

Jesus, the Bible, and You in 7 Steps - Creation

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning everyone. Thank you so much Dave for leading us so well this morning and! Paula for reading for us. Please do keep your Bibles open in front of you if you can that will! really help as we work our way through together. But it's wonderful to be with you. Thank you so much for having us. You drew the short straw I'm afraid in getting me whilst Grace Church have got the much better end of the deal with Johan going there. But it's lovely to be here to see some familiar faces. You might hear my voice is struggling a bit so hopefully we'll get through or maybe for your sake you're hoping my voice will run out but we'll see how we go.

For those of you who don't know me, my name's David. I have the real privilege of serving as the pastor of Grace Church, Racklesham, where we've been now for just over a year. We literally started on New Year's Day last year so still very early days but we're really enjoying our time at Grace Church and back here in Farnham. Many of you will know my wife much better than me or at least I mean you'll know her better than you know me. Hopefully we know each other fairly well. In the summer we'll be celebrating our fifth anniversary having been married right here in this room as many of you probably well know. Unfortunately we were married by my dad.

That's another story. Again some of you will know my dad and will have heard him preach several times here. I'll apologize for anything he may or may not have said during that time. I know very well what my dad is like but there we go. Yeah so five years Jenny and I will have been married coming up in the summer. It feels like much longer than five years not because married life is a real strain. Again for those of you who know Jenny you will know that I am the most blessed man in the world to be married to Jenny but because we've crammed in a ridiculous amount into these last four and a half years or so and that's not including our COVID romance and engagement which we can tell you all about later. We've lived in three different homes. I've had three different jobs. Jenny completed her paramedic studies and graduated just and I only mean just because she was suffering with horrendous morning sickness right at the end which if you can imagine being in the back of an ambulance is there any worse place for suffering with horrendous morning sickness. We have had two beautiful children that we're so grateful for. Stephen who some of you might have seen or met this morning soon turning three more like 13 and Joanna who is at the back she's a delight during the day. She's 10 months old absolutely wonderful during the day. Night time completely changes and we're still not getting much sleep at all. Some of you may be able to relate to this but every year when Jenny and I write each other's Christmas cards we say something like what a year it has been. Perhaps next year will be a little bit calmer and less chaotic and if anything the opposite always seems to be true so we shall see what God has in store for us in 2026. But we are so grateful to be here in Farnham. I actually grew up in Fleet not far from here and Jenny of course was a member here at Bethel for several years leading up to our wedding until I sadly took her away from you. But Bethel will always be very close to our hearts.

We have some very dear friendships here which we really treasure. But anyway that's enough about me but I must also bring our greetings and love from Grace Church. We're so grateful to be able to partner together in the gospel and this morning's pulpit swap is just one kind of evidence of that in action. And it's also great to be with you on the same day as Nicky from Growing Hope. As Nicky has said I'm one of the trustees for Growing Hope Farnham and I couldn't commend this new wonderful charity to you more highly. How many in our nation, in our community, maybe yourself included, are in desperate need for the kinds of support and therapy and hope that God willing Growing Hope Farnham can provide. So do please be praying and support if you're able. Now it's a real privilege to come and join you for your new series that Johan began last week. This series which, if I get the clicker to work, as you can see on the screen, Jesus, the Bible and you in seven steps.

[5 : 01] And as Johan outlined last week, the aim of this series is to show how the whole story of the Bible tells us of Jesus. How Jesus is the goal, the focus, the end point throughout. He is the rescuer that God has promised throughout his word and he is the Lord and Savior that we all need. Some of us may know that after Jesus died and rose again, we read in Luke 24 that he encounters two of his followers as they journey on the road to Emmaus. They are downcast, they are distraught because of Jesus' crucifixion.

They're believing that it is all over. The man they worshipped and loved was now dead. He's gone, horrifically killed. And unbeknown to them, that same man, but now the risen Jesus Christ is right next to them on the road. And Jesus gloriously declares to them in verses 26 and 27, did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself.

