

Genesis Ch1v1-25 - And God Said

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] that reminder. Children, you can now go to Sunday school. Have a good time. And the rest of us, please, can we be turning to Genesis chapter 1?

I went looking for the booklets on Genesis that I'd done up. I couldn't find any, so they've probably all gone. I'll try and print some more for next week if you haven't got them.

But do read that little booklet. It will give you an introduction to the first 11 chapters that we're going to be looking at over this term. So let's read Genesis chapter 1. We're going to start at verse 1.

We're going to go down to verse 25. And then next week we'll look at that creation of humanity.

Next week. So starting at verse 1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty.

Darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, let there be light and there was light. God saw that the light was good and he separated light from the darkness. God called the light day and the darkness he called night.

[1 : 28] And there was evening and there was morning the first day. And God said, let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water. So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. And God called the vault sky. And there was evening and there was morning the second day. And God said, let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear. And it was so. God called the dry ground land and the gathered waters he called seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, let the land produce vegetation, seed bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it according to their various kinds. And it was so.

The land produced vegetation, plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning the third day. And God said, let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times and days and years. And let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth. And it was so. And God made two great lights, the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.

God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth to govern the day and the night and to separate light from darkness. And God saw it was good. And there was evening and there was morning the fourth day.

And God said, let the water team with living creatures and let birds fly above the, across the earth and the vault of the sky. So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing within them. The water teams and that moves about in it according to their kinds and every winged bird according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas and let the birds increase on the earth. And there was evening and there was morning the fifth day. And God said, let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds, the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground and the wild animals, each according to its kind. And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds.

[4 : 22] and God saw that it was good. Well, God's word is good. It's the voice that speaks and we want to listen to it now.

Let's pray and ask for God's help as we do so. Father, we thank you for this record, this account of creation, so wonderfully and precisely written.

Amen. We thank you for all that we see and hear here. And we pray that this wouldn't just be words on a page, but it would be the very voice of God speaking into our hearts and lives today, helping us to see who you are, the kind of God that you are, and all that you are seeking to do in this world today.

So help us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, Genesis chapter 1 has so much to teach us, doesn't it?

There's a lot here. But here's the problem. We don't always get very far into the story because people start arguing over how old the world is and how long it took to make.

[5 : 41] Now, it's important for us to recognise that there are faithful, Bible-believing Christians who have very different views on this. And I'm not going to go into them now.

It will take too much time. I was going to, but I'm not. If you want to talk to me about that afterwards, I'm very happy to talk to you about it. And while healthy debate is good to have, getting stuck on this issue of how long it took is to miss the point entirely.

Genesis hasn't been written to answer all our questions about the age of the earth. So, it's primarily been written to tell us about God and who he is and who we are.

So, three things we're going to look at from our text this morning. First, God speaks. Second, God speaks and acts.

And then third, God speaks and acts to redeem. So, let's get straight into it. First, God speaks. So, those are the four views which we've moved on very quickly.

[6 : 53] First, God speaks. God is introduced to us as a speaking God. And we see this emphasis all the way through the first chapter. So, verse 3, And God said, and it's probably there in the paragraphs, verse 6, And God said, verse 9, And God said, verse 14, And God said, God speaks.

It's hard to miss the point, isn't it? He speaks to tell us who he is and what he is like. We don't have to speculate. We don't have to come up with a God of our imagination.

God is a speaking God and he reveals himself to us through his words. In fact, God is showing us that he is different from any other man-made God or being because he speaks.

Follow with me on screen. This is from Psalm 115. Why do the nations say, Where is their God? Our God is in heaven and he does whatever pleases him.

But their idols are silver and gold made by human hands. They have mouths, but they cannot speak. Eyes, but cannot see.

[8 : 10] They have ears, but cannot hear. Noses, but cannot smell. They have hands, but cannot feel. Feet, but cannot walk. Nor can they utter a sound with their throats.

Those who make them will be like them and so will all who trust in them. Psalm 115. As we'll discover, God speaks so that we can know him and how we should relate to him, how we should speak.

He speaks to us to commune with us, to be in fellowship with us. Our creator, God, is not some impersonal force somewhere away out there raging from the heavens, distant and unknown.

God speaks with words, with language, that we can understand to communicate with us just as we talk with one another.

Now, that doesn't mean we can expect God to have private, audible conversations with us. No, God's word has been spoken and it has been written down for us today.

[9 : 18] So as we read God's word, we hear his voice. That's why Genesis was written. Moses wrote it with the help of God's spirit and it was written for the Israelites as they were entering into the promised land.

God was speaking. He had his words written down so that every other generation to come could also learn. God doesn't have a private audience with individuals to say, here, I just want to talk with you a minute and tell you all about creation.

No, he's written it down so we can read and we can know. So if you want to hear the voice of God today, we open up our Bibles and we read and we listen.

