



Patristics and Christian Learning

with Dr. Jordan Wood

Lecture 6: Christ and Human Origins: Some Fathers on Faith and Science

Outline:

Christ and Human Origins: Some Fathers on Faith and Science

- The way the Father's interpret scripture is extremely creative.
- How did they approach Genesis 1, 2, & 3? What can we learn about what they thought about the relationship between faith and science (in their terms, physics)?
- Four approaches from the Church Fathers to human origins:
 - Saint Irenaeus of Lyon:
 - He writes "Against Heresies."
 - For Irenaeus, Adam and Eve are not created as mature adults. He thinks they must have begun as infants.
 - His theological motivation was that God became humans so that humans may become divine or gods.
 - Recapitulation: Ephesians 1:10 All things are summed up in the Lord Jesus.
 - If the goal of creation and our destiny is to become gods, then why didn't God just create us as gods from the start? Since we had a beginning, then we began needing to progress. We have to get habituated to our end.
 - How you understand Christ effects how you understand creation.
 - Origen, *On First Principles*:
 - Origen thinks this text should not be read literally. The Jewish commentators had already thought that.
 - This way of handling scripture was fairly normal.
 - Origen reads the two creation accounts (Genesis 1 & 2) as two different moments of creation, or as two aspects of creation.
 - (Genesis 1) The first creation is of the ideal human being (soul, intellect, mind spirit), the second (Genesis 2) is a different dimension where we begin in a more bodily state.
 - Saint Gregory of Nyssa
 - He has a theory of double creation. He makes the two aspects of creation as God's creation and God's anticipation of world's Fall.
 - God created "the human being" and then it says "male and female, he created."



- Galatians 3:23: “In Christ there is neither...nor male or female.”
- The sexual difference, though present at the start of creation, it wasn't the original intention of God for humanity.
- Matthew 22: “People will be...as the angels.”
- Procreation present from the beginning, in a certain sense is a result of the fall.
- Saint Maximus the Confessor
 - Adam's sin is so radical that it obscures Adam's own origin from himself.
 - The only true origin/beginning for humanity happened in the middle of time, and that is Jesus Christ. The perfection of the human being is the true origin of human beings.
 - We can only find our true beginning by looking to Christ.
- It is a point of historical fact that far from any of the Genesis wars in the wake of Darwin, Christians and Jews have approached the book of Genesis far differently than a book that is recounting ancient origins.
- Many of the Church Fathers don't expect that the inspiration of scripture would require literal consistency across these chapters.
 - You must read deeper than the objective account of history.
- None of them expected to read Genesis apart from a specific theological framework. We always bring a framework and we always read the text according to that.
 - This frees us from having to always absolutely harmonize what we currently think through science and what we are finding through our study of scripture.
 - Saint Augustine thinks faith/science conflict is dangerous.
 - If we are going to make claims that are clearly false according to other science due to our inspired scriptures making these claims, then how will those outsiders who know those things to be not be truth come to accept the truth of the resurrection and salvation?
 - When this happens, faith comes crashing down. Be careful with what we claim that scripture must or must not be saying about science.