May the God of Heaven strengthen your spirit in Christ

*Have you ever in your life commanded the morning,
And caused the dawn to know its place*

 Job 38:12

What a question to be asked by God. Of course we can’t command the morning. And as far as we can tell, the dawn just comes about like it always does.

But, the thing for us, just as it was for Job, is to realize that God does command the morning and He does cause the dawn to know its place. These things exist because God created them; and they always come about when they are supposed to because God has made them that way.

These are things for us to remember when we become proud of ourselves and what we accomplish. God gave us abilities, but they are small compared to our Maker.

Therefore, the best thing for us to do is to use whatever gifts He has given us for His glory and for bringing others into His Kingdom, giving Him all the credit.

In Christ’s love

John

 11-21-21

Genesis 1:6-8

If nothing else, this account of creation given to us here in Genesis should give us an awareness of the enormity of God. It is easy to simply read the words and move on, even when we believe them to be true. It is actually an act of worship to pause and think about what’s going on. Ponder how vast space is; how big the earth really is; how intricate everything is that has life. Think on these things and then dwell on God who created them.

It starts to boggle our mind when we really try to picture God making everything that exists. The universe is so big that we are not able to find its end; yet God simply spoke and it came into being. It is very humbling to consider what we are able to do compared to what God is able to do. If we consider properly, we come to ask the same question David asked, “*What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?*”

But from this comes a beautiful realization: The same Bible that gives us a true account of creation tells us that God does care for us and He does think of us. Again, God’s demonstration of power when He made all things, gives us the knowledge that He is able to redeem us from the evil we are enslaved to. His great care for us is shown in the price He was willing to pay for our redemption; the very life of His Son, Jesus.

Our reading starts with, “*And God said*”. This is repeated throughout the creation account and its meaning is clear. God is able to create simply by saying that something exists; He makes the command and it happens. God’s command not only creates material things out of nothingness, but He commands what He creates and it does His bidding. At His voice, the earth came into being covered in water; at His voice, the water separated.

Further, it is very important to see Jesus here. We pointed out last week that in order for God to “say” something, He is using words. These are words of God. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the Word of God manifest as a human-being, which He had to become in order to bring about our salvation.

The Gospel according to John gives us insight into this in the first chapter. In verses 1 and 2 it says, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.*” John is clearly talking about Jesus, and he is doing his best to describe the indescribable.

John uses the same phrase used to start the book of Genesis, “*In the beginning*”. So he is referring to the same point in time; the very beginning of time and of creation. The Word, God the Son, was right there at the beginning. He already existed; He was not created.

And at the beginning of creation, He was there with God; He wasn’t off somewhere else. And even though He was with God, John tells us that He was God. John is wrestling with the concept of the Trinity: God the Father and God the Son, along with God the Holy Spirit, are somehow different persons yet one God. We can sympathize with the apostle; how does one explain something like that?

John has been calling Jesus “*the Word*”, and in verse 2 he drives the point home by using the pronoun “*He*”. The Word is a person, the person of Christ; the Word is not just some abstract force. He was physically present with God at the time of creation.

In verse 3 John says, “*All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being*.” Here is where we tie together Jesus with the Genesis account in which “*God said*”. All creation came into being by God telling it to. The word of God made everything come into being; and Jesus is the Word of God.

The Redeemer of the world is the One through whom it was all made. How fitting that we are saved by the One who made us and not by ourselves. It takes the power of the creator God to cleanse us of our sins. That, in turn, should give us some faint idea of how horrible sin really is. Sin had the power to wreak the creation of almighty God. So, it will take His infinite power to make it good once again.

When God first made the earth, He made it covered with water. We know from the story of Noah that there is at least enough water to cover the entire earth; even to a depth of 22 feet above the mountains. So here on the second day, God separated the waters. Some of the water He left on the earth, some He moved to a place above the earth.

We may wonder why God made so much water but the Bible doesn’t tell us. What we do know is that He had a good reason because the Bible tells us that God created the world in wisdom. Psalm 104:24 says, “*O Lord, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions*.” Once again, the Bible gives us reassurance that God knows what He is doing and He doesn’t make any mistakes.

To separate the waters, God created an expanse. Sometimes the word “firmament” is used and some Bibles simply translate the word as “sky”. Confusion starts for us when we try to figure out exactly what the expanse is and where the water is in relation to it. Our English translations do their best to capture what the Hebrew says. Unfortunately, the idea isn’t clear and leaves room for a couple different views.

Let me mention the two most common. If a detailed study of the wording in this verse is made along with comparing it to other occurrences in the Old Testament, a case can be made for the expanse containing the entire universe with the water outside the outer edges of the universe. This pictures a sphere around the earth that includes the atmosphere and all of space where the stars are located; and then the water being outside of that.

The other most common view is that the expanse contains the atmosphere and outer space, but the water is contained within the clouds and moisture that is in the air. So, the water that was separated is contained in the atmosphere above the earth.