That is the theme, the heart for your series here, to look through these seven key themes, key steps, God, creation, fall, Israel, Jesus, church, the return, and see Jesus for who he truly is throughout. Last week, Johan began with God, asking the key question of who is God?

And he wonderfully drew out from Psalm 145, how God is both great, how he's good to all, and how he is gracious to save. Why though? How is that possible? Well, only through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is fully God and fully man, who came to die on the cross for the sin of the world, to be our Lord and Saviour. So that was last week. What are we looking at this week? As you can see in the red, well, it's creation. Creation. Now, Johan said last week, made me smile a little bit, that he'd drawn the short straw in starting with God. I'm not sure I'm too far behind with creation, but actually, all those preaching in this series might say the same when you look at those seven steps. It is a significant series that you are undertaking together with big topics that you could spend months considering each one in turn. But as we said, that is not the heart, that's not the focus for your series. And let me apologize right now if you are hoping that I'm going to give you a full rundown of the different positions Christians may take on exactly how God created the world, and then to categorically declare which is the correct one. I'm afraid I won't be. I'll, of course, leave that to your beloved pastor when he comes back to explain, as I'm sure he'd be only too happy to.

But as I know that may disappoint some, let me just outline what I think are three non-negotiable truths concerning creation, whatever position you feel led to take. There are more than these, but I think these are three keys. Number one, creation ex nihilo, which simply means that God created out of nothing. Nothing, which is never true of anything or anyone else. Even the most creative of individuals or the most powerful of supercomputers, AI, they can never create out of nothing.

[9 : 09] And so no matter your view on the origin of the universe, what was the starting point? How can there even be a starting point without God? God brought everything else into being, but he is not a part of that created order. He spoke the created order into being, as we read right at the start of the Bible in Genesis 1. And then can you see what that means for creation, for you and for me? I made a conscious effort a number of years ago to stop using the term nature and replace it with creation.

Not because there's necessarily anything wrong with using the term nature, but because I wanted to keep reminding myself and hopefully those I encounter that all we see around us isn't just natural in the sense that it came to be by chance, randomly. No, it is created by our all-powerful creator God.

Number two, the goodness of creation. At the end of Genesis 1, after God has created all, we read that he declares it to be very good. Very good. Now next week you're going to think about the fall and the tragic corruption and twisting of the world and creation itself. And that is foundational to the gospel and to the right understanding of sin. But even despite the fall, the foundational goodness of creation remains. It's not an illusion and one day it will be restored.

And gloriously renewed. And then number three, the special creation of Adam and Eve, perhaps somewhat more controversial. And there are many different positions believers take on this. But for me, I don't understand how without a real Adam and Eve who genuinely lived and existed, how many other scriptural truths can be held. Not least Paul's understanding of how salvation works in Romans 5 and otherwise. So I know that's brief. There's so much more that could be said, but I wanted to at least outline what I think are three non-negotiable truths, no matter the position you might like to take about creation. But before we come to our core focus this morning, let me just remind us of what it is we're thinking about. Do you ever stop and marvel at the wonder of creation itself? Let me try and help you a little. Do you know that there are believed to be more stars in the

universe than there are grains of sand on all the beaches on the earth?

[12:06] That is at least a billion trillion, or one as you can see there with 21 zeros after it. How about this? About 97% of our planet's water is in our oceans, with the total water being roughly 1,386,000,000 cubic kilometers. Now, I'm not trying to do a maths lesson, but a cubic kilometer is a cube that goes a kilometer in each direction. So that's enormous. And you've got 1,386,000,000 of those, which for some reason the National Ocean Service have calculated is enough water to fill that number there. I don't know how to pronounce that number. That many gallon-sized milk containers.

It's an extraordinary amount of water. And as a result, unsurprisingly, over 80% of the world's oceans are still unexplored. Over 80%. Perhaps with thousands of species still to be identified as a result.

Wow. What about little old you or me? Apologies for the picture. I'm not trying to be rude. You may know that your fingerprints are entirely unique to you. Did you know that you also have an entirely unique tongue print? The pattern of ridges and wrinkles on your tongue, nobody else has. Even identical twins have got different tongues. And then last week, we could probably enjoy doing this for the rest of our time, but we shouldn't. This is a picture of a blood vessel, obviously not a real picture, not a real one, just a picture.

