

God's majestic creation week (2)

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Date: 08 January 2017

[0:00] Right, please could we stop being friendly? I'm sorry to interrupt you.

! I wasn't expecting such a cascade of friendliness and conversation.! We did the last bit a little bit quickly and perhaps we can enlarge it a tiny bit.

And I've got six words in summary at the end which you can guess. I'll show you what they are.

Okay, you have to work those out what they are.

Right, let's pray. Lord, we thank you that we can sing your praise. Thank you that we can encourage one another.

But we need the power of your Holy Spirit so that we may rightly hear your word and respond to it. Please give us your help.

[1:17] In the name of Jesus, amen. In olden days, there used to be a thing that was about this size, made of cardboard.

And you used to put on it what was called a postage stamp. And probably some of you have never heard of a postage stamp. It's a way of doing email, but you do it with solid objects.

And this thing was called a postcard. And on one side of it you'd have the address. And this is a holiday postcard. On the other side of it you would have pictures of whatever.

The forest, the sea, the mountains, and people. Usually having a good time. There they are.

And on this side you would write something. And the typical thing to write was, wish you were here. The pictures would be interesting.

[2:43] If you were to look now at a postcard sent from Brighton, shall we say, in the 1950s, you would say, oh look at those buses.

Fancy that. Look at how nice the seafront was. Didn't the sun shine brightly in those days? And you'd look at the people and you'd say, did they wear those in those days?

You know, flared trousers or whatever it was. Big shoulder pads or something. You'd say, wow, that's what it used to be like in the old days. And if you were privileged to have a happy childhood, and if this postcard went back to your childhood, you might well think, those were the days.

Wouldn't it be great to be back in those days where the sun always shone, where everybody was happy. Where you could lark around at the seaside and just have a wonderful time until everybody was tired out and went home and had a lovely sleep.

Those were the days. Wish you were here. We wish we were there. And in a way, this first chapter of the Bible is like that.

[4:03] It's a postcard from another world. A world that is a bit like our world. But by comparison, our world is spoilt.

Whereas that world was full colour, our world is black and white and grey. And the motto from these chapters is, wish we were here.

Wish we were there. Wish we were back in the world as it was made to be. And the message of the Bible is that there is one person who says, I can get us back there.

I can restore all the sunshine that's turned into clouds. I can restore all the suffering that needs to be turned into joy.

I can bring all that back if you put your hand in my hand. And that person is Jesus. And as we look at these early chapters of Genesis, they sort of spell out to us just how good God made the world to be.

[5:21] And what he aims to do and promises to do in restoring it. So we'll just remind ourselves of what we looked at this morning.

And fill in a little bit of the, a bit more of the detail on the last bit that we did rather quickly. And we'll finish up, if we can, by seeing what those six words said about the world as it's supposed to be.

As it was and as it will be once again. So shall we remind ourselves of days one to six? And I can do it quite quickly and you might, and you see whether I got it right. So we began with, what was that? Do you want to have it? This is, so we're going through Genesis one.

And this is formless and empty. It's really darker, if you want to do in Hebrew, tohu and bohu. And over the top of this world, what do we read?

[6:36] It's over the top sort of spread. The spirit of God is hovering over the waters. And then in this, as God tells us his week, we have, let's do that again.

We have six days. And I think it's helpful to align them like this. Days one, two, and three. And days four, five, and six. And in the moment, we're going to concentrate on what happens in day six.

But let's fill in the other bits. So I think you could just very simply and say it goes like that. It goes like that. It goes like that.

Anybody like to tell us what's happening on day one that would be expressed by that line that I drew? Yeah, that's right.

[7:46] Thank you very much. God says, let there be light. And there was light. He saw that the light was good. And he separated the light from the darkness. I believe Augustine said this was God's ineffable work or something like that.

Meaning it's sort of simple enough to know the words. But it's rather mind-blowing to understand what it all means. Because God separated, he made light and separated the light from the darkness.

