

Born to Reign

by Ray C. Stedman

There is a sense of heightened anticipation as we come to the sixth day of creation for it is on this day that man makes his appearance. In Christmas plays, when the little children are performing, and little Johnny or Laurie appears on the platform, parents eagerly anticipate this and crane their necks to get a better view. It is because when someone to whom we are related is involved we feel immediately involved ourselves. Thus when man makes his appearance on the creation scene, our interest is bound to be heightened.

The sixth day of creation is parallel in some respects to the third day, and like it, is a double day. It has, as do all the days, an evening and a morning, and during the evening (which always comes first in the order of Scripture) we have an account of the creation of the land animals.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. {Gen 1:24-25 RSV}

There is little that is new in this account. It merely repeats the language we have had before which suggests to us an indefinite period of time during which animal life appears upon the earth. But the order given here is first the larger beasts appearing, then the ones which later were to be domesticated (all subsumed under the title of "cattle," which would include goats, sheep, camels, etc.) and then the smaller animals, including even insects and reptiles those that creep upon the face of the earth.

This order may be listed in reverse of its actual occurrence, for it is recorded, evidently, in respect to man who appears at the end. It is all pointing toward man. The category of "beasts of the earth" would certainly include the apes and the monkeys, as the animals with bodies most nearly like men. That perhaps explains why the order appears somewhat in reverse to that in which science maintains animal life appeared on the earth. But it is also apparent that we have again suggested strongly that life appeared in creative leaps and within the rigid boundaries that Scripture designates as "kinds." This is not a scientific term, but it certainly indicates boundaries beyond which variation was not permitted to spread, and thus is considerably different from the claims of Darwinian evolution.

The language also suggests that each creative leap that occurs would indicate that the combined forces of light, darkness, the weather, plant growth, and other natural forces had produced a climate which is designed for animals more and more like man. It is quite obvious, as you read this account, that all of it is aiming toward man. He is the climax of the creative week and now, on this sixth day, all is ready for him to make his appearance. In exact accordance with the fossil record man comes last in the order of life appearing on the earth. Thus we read in Verse 26,

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." {Gen 1:26 RSV}

I shall stop reading there because there is far too much in this record of the sixth day to try to

cram into one message. I will hold the rest of this account for further studies, even leaving to our next message an investigation of what is meant by these fascinating and mysterious terms, “the image” of God and “the likeness” of God. We will have a great deal to learn from those as we look at them in our next message.

But there is one thing that is immediately evident in this brief account of the appearance of man upon the earth, and that is: **The origin of man is strikingly different from the origin of animals.** Animal life appeared much as plant life did, and as the fish and birds appeared. It is all described in very much the same language and was evidently following the same manner of emergence. But now a different note is struck, and a completely different atmosphere prevails. You notice, for instance, that man appears only after God has held a divine consultation about him. God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” The question immediately arises, to whom is God speaking? Who is the other party or parties to this conversation?

There are some who suggest that he is talking to the angels; that since man was not yet made, the only other creatures with whom he could converse would be the angels. But this is impossible, in view of the very next verse which says, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God” {Gen 1:27a RSV}. He is not therefore talking to the angels when he says “let us make man in our image.” The only other possibility is that here is the first major revelation in the Old Testament of the fact that God is not a single unity but that there are other Persons within the Godhead, and he is talking to the other Persons involved.

You know, perhaps, that the word for “God” which is used throughout this passage is the Hebrew word *Elohim*, a plural word. Now that means more than when we say a thing is plural. The Hebrews also had another form called the dual form, and if the dual form had been used it would have meant that God consisted of two Persons. But it is the plural that occurs which means that the Godhead can consist of not less than three persons. It is this plural word that is used throughout this passage, a plural noun but with singular verbs. It is remarkable that here on the very first page of the Bible we have more than a strong hint of the Trinity, the triunity of the Godhead. “God said, ‘Let us

make man in our image,’” and “So God created man in his own image.” This play back and forth between the singular and the plural is strong confirmation of what the rest of the Bible tells us, that God exists in a strange three-fold unity, three-in-one – not three Gods but only one, yet subsisting eternally in three remarkable Persons.