That's what we're doing this morning. It's what we do every week. We want to hear God speak.

Second, God speaks and acts because as God speaks, things happen.

His words have power. Look at the repetition that we see in Genesis 1. So look at the beginning of verse 6 and God said and the end of verse 7 and it was so.

[10 : 39] Verse 9 and God said the end of verse 9 and it was so. Verse 11 is the same. Then God said and it was so.

All the way through verse 14 and God said end of verse 15 and it was so. God's words do what he commands them to do.

His words never rebel against God. They never fail God. His word acts as God speaks. Now I don't know if you've ever noticed that your words and my words are not like that.

We don't have power. If you've got pets or if you've got young children you'll know that your words have no power whatsoever. They don't have the power to control or order or bring things into existence.

Our text this morning will show us three things about the action of God's word when he speaks. Here's the first one.

[11 : 46] God speaks order. Look at verse 2. Now the earth was formless and empty.

So verse 1 God created the heavens and the earth. What did it look like when God began the process of creation? Well verse 2 tells us it was formless and empty.

Darkness was over the surface of the deep and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters. So the picture we have here is if you can imagine in your minds a misshapen lifeless mass suspended in darkness.

A watery sphere suspended in the universe. It was formless formless and empty.

God speaks and as he speaks the earth is formed and the earth is filled. His words bring order where there is disorder.

[12 : 52] So I have a table here that you can follow on the screen. It's not unique. If you have a study Bible you'll probably find it there. formless world on the left the formless world, the empty world on the right and then God begins the process of forming on days one, two and three and the process of filling on days four, five and six.

So let me go through that with you on day one which we see in verse three God forms the light and separates light from darkness. and then on day four in verse fourteen God fills that formation with the sun, the moon and the stars.

On day two verse six we're told that God forms the sea and separates the sky from the waters.

Then on day five in verse twenty God fills the sea with all the sea creatures and fills the sky with birds.

and then on day three God forms the land and he forms the vegetation on the land. And then on day six which is verse twenty four and into verse twenty six as well God fills the land with animals that crawl along the ground and the creatures of the ground and as we'll see next week he fills it with people.

So it's very clear to see this formless emptiness this void which is then formed and then filled. The world we live in is not random is it?

[14 : 34] It's not an accident. The world we live in is carefully ordered and structured by God's word. So God speaks order.

Second God speaks design. Everything that God makes has a place and a purpose. There's a design to this world that we can't escape.

So look at verse 11. Then God said let the land produce vegetation seed bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it according to its various kinds.

Verse twenty nine. Sorry verse twenty one. So God created sea creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it according to their kinds and every winged bird according to its kind.

Down to verse twenty five. God made the wild animals according to their kinds the livestock according to all their kinds and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds.

[15 : 51] Can you see the design that's taking place? Everything according to its kind. So an oak tree is an oak tree and it doesn't grow rose petals.

And a robin is a bird and it doesn't have an ostrich neck. It's according to its kind. And a mouse doesn't have an elephant's trunk. Each to its kind.

Now it's important that we understand this because when we come to human beings God designed men and he designed women according to their kinds.

We're not interchangeable. What God designs has their purpose. So look at verse 12. The kinds of vegetation have their purpose.

Verse 12. The land produced vegetation plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds.

[16:55] So the trees and the plants have all been designed by God to produce fruit, food for human beings. And we know from science that they take in carbon dioxide and they produce oxygen.

Verse 16. We read about the lights in the sky. God made two great lights. The greater light, that is the sun, to govern the day and the lesser light, the moon, to govern the night, to rule the night.

Verse 17. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light to the earth, to govern the day and the night and to separate light from darkness.

So the sun has a job which is to produce the lovely sunshine upon the world, helping things to grow. The moon has a job, it reflects the sun's light in the evening times.

We also know the moon is there to keep the tides going and all that happens with that. The world is wonderfully designed, isn't it?

[18:04] It's not just a random jumbled mess. Everything, the different kinds of creation, have their place and purpose within God's world.

So God speaks design. And then third, God speaks beauty. Because everything God does, God makes and he says it is good.

He delights in everything that he's made. So again, look at the repetition, that's a theme through the chapter, just look at what's repeated, that's the main point. Verse 10 at the end, and God saw that it was good.

Same at the end of verse 12, and God saw that it was good. All the way through, everything God did, it was good. Nothing is bad or ugly or unwanted or useless.

It's all wonderfully good. The stunning colours of a peacock's tail, the roaming rhino with his armoured body, the magnificent corals in the depths of the ocean, the scent of an orchid or those great tall pines.

[19:21] Creation is God's canvas, his gallery of beauty, his masterpiece on display to the world, and he is saying it is all good, just as I am good.

God's speaking, none of this would happen. Of course there will be those who will argue and say, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, we don't need God.