And he names the light and the darkness. The light he calls day and the darkness he calls night. And that is day one.

Anybody like to tell us what happens on day two, denoted by that line, the horizontal line? Yeah. On day two, he separates the waters, separates between the waters, the water separating the water, excuse me, under the expanse from the water above it.

So this expanse is the rachia, which I'm not quite sure what it is, but it sort of seems to go in the middle there. And separate these waters from these waters. And we have a naming.

[9:04] And the naming is that the expanse is called sky. So I didn't put my arrow in the right place this morning. That's the bit that ought to be called sky. And can anybody...

Oh, this is a very tricky question. Anybody remember the play on words with water and sky? How would I... They... One is mayim and the other is shamayim.

Yeah, mayim is waters and shamayim is heavens or sky. I think they're both plural, actually. So we have that separation on that day. And then on day three, we have multiple things happening on day three.

But I've got that line there. Anybody tell us what's happening along that line? Yeah, dry ground. It's water. So God separates... He separates water from water. And this time, he separates water from dry ground. So it would be quite nice if I could find a green pen. No, shall I...

[10:07] Let's not do that. Let's do a red... This one. So water... And dry ground over here. No, that was not a good colour, was it?

Yeah, I was looking for that colour. So dry ground. And something will happen to the dry ground in a minute. God said, let the water under the sky be gathered to one place.

Let the dry ground appear. And these are named. The dry ground is called land. And the gathered water, he called seas. So let's try and name... There's an...

Ooh. Is this... You can see this, can't you? Yes. So that's sea. And that's land.

Land, sea. And the second thing that happens on this day is that the land is covered with vegetation.

[11:16] The land produces vegetation. Seed-bearing plants, trees on the land that bear fruit with seeds in it according to their kinds. So let's put some green vegetation here.

So this all becomes green. And we get trees and various plants and things on here.

Let's have a smaller... Oh, that seems like a... No, here we go. So trees and plants. Okay, so there we've got spaces that have been made, as it were.

And on the next days, God fills the spaces. So, again, rather mysteriously, we've got dark and light, or day and night.

And what does God do with day and night on day four? Or what does he introduce now? Lights, yeah.

[12:22] And two lights in particular. And then, like, from the house. And so, where do I want to be good at us? We're going to go, go, go, go.

On day one, it says, let there be light. And on day four, there are lights, plural. It's a slightly different word in Hebrew.

But there's obviously, it seems obvious to me, there's a connection between day one and day four. It's difficult to express the connection, but if you were to say, I've drawn it as spaces, and then spaces that get something put into them.

So I think, you know, that's representing light, that's representing dark. And God fills those spaces or populates those spaces with the two lights.

Anybody like to suggest which the two lights are? The sun and the moon. Yeah. So I think that's what the two lights are. I don't think it says so.

[13:31] Does it tell us what they are? It says a greater light and a lesser light. So I think it's sun and moon. I'm trying to draw the moon in there, but not with that much success.

What did God also make? Stars. Yeah. So I've got no way of putting those in because I've used my black. But let's try red. God also made the stars.

Let's put some stars in there. And there's also a common theme of time because this is day and night, and these things are for markers of time, aren't they?

It says seasons and things like that. So there's something going on there, and I don't claim to understand all this. I'm not sure whether anybody does, but there's something going on there about time on day one and day four.

If we go to day five, so let's keep the idea of the division like that.

[14:31] What do we get in day five? The waters change the living creatures. Thank you. Yeah.

Let's take this water. So we've got water here, and we've got sky up here, which were produced on day two.

And actually something happens to both of those, doesn't it? So what was the one that Katie mentioned? The living creatures. And where are the living creatures? The living creatures.

Okay. So that's the waters. Let's be a bit watery. So in the waters, we're going to have living creatures.

There's some big ones, and does it say some small ones as well, or does it just say big ones? It says living creatures. Oh, yes. Greater creatures. Okay.