Regardless of which view you choose, our almighty God is able to cause a tremendous amount of weight in water to simply hang in the sky. At His command, this water defies gravity and remains suspended above the earth, until He desires some of it to come back to the earth. It may come back as rain to nourish the earth bringing life, or it may cause destruction by flooding; He may have it fall as snow to cleanse the air, or fall as hail in a display of judgement.

God is the one who cares for the life He created with the rain. Psalm 104:13 tells us, “*He waters the mountains from His upper chambers*.” God’s upper chambers are, of course, the heavens; and He is the one who provides the life-giving rain. And, although He promised to never do it again, He did once unleash the waters to engulf the earth in destructive judgement.

Isaiah 55:10 speaks of refreshment the Lord provides from both rain and snow*. [T]he rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater.* The Lord had all this planned out before He even began creation; He is truly worthy of all praise.

Job 38:22-23 tells us more about what is in the expanse when God asks Job a question: “*Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, Or have you seen the storehouses of the hail, Which I have reserved for the time of distress, For the day of war and battle*?” Our God loves His creation and cares for it with water, but He will not let evil go unpunished and will use that same water for judgement upon those who will not turn to Him.

This was demonstrated in Egypt when Pharaoh would not let God’s people go; hail was one of the ten plagues that came upon them through Moses. But this judgement is also still to come. In the book of Ezekiel chapter 38, we are told that in time to come a large fighting force is coming against Israel. It will be far too large for Israel to handle but God will intervene. The leader of the attacking force is called Gog and God says He will enter into judgement specifically with him and his forces. Verse 22 says, “*With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone.*”

God certainly has plenty of rain available and He even has hail stored up. He knows this day of judgement is coming and He is ready for it. Imagine what it will be like for those who are trying to fight with all this going on: they will be dealing with flooding, everything they try to use will be soaking wet, vehicles won’t be able to move because they are stuck in the mud. Hailstones will be constantly pelting them and will probably be big enough to cause damage. This is not to mention the supernatural fire and brimstone coming down on them.

Another severe judgement is mentioned in Revelation 16:21 and is part of the seventh bowl judgement. *And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.* This is part of the judgement God has in store for those living on the earth at the end of history who refuse to turn to Christ.

God has many good things in His expanse; but it also contains the instruments of His judgement for when the time comes. As Hebrews 10:31 says, “*It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*” How precious for us that Jesus was willing to fall into those hands in our place. Now, we are comfortable and at peace in those same mighty hands.

In verse 6 of our passage, we are told that *God said, “Let there be an expanse*…” Then in verse 7 it says that “*God made the expanse*”. This almost sounds redundant, but it is making a clarification. Left by itself, “*God said, ‘Let there be an expanse*…’” could mean that God gave the command and someone else followed the command and did the creating. But verse 7 assures us that it was all God. He did give the command, but it was also He who did the actual making.

Just as God named the light and darkness day and night, God named His expanse and He named it heaven. The name “heaven” can also cause us some problems. Here God names the expanse heaven; in verse 1 we are told that “*God created the heavens and the earth*”. When we think of heaven, we often think of the current dwelling place of God and the angels and where our soul will go when we die. So, how do we deal with all these “heavens”?

I think Paul helps us out in 2 Corinthians 12:2. *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven.* In this verse, Paul is referring to himself being taken to heaven; presumably to have Jesus explain things to him. But the “*third heaven*” is what we want to look at now.

If there is a third heaven, then there must be a first and second. This third heaven is the abode of God and the angels; this is where Paul was taken to meet with Jesus. This is the heaven we think of as the destination of the souls of Christians. Coupling this with God’s creation of the expanse that contains water and will contain the stars, we can figure that the first heaven is the earth’s atmosphere and the second heaven is outer space or the rest of the universe.

It appears that God created all the heavens in the beginning and then created the separations and what they were to contain during the seven days.

Looking deeply into the creation account lets us have some idea of the immensity of God. This should fill us with awe and reverence. It should humble us, knowing that we are always in His presence and will one day stand before Him with respect to our eternal destination. This is why we cling to Jesus Christ; we know that He is the only way that we can stand before God without receiving the sentence of eternal destruction.

Prayer

It is true that we look into the vastness of space; watch the clouds; and receive the pleasant rain, that we know we have a mighty yet merciful and caring God. You have provided for Your creation in Your commands of water being above and on the earth.

This water provides refreshment and life; but at Your desire, it can be the instrument of Your judgement. You are righteous in which ever way You choose and both uses will bring You glory; glory for Your justice and glory for Your mercy.

Thank You for the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. By His perfect sacrifice, Your justice has been satisfied and we can receive Your mercy. We confess that He is our only Lord and Saviour; He is our only way to God the Father. He is our only hope; He is our confidence for salvation.

In Jesus’ name

Amen