

The majesty of creation

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[0:00] I'm hoping and praying that through what we're talking about here, it will become a bit clearer to us. So those are three questions we'll come back to at the end.

But if you just look at the passage that was read, you will see it talks about creation in the first six verses, including the sun, the path of the sun in the heavens.

Then it launches into the perfect word of God. And there are several things it says about that. I will be pausing and going through those in turn.

And they are many of them very uplifting. If you if you think this is just, oh, it's not it's not much fun. And I should, should, should. I think when we get through that, you'll realize that there's a lot of lovely things that the word of God should be doing.

And if it's not yet happening in your life, I'm sure some who are a bit older here would love to help it to happen if they can. And then the last bit talks about it's actually David.

[1:04] This is a psalm of David and how he was responding. It actually made him aware of sin. So let's without more ado, let's let's look at this part about creation.

And yeah, I'll come back to that picture. But it says I have got most of the text in here. It says the heavens declare the glory of God.

The skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day, they pour forth speech. Night after night, they reveal knowledge. And I'm sure you've remembered what's been read.

There is this sort of almost a contradiction. There is no speech, but there is speech, isn't it? It's not audible words, but creation is speaking.

And it says their voice goes out into all the earth. Now, the reason for those things I've put in red, the word for God there is in the original, it's L.

[2:07] It just talks about God as transcendent, big, great. That's the main thing going on with the word being used for God there. And the skies, literally the expanse of the sky.

And the voice, it says in our version, their voice goes out into all the earth, the voice of creation. Literally, if you were examining the language, it's their line goes out through all the earth.

Now, that's not an expression we know very well. But if you imagine boundaries and Roman Empire expanding, the line goes out. This is a sort of dominating and influencing.

Their voice goes out into all the world. So that's just a little bit of homework on some of that. But the heavens suggest perhaps sky by day.

And the expanse perhaps suggests the night sky. But both are drawing attention to the creator. Now, I don't know how well, especially in the light, those images shine.

[3:14] And looking at the night sky, us who live in the towns, perhaps not very often we get the chance with all the streetlights to really look at the sky. But I think, from what I've heard, if you do find somewhere where you can look up at the stars, I mean, one of the experiences is it reminds us that we are small and that this universe that God has made is big.

And that is a healthy sense of us finding our place in it. Because I think busy people who have powerful jobs, they get to think that they are the main thing.

But actually, when you pause and look around, this world that God has made is a very big thing. And we are actually quite a small thing in it. But we're meant to see in beautiful skies and in the night sky.

We're meant to see our creator. I want to draw attention to that. So I ask you, we had some examples of birds and things you might have seen on holiday.

But when you see creation, how do you respond? I hope those of you who are at school and just been told it all happened by chance and it's just evolving. I hope you can, there are different views of how the Bible passages might be understood.

[4:33] But I hope you can see that there is a sense that God has made these things. God has made them. And stop and just let that wonder sink into you.

Give a sense of awe. So it speaks, but it doesn't use words. So that is a universal language. Yeah? Now I need to, there is a, there's a limit to how much creation will tell you. And I want you to, you might want to turn with me to Romans 1. Because I think this is important to read.

It's just another passage that talks about creation speaking. Romans 1 and from verse 18.

This one talks about the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

[5:40] So that, this will, it'll come out in the next few words. But this is the idea that they see creation which is shouting out that it's been made by God. And they suppress the truth.

Since, verse 19, what may be known about God is plain to them. Because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen.

Being understood from what has been made. So that people are without excuse. So, there's a limit on what you can pick up from looking at creation.

But I'm just hoping, and I think some of the things we might cover in a while. If you just automatically swallow that this has all happened by chance. I'm hoping that that thought will start to come. That there is some intelligent design and a creator here.

So, all can clearly see what God has made. Yet, many suppress that truth. And it's a chilling phrase at the end of what we read there. That they are without excuse.

[6:55] You can't look at this and just say, oh, you know, it's nothing. It just happened, didn't it? There are signs that God is great in creation. Now, I introduce a character you may not know.

I bet Steve does. You've probably heard of him. Sir Fred Hoyle, he actually wasn't a Christian. But he was an astronomer. He died in 2001.

