

God's home and our exile

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Preacher: Dave Bott

[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Will you please pray with me as we come to God's Word? Lord God, as we've just sung, my prayer is you would show each one of us how holy you are, how set apart, set apart from creation and set apart in your goodness.

That you alone are good. Help us to see your goodness as we look at your Word now. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Well, I was sitting in the dentist's waiting room and an ad came on the TV. There's this bright light followed by the swirling stars and then this gloomy earth with a volcano erupting and a brutish man walking around and then a child blowing out a birthday cake and a rocket launching to the moon and then out of the mouth of a man came one word, wow.

And he's standing in Audi looking at the specials. Wow.

Stephen J. Gould, he's an evolutionary biologist, he says this, We are here simply because one odd group of fish had a peculiar anatomy that just happened to be able to transform itself into legs for terrestrial creatures.

[1 : 48] Now, he goes on and explains the story a bit more. We yearn for a higher answer, but none exists. This explanation, though superficially troubling, if not terrifying, is ultimately liberating.

We have to construct, therefore, any meaning ourselves. Okay, that's one story. I can't stop you.

If you want to construct your meaning buying specials, I can't stop you doing that. Or will you let Genesis speak directly into those yearnings Stephen is talking about that we've all got?

Now, I think as Christians, some of us, we've reacted against our modern, story, explanation of everything.

And there's been huge debate over seven literal day creation or not. And that's been a very important debate, especially for apologetics to show that belief in Scripture is rational.

[3 : 09] These chapters, they prompt so many questions. I found that in our Bible study group. They were just prompting question after question for us. But we don't always get the answers we're searching for.

And so I want to ask you this morning, before we dive in, like any part of Scripture, we've got probably more than these two options, but let me boil them down to these two.

We can sit in judgment over the text and force our questions onto it. Or we can sit under the text and let God give us the better questions we should be asking and the ones he's giving us answers to.

Now, that's true of all of Scripture. So what posture are you coming to Genesis with? I want to give you a multiple choice question of a scenario.

And if you're not sure, don't choose B, okay? You can't do that this time. All right. You see, walking down the street, a man just in severe poverty.

[4 : 19] He looks miserable. He smells miserable. And he's begging. Now, what do you do? Here's your options. Now, there's probably way more than these options, but here's a few.

A, do you feel disgust at him? Because obviously he did something in his past life to deserve that karma. Do you feel disgust?

B, do you tell him to meditate how illusionary his suffering is to reach nirvana, remove all desire? C, do you feel pity towards him and give part of your 2.5% of your income according to the five pillars of Islam?

Do you, D, feel nothing towards him? It's not your problem. Let him construct his own meaning in life. It's not your problem. Or, if you would find it fulfilling, you could help him.

E, do you tell him or tell his family, go appease your ancestors, the spirits of your ancestors, so that you get better blessing? F, do you see his value as royalty in the image of God, though he smells?

[5 : 36] Do you see yourself like him, bankrupt spiritually? I just wanted to give a taste.

The questions that Genesis answers dramatically affect how we live our life. They answer the big questions of life. Who made everything?

Who made the universe? Who governs it at all? Who am I? Who are people? What's the goal? What's the point? How should we relate? What went wrong?

Why is there such a thing as poverty and misery? Here's the big questions that Genesis gives us. These ones answer the yearnings of our heart.

And these questions, if we listen to Genesis, they create the yearnings we should be having as well. So, as Sam said, we're going to be covering a large section.

[6 : 38] The reason being is that we covered these chapters last year, and so I'm guessing there's a fair chunk of people who heard those.

So, go back for a refresher, or if you weren't here for those, they're online if you want to slow down and go through these chapters in more detail. So, we're just going to be helicopter flyover today.

So, let's get into these big questions of life. Who? Who? Genesis 1, before anything was, God was. God's not part of his creation.

Creation isn't the extension of God. He is above it, but always involved in it. He's before it, and therefore has authority over it.

He created everything out of nothing. Ex nihilo. Sean, you can tell me later if I pronounce that right. No return trip to Bunnings. Because he forgot something. Like, no blueprint.