That is about as far as we can go in defining God, but we can accept the definition as true. There are many examples often used for the Trinity but most of them are rather confusing because they do not really illustrate a Trinity. I do not want to go into this any deeper at this particular point, but it is interesting that the idea of a Trinity only appears in connection with the emergence of man upon the earth. It is only man, among the creatures of God, who can understand and enter into an experience with a triune God. So when man appears God also reveals himself as existing not as a single unit, but as a triunity.

Notice also in this account that man stands as the link between God and creation. He is a mediator. The Lord Jesus Christ, when he appeared as the second Adam, the perfect man, is also said to be a mediator, but between God and man. Here the man, Adam, is created as the mediator between God and all animal life. He is made in the image of God which links him with God. In Psalm 8, David cries, “... thou hast made him little less than God,” {Psa 8:5a RSV}. That is an accurate translation. The King James Version says, “a little lower than the angels,” but the word is literally *Elohim*, the same word that is used here in this passage for God. Man is also said to be the governor of the created world, to have dominion over the fish and birds, over the cattle, and even over the creeping things upon the earth.

At this point we must deal briefly with man’s relationship to the animal world. Here we must part company entirely with the theory of evolution. Mr. Darwin said that man is the end product of animal life, that he is the highest of the animals, is linked to them and descended or evolved through interminable ages, from animal life. The impression received from his ideas is that man is not really very far removed from the animals, that there are close links which tie man to the highest of the animal life, especially the apes, who are most like us in the animal creation.

Ever since Darwin every monkey in the zoo has been asking himself, “Am I my keeper’s brother?”

That accounts, of course, for the discouraged look on their faces.

If you take a walk through a museum of natural history you will see dioramas that picture the descent of man. In these you will see ungainly creatures with huge slumping shoulders, a slouching gait, protruding jaws and heavy eyebrows, who are said to be the links between the apes and man. Anyone visiting such a museum is almost driven to the conclusion that this is all very well substantiated, that science has established the fact that man does come from the animal world. But the actual truth is that there is no evidence whatsoever that links man to the animals – none whatsoever. Actually, the gap between man and the highest of the apes (and scientists themselves admit this) is at least as great as the gap between the ape and the amoebae. There is no close connection whatsoever. Science is at a total loss to account for the sudden appearance of true man, with his amazing faculties not found in the animal creation. Through the decades since Darwin, scientists have been looking for the links that would establish a connection, but these links do not exist in fact – only in imagination and plaster of Paris.

Let me give you a few quotes from evolutionists themselves to indicate how true this is. I do not want to dwell long on this, but I know there is considerable interest in this. Jacobs and Stern, who issued a college textbook called *The Outline of Anthropology*, admit:

The most decisive changes away from a Dryopithecus level [a supposed ape ancestor of man] occurred, not in the later periods for which fossils have been found, but in the middle Pliocene to the late Pliocene periods for which not an iota of evidence is available.

Now these men are evolutionists. This quotation does not mean that they cast aside the theory of evolution. But they do admit that there is no ground for this particular claim other than certain educated guesses, and that the fossil records do not contain any missing links, though they have been presumed to have occurred before the fossils were formed. But there is no evidence for this at all. Also, one great authority, A. L. Kroeber, says,

That great mysterious “X” of a generation ago, the famous Missing Link, has become quite outmoded. The story leaves him

stranded and forgotten and its path is all the more intricate and dramatic for it.

Just one more reference along this line: Dr. J. M. Gillette, writing in *The Scientific Monthly*, presented an article entitled *Ancestorless Man – The Anthropological Dilemma*. All this is simply to make clear that science itself finds little or no evidence to link man with the animal world. It is all mere speculation as a result of projected guesses, based upon the theory of evolution.

But there are even some Christians who feel that perhaps God did make the body of man through evolution from the animals, but put in it a soul and spirit, and it is these that makes man different. His body evolved from the animals but his soul and spirit are a unique creation of God. There are some who feel that there were certain hominoids, or hominids (manlike animals), that existed at the same time Adam was created. Now it is very likely that this was true, and this would account for the discovery of certain bones that have been reconstructed in our museums. But from the Biblical record we must insist that Adam, the progenitor of the present race of man on earth, was not one of these hominids. The reason is that all the Biblical evidence points to the fact that Adam was created an immortal being.

