

CREATION AND EVOLUTION

LIBBY: What are you doing?

KAI: I'm trying to figure out how we got here.

LIBBY: We took the 405 to the 10, and ...

KAI: No, I mean, how did we get here as humans? What do Catholics say? Were our ancestors monkeys, or two people who couldn't follow directions?

LIBBY: That's easy. Option number three.

KAI: Oh, you mean monkeys that couldn't follow directions.

CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

LIBBY: Hi, I'm Libby.

KAI: And I'm Kai. Welcome to Catholic Central.

LIBBY: Today, we will explore what the Catholic Church has to say about the debate between the Bible and evolution. Spoiler alert: for Catholics, there's another way.

KAI: But first, what is this fight all about?

LIBBY: Well, in one camp, we have the evolutionists and the theory of natural selection.

KAI: Charles Darwin came up with this theory in 1859, which states that life started as a primordial soup and evolved.

LIBBY: The strongest of the species, meaning the ones that could best adapt to their environment, survived.

KAI: From this perspective, everything could be chalked up to random chance, and God could be considered unnecessary.

LIBBY: Nothing became something, and out of it, substances came to life.

KAI: And at some point, we became self-aware and weeded out the weaklings until arriving at the nearly perfect specimen you see before you today. Specimens. Sorry.

LIBBY: In the other camp, we have the creationists.

KAI: They believe that the creation story in the Bible was written like an eyewitness report.

LIBBY: One day of light, one day of oceans, one day of plants, animals, and bam! Here we are, a mere 6,000 years later.

KAI: You may be wondering, okay then, option number three? Catholics say what?

LIBBY: Well, to answer that, we really need to dive into how the Church views science.

KAI: Now, you might be tempted to roll your eyes and think that the words Catholic and science should only go together in a sentence along with the words superstition, anathema, and excommunication.

LIBBY: But actually, Catholics aren't at all scared, distrustful, or willfully ignorant of science.

KAI: They love it so much that many of them have dedicated their lives to studying it. A holy cross priest, Julius Nieuwland, developed a synthetic rubber that revolutionized the industry. Pasteurization and genetics both came from Catholics: Louis Pasteur and Father Gregor Mendel.

LIBBY: Not to mention another priest, Georges Lemaitre, who came up with the Big Bang theory.

KAI: The actual theory, not the show.

LIBBY: Which is still the leading explanation of how the universe began.

KAI: Catholics don't see science and faith as conflicting. You don't have to choose which camp to live in.

LIBBY: You can believe in evolution and also in the creator of an ordered universe, where beings evolved according to a higher purpose.

KAI: Which, let's be honest, is actually helpful, since science is a little lacking in the where everything came from in the first place and why is it here now, and where is it going department?

LIBBY: And because Catholics believe God created the universe with order, for them, all truth comes from God. So, we understand more about God when we discover more about the truths of the universe through science.

KAI: And science can bring us closer to God. It gives us a greater admiration for his greatness when we see his works.

LIBBY: And you know what else doesn't conflict with science? The Bible.

NEWSCASTER: Breaking news! Scientific evidence has been found that suggests that our cells are actually made up of tiny dust particles, proving that man's creation from dust in the book of Genesis is true! Ha ha!

LIBBY: No, I mean they're compatible when you see the creation story as figurative, not literal; as words and images that point to truth.

KAI: Especially when you consider that the Bible is full of poetic language which means something different in Hebrew. Uh, Libby, this is not the time for yoga.

LIBBY: No, that's the word in Hebrew for day. Like Yom Kippur? It could mean anything, from a 24-hour day to an entire era.

KAI: Oh, right. So, when the Bible says God created the Earth in six days, it could mean a series of epochs.

LIBBY: What's most important is how Genesis shows us God's relationship with creation and ultimately, with humanity.

KAI: Science is the observation of the physical world.

LIBBY: So it can't definitively say that God had no hand in creation.

KAI: And it can't tell us why anything happens, either.

LIBBY: Or whether it should.

KAI: Catholics say that observation reveals to us who God is and how he works. Speaking of dinosaurs ...

LIBBY: Who's speaking of dinosaurs?

KAI: Well, now that you mention it, yesterday I discovered a team that's actually researching how to bring back woolly mammoths.

LIBBY: Wait, really?

KAI: Yeah. I'm going to do a Kickstarter to open a theme park and call it Mammoth Land. Think of Jurassic Park, only friendlier and with more fur. And with smoothies and musical numbers. It's the magic of science!

LIBBY: Science is not magic, and you know what happened in Jurassic Park.

KAI: Come on, they're way less likely to eat people than dinosaurs are.

LIBBY: My point is that you need to consider where breakthroughs fall in the natural order of things. So Genesis ...

KAI: Which, how accurate can it be if it doesn't even mention dinosaurs once? I mean, including a picture would be pretty cool.

LIBBY: You're proving my point. Genesis is not meant to be a science textbook. There's a lot of stuff in the physical world that's not mentioned in it, but there are truths about our relationship with God.

KAI: Pope quote! As Pope Benedict said when he was still Cardinal Ratzinger, "The Biblical story of the dust of the earth and the breath of God does not, in fact, explain how human persons come to be, but rather, it tells us what they are." And when in Genesis, God declares everything to be good, we know that the universe wasn't an accident or a mistake, but something beautiful and intentional.

LIBBY: And made out of love, including the human species, which stars in the story of Adam and Eve and their bad life choices.

KAI: Even though they messed up, they were created in the image of God, with freedom, intelligence, creativity, the ability to consciously choose love, and to choose truth, beauty, and goodness.

LIBBY: Or choose to be defiant, selfish, and defensive, a proud tradition humans continued to uphold today.

KAI: Which is kind of awesome.

LIBBY: Wait, you like when people are defiant, selfish, and defensive?

KAI: No, no, no. What I mean is, because even though Adam and Eve abuse what God gives them, they do it with their free will, which sets the stage for what Jesus needed to save us from.

LIBBY: The creation story in the Bible makes the most sense as a framework to the supernatural love and peace that Christ comes to offer the world.

KAI: Science and religion go together because the God who created evolution as part of the natural order is the same God who inspired the writing of Genesis. God is the god of scientific truth and the god of sacred truth. These truths complement each other and don't contradict. God is God of all.

LIBBY: And God keeps both scientists and theologians busy. He's always active in showing us His creative love from the galaxies and stars, down to the daily lives of every one of us.

KAI: The process of creation has never ended. Ever since the big bang, God hasn't stopped shaping the universe.

LIBBY: We can see God at work every day, if we look for him. He gives us a world of wonder and the gift of nature to admire, and like Adam and Eve with the garden, it's up to us to protect the Earth.

KAI: Or destroy it.

LIBBY: On that note, let's use our free will to end this episode. I'm Libby.

KAI: And I'm Kai. This is Catholic Central. Until next time ...

NEWSCASTER: You stay classy, Catholic Central.