[15:27] Okay. I haven't got room to put very big creatures, but I shall put some fish in here. And what happens in this space up there? Birds.

Yeah. Things that fly. Okay. Let's go up there for some birds. There's a correspondence between day two and day five.

And then on day six. Day six. So day six, we had previously got... We were under the sky.

So I should put the sky in. It does say that, doesn't it? I think it does. And we had sea and dry ground, but the focus is on the dry ground.

And what happens to this dry ground? And the dry ground has been populated with vegetation. That happened on day three. Animals.

[16:39] First thing is animals, isn't it? So there's the... Oh, dear. There's the trees and stuff that were there already.

And we get into this space here, a three-fold division of living creatures. Have I got a good colour to do living creatures with?

So the living creatures... The three-fold division is livestock. So if I try and draw a cow... Oh, dear. That's not a very good cow. That's livestock.

And wild animals. So the animal I opted for was an elephant, rightly or wrongly. So elephant.

And then creeping things. So I guess that the creeping things would include insects, but probably not be limited to insects. So let's put some of those there. So those all go into that space.

[17:41] And the next bit. What's the next bit? So we're now in chapter 1, verse 26.

Man. Yeah. Human beings. And we end up with... So this is the sort of final masterstroke. The final completing act is to make human beings. Let me just rub out that arrow. And put in human beings.

In terms of their significance, they ought to be very big.

Because they rule over everything. And that's the bit that we got to this morning.

[18:49] And we did a little bit quickly. So let's do it a fraction slower. And this is the first time that any of these creatures is specifically...

Well, is specifically talked about and related to God. How do we know that God talks about this? We're in verse 26. Okay. That's the answer to the second question. Let's do the talking about first. How do we know that... Well, he's said this.

He's done a lot of and God said. But there's a particular thing, isn't there? Let us. Let us make man in our image.

So perhaps I'm pressing that point a bit far. But it seems to be God conferring with himself. Let us make man in our image.

[19:58] Us, our... Sorry, Jack, but grammatically, what are those? As distinct from I and my.

Us and our. Plurals, yes. They are plurals. So there's a very mysterious and deep thing going on here that God sort of confers with himself about this creation.

And he's going to make a plural race. And there is something plural about God.

I was talking to Vaughan about this this morning. I think we have to wait till the New Testament to understand what was actually going on.

So in the New Testament, we understand that God is plural. There is one God, but he is three persons. That's right, isn't it? Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And I think at this point, we have some inkling of the Trinity conferring and saying within Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, let us make man in our image.

[21:21] It's a hint. It's a hint. I wouldn't want to make it dogmatically say, oh, the Trinity is definitely stated there. But it's a hint of the plurality of God.

Thank you for that, Ben. And what relation to God is humanity? Now it's your answer for your one, Lindsay. In his own image.

Now, none of the animals is in the image of God. But man, Adam, or male and female, is said to be in the image of God.

So if we want to understand what human beings are, we could say, well, they're somewhat like animals. They eat the same food. They inhabit the same world.

They have the same experience of gravity, sunlight, digestion. But it's human being. You cannot understand human beings properly until you, instead of looking down, you look up and say, human beings are something like God Almighty, their maker.

[22:37] And I'm not going to stop and draw that out. But there's a huge amount of significance in that fact. I mean, let's just be very practical.

Why should we respect people who we differ from? Answer. Because they're made in the image of God. Why don't we just shoot terrorists?

And why would we aim to bring them to trial and treat them with justice and respect? Answer.

Because they're made in the image of God. There's a huge importance to that.

So let's write image here. And what is the place of male and female regarding the world that's been made?

The world, the fish, the birds of the air, the living creatures that move on the ground. What do they do? What is their position with respect to all of those other creatures?

[23:47] Rule over. Thank you. So if I put that there. Rule. So that's all the creatures and the resources, I would say.