- That does not mean someone who cannot die, because Adam did die.
- That means someone who need not die.

Jesus Christ was also an immortal being. He did not need to die, and he did not die by any effort of man. He said, “I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again,” {cf, John 10:17-18}. He did not die because of the effects of crucifixion – he died because, on the cross, he dismissed his spirit by an executive act of his own will. He laid down his life in that way.

The first Adam was also an immortal being. His body did not need to die. But if his soul had been placed in a mortal body, then the second Adam is not like us. According to the Scripture, the second Adam came to become man as man was made in the beginning, entirely like us. He became one with us. The writer of Hebrews says,

he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, {Heb 2:17a RSV}

Thus the Bible denies that men evolved, as some scientists would tell us, that he was created directly by the hand of God. We will say more on this as we come to other studies, but I want to point this out here:

- Man is now being redeemed by the grace of God, and
- To be redeemed means that he has fallen from what he once was.

Redemption is a process of restoring him to what he once was. We know from the Scriptures that when the redemptive act of God is complete man will stand before God, body, soul, and spirit, all made in the power of an endless life. Thus this record strongly suggests that the body of Adam did not come from the animal world.

That brings me to the final point here in Verse 26, which is **the purpose for which man was made**. He was given dominion over all the created universe. He was made to govern and to master the world in which he was placed. Even though man has fallen he has never forgotten that command, and this accounts for his unending persistence in trying to master the forces of earth, to climb the highest mountain and explore the deepest sea and to utilize the animal creation for his own purposes. But also, the effect of the fall is seen in the amazing fact that the man who was placed in this world to govern it is now on the verge of destroying everything.

If evolution be true, and man is, as the evolutionists tell us, the highest achievement of evolution, then what kind of progress is it where man, who represents the zenith of evolutionary achievement, is found to be crueler than any animal could be and whose obdurate madness is threatening to bring the whole thing down in total collapse, destroying all animal life as well as himself? Yet, despite the fact that man has lost his ability to master, the desire to do so still remains as a kind of racial memory within us. And that desire in itself is a picture, on the physical level, of what redeemed man is called to be on the spiritual level. Here we come to the great purpose of this passage. It is not

here to teach us what our instincts already have informed us, that we are made to govern. It is here to illustrate to us that when we become redeemed we are called to reign in life, to master life.

Let me give that to you directly from the pen of the Apostle Paul. In Romans 5:17 he says:

If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. {Rom 5:17 RSV}

Reign in life – not in heaven – in life, now, at this present time. That means to control, to govern the effects of life around us, to be in control of events, though fulfilling the program of the Father, and moving in the direction God determines. Redeemed man is never to be a helpless victim of circumstances. It was not meant for the world to make havoc of the church, but for the church to make havoc of the world.

If you read the events of our Lord's last week in Jerusalem you will see exactly what I mean. There he is, moving toward the goal which the Father has ordained, that he should die upon a cross. He sets his face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem and is constantly aiming at that moment he knows to be the Father's program for him. But notice how he goes toward it in full control of every circumstance. He sends out the disciples to do the work that leads to his arrest. He dismisses Judas to go out into the night, telling him when to leave to accomplish his betrayal. When the soldiers come to take him he rebukes them and they fall to the ground in fear. He could easily have turned and fled, but he waits quietly for them to take him. The only untroubled person in all that troubled account is the person of the Lord Jesus as he walks in solitary majesty through all those tumultuous events. He was reigning in life. And that is what the Christian is called to do. The circumstances of our lives are sent by the Father, they are the program God has picked out for us, but our attitude in them is to master every event, not being taken by surprise but reigning through them all.

This brings us to **the matter of prayer**. What is prayer, this mysterious power placed in the Christian's hands? Primarily, it is a means of communication between God and man, but second-

darily, it is a means of control of the events of earth. Have you ever seen prayer in that light? Look at First Timothy, Chapter 2. Paul says, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions. [Why? Why pray for kings and those in high positions?] that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way," {1 Tim 2:1-2 RSV}. That will be the result of prayer, the ability to lead a quiet and peaceable life. That means that when riots, tumults, and outbreaks begin to occur, prayer can have a very vital effect upon these things. Prayer can quiet these social outbreaks that threaten the peace of our time. Christians have no idea what is committed to them in this ministry of reigning over the events of life. This is evidenced by the fact that we really have very little confidence in prayer, as is seen in the attendance at prayer meetings.