It all evolved from a big bang, there was matter that kind of all came in together and it just went bang. I don't know if you believe that or not.

Well, if you do, consider this. Because if everything was to begin with a big bang, just a chance where it just happened, the chances of a world being created where you have order, design and beauty, is like putting the parts of a car, so your car that you came in this morning, stripping it back to every nut and bolt, every wire and fuse, the doors and windows, the bumpers and every little gadget, stripping it down to its tiny little parts, putting it all into a massive big washing machine and turning it on and when you open the door, whoa, you have a fully working driving car with every bit in its place.

That's what we're expected to happen if we believe the big bang that somehow it all just came into being in this wonderful order, design and beauty. no, this world is not a product of chance, it has been spoken into being by God.

[21:08] Whether you believe it's a literal 24 hour day or whether you take that day as an age or a period of time, it's all into being by God.

God speaks to act and when he acts, he brings order, design and beauty. Listen to this, John Stott, who's now with the Lord, a Christian writer and speaker, so good with his words.

This is what he says. God speaks to act and when he acts, he brings, oh sorry, God preaches and the world is made. God said, let there be light and there was light.

Six sermons are preached in wonderful sequence. The word of God is proclaimed in the heavens pulpit and it all comes to pass. The preaching forms the universe.

The word preached is no empty word. it accomplish what it pleases and never returns void to him who speaks. God's spoken word is a powerful creating word.

[22:24] It changes, it transforms, it achieves the purpose that God intends. Or as Psalm 33 verse 6 tells us, by the word of the Lord the heavens were made.

Their starry host by the breath of his mouth. For he spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm.

So God speaks and God speaks and acts. But third, there's a reason for God speaking and acting. And the reason is he speaks and acts to redeem. Imagine for a moment that God did not speak. So, verse 1, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

He did that, he spoke that into existence, but then after that he didn't. What would we have? Verse 2, well without God speaking the world would remain formless and empty.

[23 : 33] Without God's word, darkness would pervade the universe. There would be no life without God's word. Now, that's really important because the biblical authors pick up on that theme and they use this picture of pre-creation where it's formless and empty to describe humanity without God's word.

So, turn with me please to Jeremiah chapter 4 and we'll see how this is true. Isaiah chapter 4, or Jeremiah chapter 4. Jeremiah begins with explaining to us that God's people have rebelled and turned their back on God and his word.

They don't want to listen to God anymore. They've had their fill of everything God has to say. And we're told in chapter 2 that they've exchanged the glorious God for worthless idols.

Remember we read about that earlier. Worthless idols who have mouths but cannot speak. Throats that don't utter a sound. They don't want to listen. They've got their own gods.

Now listen to what God says to them. Chapter 4 verse 22. To those who don't listen. My people are fools.

[25 : 05] They do not know me. They are senseless children. They have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil. They know not how to do good. That's what happens when there is an absence of God's word.

But look now at how he describes humanity. Verse 23. I looked at the earth and it was formless darkness and empty.

And that the heavens and their light was gone. You see when God's word is not heard there is chaos and darkness. Now isn't that a remarkable description of humanity today?

It's lifting it straight out of Genesis 1 and showing to us that God's word when it is rejected and ignored becomes chaotic. humanity, the world in which we live is formless and empty.

There's division in our relationships, disorder in our own lives. There's no purpose, no meaning. We're just here trying to figure it all out. The light has gone out and darkness prevails.

[26 : 16] We were reminded of that yesterday weren't we with the 20th anniversary of 9-11. It's still going on in Afghanistan and Syria and in many nations in our world.

There's something very dark that pervades this world of ours. We see it in our own communities, the tragic murder-suicide in North Kerry this week.

How awful that is. The continued items in the news of rise in domestic abuse. And if we should dare peer into our own hearts and lives, if we would dare to look inside ourselves, we see things there that we would not want anybody to ever know or see.

I see it in my own life. There have been seasons of struggle and God's word is not opened or read and well I know what happens, my life becomes dysfunctional.

Work and home become imbalanced, marriage becomes joyless, relationships break. When God's word is not heard, verse 23, life becomes formless and empty, the light goes out.

[27 : 41] In fact when the word is rejected, a decreation takes place. Follow on with Jeremiah in verse 24. I looked at the mountains and they were quaking and the hills were swaying.

I looked and there were no people. Every bird in the sky had flown away. I looked and the fruitful land was a desert and all its towns lay in ruins before the Lord before his fierce anger.

Isn't that true of the world today? There is a decreation, an undoing taking place of all that God made that was good. Not only do we take the place of God, but we order our lives as we please. Gender is redesigned, life is ended in the womb, our environment is polluted, our world is breaking and our personal lives spiral out of control.

Instead of flourishing, we have become a fruitless, parched desert. the world is starved of the very thing that gives nourishment and life, God's word.