And although he was an atheist, he actually rejected one of the ideas popularly thought. There's a big bang originally. And all these random things happened. And somehow we've got our world. But he rejected that idea in favor of a steady state model. There's a little bit of science here. He was interested in enzymes. And he was really saying, life cannot have a random beginning.

Because there are about 2,000 enzymes that have to come together. And the chance of that happening, it says, 1 in 10 to the 40,000. Now, suffice to say, that is a very small chance that this could have all happened by chance.

[8:05] But the quote he's known for, he says, the chance that a higher life forms might have emerged in this way is comparable. And I think the children will get this idea.

Comparable to the chance a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials found there. Okay?

That's about how likely it is that the complexity and beauty of what has been made. Right. Now, I quickly go on. He didn't believe in God. But he just thought this was incredibly improbable.

They're bordering on impossible. Now, Steve reminded us last week, didn't he, of the construction of the living cell.

And he, if you were here, he reminded us of how incredible that is. He talks about how they can reproduce themselves. Right? Very clever.

[9:04] This small unit in a lot of life, in all of life. Some of you will have heard of a biologist, Sylvia Baker.

She wrote a booklet. Some of you will have heard of Bone of Contention. That won't be exactly the view that everyone will have on the origins. But she was a biologist. And at college, she started as a Christian believing in evolution.

And as she was studying the eye, and I'm not a scientist. I'll get this slightly wrong. But she thought of the lens that received light. And it pointed at the back. And then she thought about the back that receives the images and tends it into impulses.

And you know, she thought, there's no way this could have evolved. It is a complex thing. A complex thing. And this has been designed.

This has been designed. And she was, you know, she's been very much used to... At the very least, she's shown that there's an awful lot written in the Bible that is supported by science.

[10:14] Whatever view you come to on how you view the first seven days of creation. But this is so complex. Similar theme to what Steve is saying.

This was not just appeared by gradual chance. Now, the last bit in this section, it talks about the sun.

It says, in the heavens, God has pitched a tent for the sun. And here is an unusual phrase for us who sometimes go to weddings. That it's like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.

Like a champion rejoicing to run his course. And I'm sure I've reminded you before. Whereas a typical wedding here, you'll see the bridegroom at the front waiting.

And it will be the bride who is looking all dazzling and beautiful who will come. And we'll all be going, wow. But back in these days, it was the bridegroom who was really the person you were looking out for.

[11:20] And he would have... Everyone else would have been waiting. And when he was ready, he would have come with dazzling a ray in dress and claimed his bride. So, like a bridegroom coming out and running its course, you see this sun rising from one end of the heavens and making its circuit to the other.

So, glorious, I've mentioned. Like a bridegroom running end to end. And there is at least the idea here that there is nothing much hidden from the sun as it passes.

But it is still a very glorious thing. We know how if there was no sun... Any of the children tell me if there was no sun, could we live?

Because we need the sun to make plants. We need the... It does everything. We cannot do without it. Okay. That's enough on creation for the moment.

But as we get into the next section, we hear these words. The law of the Lord is perfect.

[12:35] Refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy. Making wise the simple. Precepts of the Lord are right. Giving joy to the heart. Commands of the Lord are radiant.

Giving light to the eyes. Now, I think I'm doing this in two bits here. The first thing is that this word for law, it's the same one Daniel would have led us through in Psalm 1.

It is the word for Torah. And all I want to help you think about, don't just think of... Today you think about law, you think about rules that you must obey.

Now, there are parts of that coming up. But this idea of law is really about God's ways. It's about the instruction. It can be legislation, but its primary force is this instruction.

The kind that a father would impart to his dearly loved children. Right? So that's the nature of law.

And I also want to draw attention to the fact that this word for Lord, I did say that in verse 1 we had the word El for transcendent God.

[13:40] Now, this is the word Yahweh. And this is drawing attention to the covenant God. The God of grace and redemption. And we're going to find that from now on when it says the Lord, it is this word talking about...

In essence, it's about the God who wants to be known and reveals things about himself. And he's drawing people into relationship with him. But I wanted to pull this out a bit more because there are nouns and adjectives and benefits.

Some of the children, I'm sure you probably know better than me. I'm sure Mark will know all this about English and adjectives and whatever. It's a while since I've done it. So we have the law.