Lambert Dolphin was telling me this past week about a circumstance that occurred when the Beatles came to Kansas City recently. The women in the Christian Women's headquarters there became concerned about this because they knew that the Beatles exercised a strange magic over young people. They whip up youthful enthusiasms and create mesmeric forces that lead young people to see life in a distorted fashion with the ideas and values of the world greatly exaggerated, and spiritual truth diminished to a minute degree. So they organized a prayer meeting to counteract the effect of the Beatles when they came into town. And when the Beatles came, they were very disappointed in the response. They did not find the enthusiastic reception they had had in other places. And the young people seemed to experience no aftereffects from their visit, but went about their business, enjoying life quite free from these influences. When this same group heard of the riots breaking out in Detroit they gathered for prayer. The next day the riots took a different turn and quietness fell upon the scene again.

Well, you say, that is just coincidence. Perhaps, perhaps, but the scriptural record and the testimony of 2000 years of church history speak otherwise. When the people of God are faithful in prayer, wonderful things can be accomplished.

I was just with John Noble in Tyler, Texas. This man had the cruel experience of being incarcerated for nine years in a Soviet slave labor camp

above the Arctic Circle. His father was there with him, and was placed in solitary confinement for three years. He had no one to talk to and was almost driven out of his mind by the silence. But he had been led to Christ by the sufferings of this labor camp, and he began to pray that God would send him a Bible. What could be more unlikely than to have a Bible be given to a prisoner in solitary confinement in a Russian slave labor camp? But he kept on praying that God would give him a Bible. He asked the guard one day if there was any reading material he could have. The guard said "No, of course not!" – that even if they had some they could not give it to him. But the next day there came a summons from the commandant to appear before him. When the prisoner was led in, the commandant said to him, "The guard tells me you've asked for reading material. I know what you want, you want a Bible." And he turned around and reached on the shelf in back and handed him a Bible. He said, "We didn't have a Bible here and we had to send to West Germany to get this for you." What moved him to get that Bible, no one knows. He had to send outside of Soviet controlled territory to get it. But God moved that man to get a Bible and that Bible sustained Mr. Noble's father all through the long months of his imprisonment.

That is reigning in life.

Why is it that the United States has been unable to disengage itself from Vietnam? It is my personal conviction that much of it is because Christians, who ought to know better, are wasting their time in political demonstrations and protests on a physical level, and ignoring the spiritual weapons which God has placed in their hands by which with concerted prayer this thing could be brought to a close. That is why Paul says in Second Corinthians 10, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," {2 Cor 10:4a KJV}. They are not fleshly. They are not the means which worldlings use to accomplish their results, but, he says, "they are mighty ... to the pulling down of strong holds ... and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

What fools are we to lay aside these mighty weapons of spiritual power and waste our time in futile outward demonstrations which only serve to inculcate more resistance and more violence. We are called to reign in life, to have dominion over the things of earth and the forces of it. This is why James, writing to the Christians of his day (because

they had the same problems that we have), says to them, “You have not, because you ask not,” {cf, Jas 4:2b}. Oh, the authority of faith!

This theme runs all the way through Scripture and traces for us the accomplishments of men and women who learned to utilize the weapons of spiritual power God had placed in their hands and to speak with the authority of faith. The account of it is given in Hebrews 11. I suggest you read that through to learn how thrones were toppled, kingdoms changed, armies repelled, and many other events of earth, the things which were reported in the papers of that day, were affected by the power of men and women who learned to reign in life through Jesus Christ.

Prayer:

Our Father, we pray that you will rebuke us by this word, and turn us from the empty, foolish things with which we engage ourselves so frequently, to become once again men and women of vision in the realm of the spirit which lies as an unseen reality behind the events of history. Grant to us that we may learn how to move in this realm, how to become a powerful force to accomplish thy will and thy purpose in human life, through these weapons. We ask in Jesus’ name, Amen.