[28 : 58] But notice that this isn't all the consequences of rejecting God's word. Again, look at verse 26. I looked and the fruitful land was a desert, all its town lay in ruin before the Lord, before his fierce anger.

Not hearing God's word is judgment. Removing God's word from a people and a community is a sign of God's displeasure.

It's God's response to a world who says, I don't want you, I don't want to listen to you, and God listens to that and says, well I'll be silent and I'll remove my word from you and you will see what becomes.

In other words, it's a mercy of God. It's a gracious act of God when we hear his word in our lives and in our communities.

So that is humanity without God's word. Second, humanity with God's word. You see, we can see how desperately we need the word of God, that creative, powerful act of God that we read about in Genesis.

[30 : 18] We need that same voice, that same word to renew and restore. We need a new creation in our own lives. So let's have a look at 2 Corinthians chapter 4.

2 Corinthians chapter 4. chapter 4. Once again, the authors of scripture pick up on this theme of creation to explain the world in which we live and what needs to happen.

Look at verse 4. 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4. The God of this age, that is Satan, we'll meet him when we get to Genesis 3.

The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers just as he blinded the minds of Adam and Eve. He's still doing it, that's his job, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

So the gospel, the gospel word, which is all about Christ, is not seen and it's not understood.

People are blind to its truth and reality.

[31 : 41] They're in darkness. They can't see how destructive their lives are becoming. People think that, well, if I don't have God's word, that's actually freedom.

No, it's judgment. They are blind to the truth of God's word. So how are we, how are people ever going to see the light of Christ and understand who he is?

Well, look at verse 6. For God who said, let light shine out of darkness, Genesis 1 verse 3, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

We're taken right back again to the beginning of creation, aren't we? To the God who spoke. And he's saying, look, I want you to remember, imagine, go back to creation. The God who speaks and acts is the God who speaks and acts to redeem.

The power of God's word that formed this formless world and his word that filled this empty void.

The power that brought light into the darkness is this same God who by his spirit speaks his creative word and his life-giving word into our hearts today.

[33 : 05] How does he do that? Well, go back to the verse before, verse 5. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord.

as the word about Christ, the living word is preached, his word takes effect in our hearts. It's like the lights go on, it's like being in a room full of darkness and someone comes in, maybe you're asleep, windows, blinds, curtains are closed, it's a dark, dark room and somebody comes in, switches on the light, bright lights.

God's word begins to act. And we can begin to see that the decreation in our lives, all that disorder and disruption, we begin to see it and we turn to our creator God in faith.

As Paul will put it in the following chapter, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come, the old has gone, and the new is here.

You see, when we turn to God in repentance, when we turn in trust to his word about his son, it's like a new creation takes place in us personally.

[34 : 33] As we begin to live under his word and submit to his word, our disordered lives are reordered. spirit, what is chaotic in our life, is now wonderfully redesigned.

Where there is brokenness, there is now a magnificent beauty. He takes empty vessels such as us, who are formless and shapeless, and he fills us with his life-giving spirit.

God is not distant from us today, raging from the heavens in chaos and disorder.

God has come close to us through his word to redeem us. His word is powerful, renewing and restoring. So think about your life today, where you're at.

Maybe there are things that are in chaos. Maybe there's disruption and disorder. Maybe there's relationships that are broken. Maybe marriage isn't as it should be.

[35 : 43] Things aren't right. Nothing seems to be in sync. Come under God's word. Submit yourself to God's word.

Let him speak his word into your life and bring about an order and a design and a beauty to the chaos that is there. Let him bring about a new creation, new relationships, new beginnings. He can do that for you as we turn to his word. Think about where you live, your neighbours. Think about the people you work with, maybe your family.

And you look at their lives and you see how painful it is, how disordered things have gotten, wrong choices, bad decisions, ignoring God, I can go my own way.

And you see the mess. What's going to make it right? speak the word of God's truth.

[36 : 57] Let them hear the voice of God speak into their lives and watch how God renews and restores and transforms, bringing order and design and beauty in the darkness bringing light.

God speaks and when God speaks he acts and when God acts he redeems. Listen to the voice of God.

Have confidence and speak his word into this broken world. Let's pray. Father, we so often look at your word, we open up our Bibles, we have it on our laps in front of us and we just treat it as perhaps like any other book, any other word.

but you've reminded us again and afresh today that your word, your voice is powerful. Your spoken word creates, it acts, it redeems.

Father, help us right now, even now, we confess where we have intentionally ignored you. help us to come under your word afresh and would you restore what is broken.

[38 : 47] Would you please, Father, bring order and design and beauty to what is broken. We confess and humbly ask that you would do that in us today.

We pray for those known to us, friends or family. Father, would you use us to speak the word of God into the life of another.

And will you be gracious and bring about a new creation. May the old go and may the new come. Jesus for the glory of God and for our good.

Amen. you