[7 : 42] No angel engineer to get counsel from or project manage. It's all out of his self-sufficiency. It's out of his wisdom. It's his power. It's his goodness. The heavens and the earth.

Everything in them. Everything in between. Now, we all know when you go to a country that's not yours, when you go to a house that isn't yours, we all know this.

Their house, their rules, right? You come into my house. Do you put your feet on my coffee table? You watch me.

It's my house. Do I do it? If I do it, go for it. My house, my rules. Your house, your rules. We get that. He's the only creator.

His house, his rules. All things owe their being to him. Him alone. He alone deserves our trust to provide and protect.

[8 : 43] He alone deserves our obedience, our allegiance. His house, his rules. That's the who. What about how?

How did God create? Now, some see violence and darkness and death as essential to our origin story.

And I'm going to put the atheistic evolution in that camp. Because death is just natural. The chaos and the violence is part of the process.

So, too, in Moses' day. So, just listen to a bit of the Babylonian creation beliefs of his day. The Enuma Elish. A god named Apsu, sweet water, and his wife Tiamat, salt water.

It's kind of nice so far. Husband and wife. Bore children and grandchildren. But they became so noisy that Apsu decided to murder his sons and grandsons to have silence again.

[9 : 54] I don't know how many of you can relate to that. But one of his sons murdered him first. Then one of the sons, Marduk, the greatest of all the gods, started fighting his mother, Tiamat.

Tiamat created dragons and beasts. And Marduk killed her with an arrow, stood on her body, split her skull. Kids are it. Sorry. Sorry for any kids in the room.

Cut her arteries. He took her body, divided it into two parts. One part became the sky. The other became the earth. And then Marduk created mankind to do all the menial work on the earth to serve the gods.

God said, Mm-hmm. Okay. God said, Let there be light. And there was light.

God said, Let there be, and it was so. God said, Let there be, and it was so. God said, Let there be, and it was so.

[10 : 59] Great. the true God he is personal he's totally sovereign there's no rivals he's rational it's got purpose he's speaking verse 2 might seem strange at first but it's the key I think to unlocking this chapter the earth was without form and void empty and darkness was over the face of the deep and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters here we see the kind of God that he is he doesn't accept darkness as necessary evil he doesn't call it good he only calls the light good he is the kind of God who is above evil he's above the darkness and he brings order out of the chaos he brings light out of the darkness life into the emptiness and how does he do it he does it by his word his all-powerful word the other thing we see here is by his word he forms and he fills which matches verse 2 it's formless and empty he first forms in day 1 2 3 and then he fills in day 4 5 6 so day 1 2 3 he forms the conditions for life he creates the order day and night atmosphere and sea land and ocean life requires separation distinct in its proper place after the forming is complete we've got day 4 5 6 he fills the emptiness with life life we've got the sun noon stars filling the heavens we've got conscious life in the atmosphere and oceans day 5 and then day 6 we've got land animals and mankind is the pinnacle he creates order out of chaos he forms the conditions for life and then fills it with such diversity diversity like you know what a gum tree is we all know what a gum tree is or we should do there's like 900 species of gum tree isn't that someone can correct me later if that's wrong but google tells me that at least isn't it it's incredible this world isn't it the feeling God does so people are creatures

Genesis says but much much more God created man in his own image in the image of God he created him male and female he created them not just animals we shouldn't expect just animal behavior from one another not slaves to serve the gods because they don't want to do the menial tasks this is a profound statement about human dignity and value and purpose royalty where royalty is what this verse is saying you've never met an ordinary person we're made to relate to God communicate with him in a way animals just can't we're made to represent him we're image we're meant to image him we're meant to show his character as we go about life and rule the world under him as a theologian said

Colin Buchanan birds were made for flying flip flat flippity flat fish were made to swim splash splash splishity splash you and me were made by God to love and treasure him we're made in his image to know him so creation tells us he is absolutely sovereign over heaven and earth his house it's his rules creation tells us the kind of God he is he is a redeeming God he brings order out of chaos he is above the darkness and brings light he's above the emptiness and brings life he's a redeeming God it's his house it's his rules he's a God who rules by his word his word is life giving and all powerful and we know he is personal in nature because he's made us persons in his image at the heart of the universe isn't this nebulous force there's a beating heart he's personal okay