Perfect law. But notice that benefit. You think that reading your Bible is the sort of just the thing you should do.

And yeah, it's not much. I hope that maybe more of you can testify that it is good fun. But there will be some who think, oh, you know, this is hard work and I'm not getting much out of it. But what's it

meant to do?

[14:50] You see the benefit there? What's it meant to do? Refresh the soul. Perfect is a word in the Bible that often just means complete.

It has the idea that you don't add to it and you don't take away from it. It is everything you need. It might not be everything we want to know. We want to know. We want to know all kinds of things that the God doesn't choose to tell us.

But it is complete. And this idea of refreshing, restoring, bringing back the soul or reviving. When Samson drank something in Judges 15, his strength returned and he revived.

Similar word. But what a thought that the law of the Lord could, the ways of God, the instruction of God could have this effect on you.

And it's worth even in passing just saying, you know, is that for many of you have been walking with God and learning from his word. Does this ring true with you that you have a sense of being refreshed by it?

[15:56] I hope so. I hope so. And for those of us who sense that a bit more, I hope that we can link up with others who are finding it hard and help to share some of that refreshment.

More often than not, the Bible speaks of the law making people aware of sin. I find this an interesting contrast. And just one other passage. This is in Romans 3, verse 19.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight.

Since, this is the key part, through the law comes knowledge of sin. So we're familiar. More often than not, that's the law condemns. It makes people aware of sin.

But that's, I haven't completely checked whether that's a different word for law. But the Torah idea and the psalm we are in, this is a law that you dwell on God's ways and it's meant to be refreshing.

[17:09] Refreshing. Second one here is statutes. Statutes. And they are trustworthy. Literally, statutes might be testimony.

It's a way of thinking about his personal authority. Trustworthy is the idea of being sure. The idea of making wise the simple.

Some of us might take great offense. I don't like to think that I'm simple. And that I need to be made wise. But actually, here is some of the idea that it can mean gullible.

That you might swallow anything. But it's really, in this context, it's an open-mindedness to this covenant God, Yahweh. And the willingness to be ready to be taught by him.

And I pause there because that doesn't come naturally. The willingness to come to the Bible that God has revealed himself.

[18:12] And to be willing to be taught by it. When actually so many people in our current culture, we just think we know better. We're meant to do this, but actually, no, no, I know better.

And if you can't come to the Bible and be willing to be taught by it, then you're missing this point.

So, if you genuinely understand that you need wisdom and that there are things in life that you need this truth, the statutes, the testimony of the Lord is sure.

And it can make wise the simple. Then I'll deal with these ones together because they are very similar. Precepts and commands. They are described as right, straightforward, radiant, or pure.

But look at the... And it definitely has got the idea of things that you would obey. That you would follow. But by taking God's instructions on how to live and following it.

Again, very unnatural to our current age. The idea of having things that you might follow. What's the benefits we're picking up here? What's the following in God's ways?

[19:30] Giving joy to the heart. Giving light to the eyes. So, you know, there might be a lot of things you'd really like to see, Celi. But if it all seems overwhelming and muddled, as you dwell in God's word and let it sink in, it gives some clarity to your vision.

And it brings some joy to the heart. So, that's not saying that everything you read has all of these effects. But following God's commands is meant to be really enlivening.

So, there is no sense of a reluctant drudgery here.

Joy and clear vision. Right. So, then we're going on to the next few. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm.

And all of them are righteous. And these lovely words that will come into our last song, and they're very challenging words. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold.

[20:37] Sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. Then fear is there, isn't it?

I think that was there. And the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. This is a healthy reverence and a respect, and it endures. And the decrees, like the decisions, judgments of God, they are firm and right.

But interestingly, and we will just explore this a bit more, the benefit of these decrees and things, there are warnings and rewards. So, sometimes this truth of God, this law of God, this Torah, it brings warnings.

And again, if you think you know better, that's not very, you're not going to easily take these warnings, are you? But if you have that humble, teachable spirit, and I hope very much that we are learning that, warnings in God's word.

On fears and decrees, yeah, the other way of talking about rewards is like an abundant outcome.

[21:51] But you have to picture this, isn't it? If you're being offered learning about the truth of God's word, or being given lots of bars of gold that you could buy many houses with, if I were to find 100 people out in the high street and say, which one would you want?

