unfortunately, only some of them did! – and after millions of years salamanders turned into birds and snakes, and after millions of years birds and snakes turned into monkeys, and after millions of years monkeys turned into you and me!

You know, it’s just as easy to believe – as some primitive cultures made up – that some primordial monster sneezed all things into being. It is much more sensible to let God, the only eyewitness and act-or in this events, tell us what really happened.

And what really happened is this. God, who handmade you in your mother’s womb—God intended for you, personally, to bear his image, his likeness. After all, that’s the way in which he created our ancestors – our great-great-great-great and about two hundred more great- grandparents: Adam and Eve. God loved you to such a degree that he wanted you to have a personal and perfect spirit as he has.

Tragically, you were born without that spirit, that perfect and personal soul, that image of God. Hence all the chaos and pollution and pain and sadness and sickness and death in this world—and all the guilt you and I rightly feel in our hearts.

But God loved you so much that he couldn’t leave things that way. He gave you a new conception and birth—in Holy Baptism. It was a birth in which God made himself your Father again. It was a birth in which your Brother, Jesus Christ, applied to you the perfect image of God he displayed—when he was conceived and born and lived and died and triumphed over death for you. It was a birth in which the Holy Spirit applied to you the perfect image of God that your Savior had supplied for you.

Conclusion: We’ve Received Answers to Some Profound Questions about the Beginning of Things

And that means something very special.... You know, when you consider how beautiful creation still is, you get to thinking how very amazing creation once must have been. And a sense of guilt and tragedy sets in on us. This beautiful account that we read today—I forfeited that, by my sin! You forfeited that, by your sin!

But you’re going to see that perfect creation again. God promises – most graphically, in the last chapter of the Bible – that, probably long after we have died, certainly after this world has disappeared, and after our bodies rise to join our souls in paradise, he will restore to us the beauties of his original creation.

God: who always, always was, God: who created the whole vast universe, and its every minute particle, God: who is renewing us in his image—that God, Christ Jesus our Savior, will draw us face to face with him in love for ever and ever. As Scripture says:

To that King: eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God be honor and glory for ever and ever! Amen.