Do you know, if you took all of your blood vessels out of your body, try not to think about too much, if you did and you connected them together and you made a massive tunnel, its length would circle around the world four times. Four times. And that is inside each and every single person.

[14:15] It's incredible, isn't it? Stunning. This is the wonder of creation. But what do we do with such wonder? Do we worship and marvel at creation itself, like perhaps Sir David Attenborough or other naturalists? Attenborough famously said this, it seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement, the greatest source of visual beauty, the greatest source of intellectual interest.

It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living. Now that is a great quote. But as a Christian, I want to respectfully say, no, Sir David Attenborough, I'm afraid you've got it quite wrong.

You're not seeing the wood for the trees. You're seeing the beauty and the wonder of the created order. But you believe that is the source itself. When it's the creator, he is the source. He is the one that brings all this beauty and wonder to life. He is the one that makes life worth living.

I find it such a tragedy that Attenborough can both see so much and yet see so little. And the little is what truly matters. We must keep praying for him and for so many others likewise.

Now, all this preamble leads to our core focus this morning. As we said, we're not thinking about the how of the universe. The key question for us today is what or who is the universe for? What or who is the universe for? Now, not that we need any help in this, but our society and our culture would tell us that the world revolves around us. The world exists for us and for our pleasure.

[16:20] We live in an extremely individualistic age, don't we? You've got to do what's right for you. Don't let anybody get in the way of you or your dreams. Nothing is impossible if you work hard enough, if you want it enough. Our advertising, our social media algorithms continually reinforce this.

So you're encouraged to see yourself as the main character in the world, in life. You deserve this. You need this. Your happiness is all that matters. Some of us went, as has been said, to Friday night's alpha launch with Warren Furman, who was ace from the original Gladiators, if you remember that.

And he told so powerfully about how all that kind of messaging just doesn't fulfill. It doesn't satisfy. The world doesn't revolve around us. It's not just made for our pleasure.

Now, interestingly, there is something that scientists have called the anthropic principle, which essentially just means that the world is peculiarly suited to human life.

Now, why would that be the case? Why would that be the case if all this came about randomly without a creator? There is a sense in which creation is made for us. And as opposed to those like Attenborough, we stand at the top of creation. Again, isn't that what we read in the opening chapters of Genesis?

[17:56] Genesis, humanity is the pinnacle of God's creation. We're called to rule and steward the earth, bearing God's image. Genesis 1, 26 to 28.

Then God said, So God created mankind in his own image. In the image of God, he created them. Male and female, he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

However, whilst we are given such a privileged position, creation was not truly made for us. Rather, it was made by, through, and for what we might call the human being par excellence, the perfect man, Jesus Christ.

[19 : 18] If you've still got your Bibles open, and you might have been wondering whether we were ever going to get to the readings we started with, in John's stunning prologue to his Gospel, he makes that glorious declaration that Jesus, who is the Word of God, the true expression and revelation of God, Jesus always was in the beginning, because he was with God, and he is God.

The second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, who is verse 14 of John 1, tells us, and we thought about this at Christmas, became flesh, made his dwelling among us, Jesus.

And as verse 3 declares, through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made. And our reading in Colossians, that we've had doubly read to us, and I'm going to read it again in a moment, let's reinforce it into our minds, makes this point even, takes it even further, to reveal Jesus' ongoing activity, and the purpose of creation.

The Son, that's Jesus, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Firstborn, not in the sense that he was created, that would clearly contradict all that we've seen in John 1, and elsewhere, but in the sense that he is, what we might call preeminent, he is first.

Just as the firstborn would inherit, and lead the family, so Jesus possesses the inheritance, and leadership over all of creation.

[21 : 05] For in him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him.

Do you get the point? All things, whether we see them or not, visible or invisible, were created through him, by him. Do we have any evidence for this though?