I'm going to abruptly hand over to James there to read from Genesis 2 if you want to follow along 1 to 18 thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them and on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done so God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation these are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created in the day of the Lord that God made the earth and the heavens when no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land and there was no man to work the ground and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground then the Lord God formed the man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living creature and the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and there he put the man whom he had formed and out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food the tree of life was in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden and there it divided and became four rivers the name of the first is the Pishon it is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havala where there is gold and the gold of that land is good delium and onyx stone are there the name of the second river is the Gihon it is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush and the name of the third river is the Tigris which follows east of Assyria and the fourth river is the Euphrates the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it and the Lord God commanded the man saying you may surely eat of every tree of the garden but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die then the Lord God said it is not good that the man should be alone

I will make him a helper fit for him single God non-smoker seeks attractive creation with good sense of humour now don't get me in trouble well I suppose you can get me in trouble I'm quoting someone but I'm using the quote it was Michael Reeves who said that I just liked it because it kind of captured like why did God create was he lonely like why what would motivate God to create if he's content in himself he wasn't lonely and he didn't need it for his identity as creator to be realised so it's not this weird sense in which he needs us for him to be himself creator he is self-sufficient he freely chose to create as Sam's already introduced this morning it's like his life his love overflowed it's not that he was empty but he overflowed so why why did God create the seventh day introduces a huge theme in scripture the theme of rest rest now don't confuse this with the mosaic law where

[20 : 01] Israel were to rest on the seventh day don't confuse it with that this is God resting God rested on the seventh day now chapter one I've already seen he is hardly a God who needs to catch his breath he spoke and it was so the emphasis on the seventh day is it is finished the heavens and the earth were finished the seventh day God finished his work creation is done then he rests it's like a builder of a house what does he do when he puts down his tools the house is done what does he do he moves in he enjoys it with his family I think it's like the goal of rest here in his home with his people so I think chapter one is a panoramic view where

God alone is ruling over heaven and earth he is above it all he is transcendent his house his rule and then chapter two zooms right in on one particular place part of the earth called Eden and it shows God dwelling in it with his people he is present so what's the best part of God's home of this rest do you think as you are hearing the descriptions as you imagine it in your mind's eye is it the place itself is it the garden gold is everywhere I don't know how much gold you own it's just overflowing with abundance riches the food is pleasant to the sight and good for food some in this room eat to live others live to eat is it the food is it the place itself is it the health and beauty and dignity of Adam and Eve's body mentally and physically in order the capacity to never die they've got access to the tree of life is it is that the best part imagine that

Sam's already mentioned this again is it the fruitful work it's I know work is a hard slog but here it's there's purpose there's there's we've got a significant role to play to have dominion over God's place imagine every ounce of effort you put into your work bears fruit and not frustrated like that would be incredible incredibly satisfying is that the best thing is the best thing the community the chapter ends just for the sake of time I made the reading a bit shorter but the chapter ends with man and wife coming into marriage covenant love is family the high point is that the best thing about Eden about

God's home well something running through all this chapter which shows us what the best thing is now that's all good it's all good God wants to bless what is good but the best thing we see is that he's present he's there he's like a good father very present and active in his house let me just fly through pointing out things it's the Lord who's causing it to rain and yield the crop it's just it's not this I think we need to remember this in our day and age especially not living on a farm it's the Lord who provides that it's the Lord who forms the man's body it's a very up close personal picture it's like mouth to mouth resuscitation he breathes into his nostril sharing something of

God's life his breath it's the Lord doing that it's the Lord who plants Eden it's implied that he's the source that Eden is the source of these great rivers if these great rivers in Moses day were known for creating abundance in life imagine Eden the source of it all he's the source of life of the rivers he gives mankind his purpose to work and keep it this is a high calling as we've seen he's in the image of God he's royalty having dominion it's the Lord speaking imagine that he's speaking to us he's giving permissions go eat you may surely eat go and he's giving boundaries don't eat there he's speaking to us he's not some distant

