

CREATION AND GOD'S JUDGEMENT

"If God in the final judgement would ask you a question about the Creation, what might that question be?"

Some years ago I addressed this question of a group of respected evangelical theologians and scholars who had come together as colleagues to attempt to come to resolution of some knotty problems about origins. We were engaged in serious business that might affect academic careers and appointments, and it was because of the seriousness of this business that I asked this very serious question. Among other things, it is serious because my colleagues, as is true for all of us, not only confess God to be Creator of all things, but also expect to be judged by him.

My colleagues needed very little time to give their response. No doubt, you too, could respond quickly and confidently to such a question. Perhaps you already have done so?

The immediate response from a theology professor was that God might ask "What did you do with my Creation?" Several nodded their heads in agreement, and then another observed that God might ask "What do you *think* of my Creation?"

As you might suspect, this was not the question about which we had assembled for our discussion that day. Our purpose was more closely related to the next question I asked of my colleagues. It was this, "Do you think that God might ask, "How did I do it? How did I make the world?"

The reply was immediate and vigorous: "Even to *suggest* that God would ask one of *us* how he made the world would be the height of human pride and arrogance!" And, then this respected seminary professor recited God's question to Job: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (cf. Job 38:1-40:5 and 40:6-42:6). We fell silent. We reflected deeply on what we had said, because we had come together for judgement.

And so I come to us who read this. As you and I discuss God's Creation, which question or questions are we preparing ourselves to answer? A question of the first kind, or of the second kind? Are we preparing ourselves and those we influence to answer, "How did I do it?" or "What did you do with it?"

Something peculiar (to me it is even sinister) has been happening through the decades during which I have been studying our Lord's Creation. In my first two decades, mention of Creation brought from fellow church members something like psalms-- they would be moved by the thought of God's power and soon might be heard humming "How Great Thou Art." During my fourth, fifth and now sixth decade, mention of Creation more often than not elicits from fellow believers-- after just two or three sentences of conversation-- a particular word and a specific question. The word is *evolution* and the specific question is, "What is *your* stance on Creation?" (Meaning of course, "What is your stance on evolution?") It is a response in which there usually is no hint of praise, no reference to Psalm 104 or 148 or anything like that, and no telling of awesome experience in Creation that wonderfully displayed God's divinity and everlasting power.

Knowing the question on Creation and evolution to be asked in all seriousness, I reply by saying I am willing to answer, but only after I ask *them* a question, and only then if they still want an answer. My question to them is the very one I asked my theologian friends, "*If God in the last judgement would ask you a question about the Creation, what might that question be?*" ..."If God would ask you about His Creation, what do you think He might ask?"

Their question soon is diminished by their answer to my question-- as they realize that while we discuss "Creation" the real Creation is being degraded through human abuse, indifference, and negligence-- including abuse of our own. While debating Creation, if not participating in its destruction, we often are on the sidelines watching its dismemberment: permitting many species to be extinguished, not speaking out against rampant soil erosion, obscuring the testimony of the heavens with our polluting wastefulness, becoming the only occupants of the land, muddying the waters, trampling the vegetation, and much more.

The world God *loves* is being subjected to destructive use even while we debate how God made it. As we (seemingly) defend Creation by our words, we may find that we destroy it by our deeds--deeds of omission and commission.

A meditation by Abraham Kuyper on John 3:16 is helpful in this regard. He confesses with Scripture, "God loves *the world*. Of course not in its sinful strivings and unholy motions... But God loves the world for the sake of its origin; because God has thought it out; because God has created it; because God has *maintained* it and *maintains* it to this day."

Kuyper reminds us that "Not we have made the world, and thus in our sin we have not maltreated an art product of our own. No, that world was the contrivance, the work and the creation of *the Lord our God*. It was and is His world, which belonged to Him, which He had created for His glory, and for which we with that world were by Him appointed. Not to us did it belong, but to Him. It was His. And *His* divine world we have spoiled and corrupted. And herein roots the love of God, that He will repair and renew this world, His own creation, His own work of wisdom, His own work of art, which we have upset and broken, and polish it again to new lustre."

And he warns: "But the children of men meanwhile can fall out of that world. If they will not cease to corrupt His world, God can declare them unworthy of having any longer part in that world, and as once He banished them from *Paradise*, so at the last judgement He will banish them from this earth, and cast them out into the outermost darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And therefore whoever would be saved with that world, as God loves it, let him accept the Son, Whom God has given to that world, in order to save the world."

The scriptures, in their depiction of the last judgement, confirm dire consequences for the destroyers: "The time has come... for destroying those who destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18b). And so it was that my colleagues and I were sitting in judgement, not fully cognizant of God's final judgement.

"If in God's final judgement we would be asked a question about the Creation, what might that question be?" What is your answer?

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