Well, how about one of my favourite passages in all of scripture, Mark 4, as we see Jesus fast asleep, in the boat, in the middle of what must have been the most catastrophic of storms, to make seasoned fishermen, who knew those waters so well, absolutely terrified for their lives.

How could he be asleep at such a time? Because he is in complete control. He is the Lord of all, so he can get up, and by the power of his word alone, rebuke, and instantly calm the wind, and the waves.

Why? Because it was his word, that created them in the first place. Creation has to, and willingly always does, obey him, as a result.

[22 : 23] The question for you and for me, the most important question we'll ever answer, is verse 41 of Mark 4, as his terrified disciples look at each other, and say, who is this?

Even the wind and the waves obey him. What say you this morning? Who do you say Jesus is?

You cannot sit on the fence. I'm afraid he just doesn't give you that choice. Either Jesus is the creator God in the flesh, he is Lord of all, or he's not Lord at all.

You can't have it any other way. Who do you say he is? And if you're exploring that, why not come on Alpha? That is the heart of what we're looking into with Alpha.

But having established that Jesus is the creator, that all things were made by and through him, back to our key question this morning.

[23 : 23] What or who is the universe for? It is for Jesus. All of creation is for him. I think Keith ended last week, the end of Romans 11, 36, for from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory forever. Amen. Creation exists for Jesus and his glory alone, as the father desires. Jesus loves all that he has made.

He gives all creation good things. That ties in with what we said earlier about the goodness of creation. Common grace, as you might have heard before. But common grace only goes so far. It cannot save you, cannot bring you true life. Will you, will I, recognise Jesus for who he truly is? We left John 1 at the end of verse 3 earlier.

These are verses 4 and 5. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

[24 : 37] In Jesus Christ alone is life. Life in all its fullness. One of my favourite verses, John 10 verse 10. He is the creative word that calls life into being.

We've seen that, but it goes further than that, because his death on the cross pays the price for our sin, if we would but believe in him, turn from our sin and confess him as Lord of our lives.

Amazing love. Oh, what sacrifice. The Son of God given for me. My debt he pays, and my death he dies. Why?

That I might live. That I might live. Jesus is the Lord of creation. He is the Lord of all. He has all authority and power over everything, and he is coming back to reign in glory and justice, when all will be renewed in recreation.

Will you, will I be a part of this? Why would we not? What's stopping you, if that's you? Turn to him. Run to him. Give your life to him.

[25 : 51] It's the best decision you will ever make. I promise you. You might know the great song by the Gettys and Stuart Townend. Creation sings the Father's song.

If we had time, I'd read you the whole lyrics, but listen just to the final verse. Creation longs for his return. When Christ shall reign upon the earth, the bitter wars that rage are birth pains of a coming age.

When he renews the land and sky, all heaven will sing an earth reply with one resplendent theme, the glory of our God and King.

What a glorious vision and hope that is, if we know and love the Lord Jesus. Can we go out into his stunning creation to live and proclaim him in all that we do?

Can we shine like stars for him into the darkness? Bring his life where otherwise there is tragically only death. Can we love those who don't love him, recognising just how much he loves them and how he gave himself for them on the cross?

[27 : 06] Can we marvel in awesome wonder at all the works his hands have made so that our souls sing to our Saviour God, how great thou art, how great thou art.

I hope we've answered our question definitively this morning. What or who is the universe? Is all of creation for? For Jesus. It is all for him.

So let's live for him and his glory alone as we go out into creation in all that he's called us to do in our respective lives and the different stages that we're in.

It's all for him. We live for him and for his glory alone. Shall we pray together? Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, we want to thank you so much for Jesus.

We thank you that all things have been created through him and for him. Lord, forgive us for the ways in which we live as if the world revolves around us.

[28 : 16] Help us to see through the facade of such individualism, to recognise how hollow and empty it truly is and instead to see Jesus for who he really is and bow the knee in humble adoration.

Lord, we marvel in wonder at the works of your hands. What are we? That you are mindful of us, that you love us so much that Jesus came to die for us that we might truly live.

Help us to live for him and for him alone to seek his glory, his name, his honour in all that we do in this next week and into eternity beyond.

We pray in his name. Amen.