I think I know what most of them would say. It would make me sad. But they have no idea how precious the truth of God is. And it's more precious than gold.

And in the text it said, much fine gold. Incomparable value to have this truth and to hang on to it. And not only is it valuable, but it's a pleasure to experience.

We've touched on other things that are talking about that. So I move on now to the last part of the psalm, which includes some responses.

It says, who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins. Then I'll be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

[22:59] So the idea of hidden faults, as I've just examined what people say about it, this is most likely slightly out of character.

The hidden faults is not so much things that I might not know. There will be sometimes things in us that we don't know yet. Maybe someone else has to point them out to us. But this is more likely just out of character. These are just slip-ups and mistakes.

There's that kind of sin. And then there's the more blatant, willful sins, that we need a humble awareness, that they can rule over us.

So two types of sins. But David, who has been thinking about the law, thinking about God, and that's partly why I read Isaiah 6 to start with, is I sense when you've come near to God's holiness, that it has this effect that you're aware of how dirty you are.

But because, and you long to be like God, holy and longing to be blameless. And then I'll come back to other lessons we're learning in a minute.

[24:13] And then the last verse, may these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart, that's a word we'll come back to. I don't often hear people at school learning about meditating.

Meditating, often when you hear about other religions, it's more about emptying the mind. And that's really far from what is being thought about here. It just has this idea that truth, which can come in one ear and then you're distracted and you forget it.

The idea that you think about it, think about the implications of it. How does this affect me? What are the things I should be changing? That kind of meditating, chewing on it.

But it talks about the words of my mouth and wanting them to be pleasing to God. James will tell us who can tame the tongue. I've mentioned that meditation is largely a lost art.

This idea of longing to please God. Now we're almost through. I just want to come back now to the three questions we started with. So when we look at creation, how do we respond?

[25:26] I hope with a sense of wonder. I hope with a sense that it has been designed and created by God and could not possibly have come by random chance.

I, like many of you, the programs that David Attenborough has produced astound me with the detail and marvel of nature. But how he could have spent all his life doing that and not think that it's been created, I am baffled.

I'll leave it there. But this creation, it is a universal, it's a silent language, day after day. It pours forth speech.

But can you hear that speech? Can you hear it? Second question we started with. As we spend time in the word of God, how does it make us feel?

If you're honest, is there a sense in which you're going through motions sometimes and it feels like a drudgery, sense of duty? But I do need to bring at least six or seven points to our attention again.

[26:40] What it's meant to do, this law of God, this instruction that godly fathers would pass on to their children, it's meant to refresh our souls, make us wise if we are teachable.

I hope we are. It's meant to bring joy to the heart, light to the eyes, so that you can see clearly.

It's meant to warn us and it's meant to give rewards or an abundant outcome, as it says, in keeping God's law.

It leads to great reward. So that's wonderful things to hope for and look for in one another as we talk and share about what God's word means to us.

And then the last bit, how do we respond to things we learn in the Bible? The idea that God's holiness makes us more aware of our sin, mistakes, slip-ups that are out of character, deliberate sins.

[27:49] And there is the call that it's a good thing to become more aware of these things and especially if you know about Jesus and he's given himself on the cross to make forgiveness possible, these sins, although they hurt hurt and you know they shouldn't be there and you don't want them there and you want them taken away, there is a remedy.

They can be forgiven. They can be taken away. Jesus Christ has done enough to remove these sins. So you don't have to, many will not think about sins because they don't see a solution to it. So just think about something else. But a Christian can have that healthy sense of broken-heartedness that you can be aware of sin but you're thinking of this relationship with one who you don't want to offend and you know it's been dealt with and you want to turn away from it, not because you're going to get beaten if you don't, but because you don't want to offend the one who's done so much for you and he will help us to turn away from sin.

And then there's that last challenge to meditate and to long to please God. and the idea of mulling over what you learn. So I'm going to stop there and I hope that's been of benefit and we'll now sing the most obvious song that you could.

I don't think it's in praise hymns. Angela and her assistant will be taking to the piano. Oh no, he's done a runner.

[29:23] So we've just got Angela. Okay. So we'll stand. Oh, he's come back. Right. Thank you. The law of the Lord is perfect. Well, thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.