Et cetera. That's what they're there to do. That's part of their glory. To image God in this world. In creative actions. In orderly actions. In doing the sort of things that God has been doing. When God has been speaking. Creating. Making. Separating. Blessing. And so on. And we find that these creatures.

This man and woman are in God's image. And they speak. They create. They separate. They produce order.

[24:56] They bless. So there. In a very quick way. Is a summary of day one to six. And we end up on day seven.

Now day seven is a bit different to the other days. Because it doesn't have an end. Well it doesn't have an end stated. So if I draw a box. With one side missing. Because what is not stated about day seven?

That's stated about all the other days. That's correct. All the others. Have this punctuation at the end.

There was evening. There was morning. Day six. Or whatever it is. But this day is different. For whatever reason. It says that on this day God rested.

And that's all that's said. It isn't brought to the same conclusion that the other days are. I'm just stating that's what it's.

[26:00] That's the fact of it there. And this is a day of rest. And there's a number of things that are said about this day. Which was on my piece of paper. It says on this day God finished.

And that brings to your mind. As Christians another place where it is said that a work is finished.

On the cross. Jesus finished a sort of new creating work. It said on this day that he rested. So it's a God copying thing to rest.

It says that he blessed the Sabbath day. Does it say Sabbath? It just says. Yeah the seventh day actually it says.

And he made it holy. Because on it he rested from the work of creating that he had done.

[27:15] So here is. Again. There's a lot of things that need to be thought through. About the implications of this rest. But one of the implications for us.

Is that there is. The New Testament makes this very clear. There is a rest. Which is yet to come. There is a state of resting.

Enjoying. Appreciating. Being blessed and holy. Which is yet to come. And the Bible says make every effort to enter that rest. And that rest is the rest.

Of being with God. In the world to come. There's certainly that implication. And there's also an implication. That if God has a working week.

With a rhythm of six and one. Six days of working. And one day of rest. That would be a very good pattern for us to copy. So.

[28:16] Let's go back to the postcard. That's a wonderful picture. Can anybody. Fill in those six words.

You might have trouble with this one. Let's see if I can help you. Let's see. Let's see. Let's see. Do you want to do this one?

Bright. Bright. Put that because it rhymes with the next one. Bright. Bright. Less. Oh.

No, no, no. No, no, no. That's wrong. That's wrong. That's wrong. That's wrong. That's the trouble, isn't it? Right. That was wrong. That was the next one. Right. Yeah.

It is a right rule. And this one. Less. If I did. Oh. Dear. Blessed.

[29:26] Rest. If you like, those are three of the pictures on that postcard. A bright image of this Adam, the man, who images God.

And it's just like if a Martian, there are such things as Martians. But if a Martian came down and said, what's God like? You could say, look at Adam. And then you'll see what God's like.

He's the very image of Adam. Trouble is, if God, if a Martian came down and looked at us, followed us through our day, what's God like? Is he like one of these people?

He'd get a pretty muddled picture, wouldn't he? The person who does have the bright image is Jesus. He succeeds where Adam quickly failed.

And if a Martian, and not that there are such things, and this illustration is really rather clunky, were to follow Jesus through all the things he said and did, he would get an exact picture, an exact image

of God.

[30:35] Jesus said, you remember, to Philip, have you been with me so long and you don't realise that if you've seen me, you've seen the Father? That's the bright image.

And there's the right rule where the world is not disorderly and going off in all directions and suffering and disorder, but is in a right relationship.

Through Adam, a right relationship with God, that right rule. And that's what Psalm 8 says, isn't it? We don't yet see everything put under his feet.

We don't yet see the right rule. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, who came to suffer death. We see him, and he is crowned with glory and honour.

He's the one who has the right rule. And the blessed rest, which was there on that day seven, but now escapes us until we get home.

[31:39] These are all pictures on the postcard. Wish you were here. Wish we were there. And Jesus is there in each picture saying, I can get you there.

I will get you there. That's exactly what I've come to do. Put your hand in my hand, and I'll take you there. Let's close by singing together, shall we?