[25 : 33] God he's there and then when we come to Eve it's the Lord who fathers Eve he creates Eve and I think it's like we're picturing God with Eve in his arm walking down the aisle bringing her to Adam I think the high point of marriage here is that man and woman family community displays what God is like he is covenant love in nature which is why the name in this chapter is Lord God the covenant name of God chapter one was just God he rules here it's Lord God so together in community as we relate to one another that's how we image him best all this I think shows he's present he's present in it all he is the best thing about this place him dwelling in his house with his people that's rest

Tim Keller I think draws out the implication for us today he says the fulfillment we've been looking for in work in building skyscrapers in having wonderful spouses in having lots of children and making money the blessing we've been looking for is actually in the face of God his presence is what made Eden heaven on earth the Lord's goal of creation is rest not just a home a playground for us but a home for him to live with us and we with him and she gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths and they heard the sound of the

Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden but the Lord God called to the man and said to him where are you well we aren't home we're in exile God is righteous he only blesses what is good our daily reality we receive a lot of good gifts I was a bit staggered walking in the walls and shops the other day I don't know it's just people enjoying donuts and coffee and exchanging money and I don't know I was staggered by it for some reason we get so many good gifts but for all we have where we live now is constant daily toil is a word repeated in this chapter struggle life is struggle conflict pain death is where we live and it's a loud daily reminder we're not home we're in exile everywhere we look the universe has been thrown back into chaos and darkness instead of peace with

God we feel guilt and shame and hide in fear of his judgment instead of this state of innocence the constant battle in our choices and our motives for good and evil there's this chaos within us we look at family and social relationships and they're fractured the woman's glory in bringing image bearers into the world is now filled with pain emotional and physical between men and women even in marriage the harmonious naked and not ashamed and partnership in worshipping God in the garden does that characterise marriages now it's the battle of the sexes the fight for control for dominion shifting the blame and mankind's rule over creation is frustrated like why do we have a housing crisis in Australia like we're an abundant nation and yet still so many people are struggling our work is frustrated by the sweat of your brow and we feel that we're in exile more than ever and we get the loudest reminder whenever you attend a funeral whenever you go to the grave site and you see that hole or the crematorium you know what's behind that curtain for you are dust and to dust you shall return we're in exile we've got daily daily reminder what went wrong why what went wrong

I think the description here of Adam and Eve's sin is kind of like a teenager sorry teenagers in the room a rebellious teenager not every teenager okay who claims who puts their flag in their room they claim territory my possession they want they've set up a sovereign independent state I'm not paying taxes it's it's like that willfully forgetting who their parents they owe their being to their parents willfully forgetting all that their parents do for them and have done for them just putting all that out of mind and rebelling against their parents authority claiming autonomy they want all the house and the comforts keep paying the bills I just don't want you here in my room

[33 : 28] I think it's kind of like that when Adam and Eve disobeyed God it is not just eating some forbidden chocolate ice cream indulgence here this is cosmic rebellion this is we've already covered God's house God's rule it's declaring autonomy and sin is rejection as we've seen in chapter two the Lord wants to be present relating in his house with us we're rejecting that love we don't want you in our life sin is rebellion it's rejection and Adam is the head of the family he's ruined the whole family and we've inherited his rebellious and rejecting nature well I think what we've read we can go one step further so sin is it's rebellion it's rejection

I think the dialogue the focus here is on the dialogue between Eve and Adam who says he was with her and the serpent I think this is the best case study of what sin is because you cannot blame this on environment you can't blame it on upbringing you can't blame it on nature that nature nurture argument irrelevant this is this is the best case study of what is sin I think from verse one to verse two in chapter three the name of God changes Lord God that relational covenant name of God back to just God I'm going to suggest that Satan wants Eve forget forget God's relational nature put that out of mind and then he invites her to sit in judgment over

God's boundaries see God as strict rather than the source of life rather than the best thing about being home see him as strict and she adds to his boundary we can't eat it and we can't touch it God didn't say that she makes him out to be strict and then the punishment for sin is weakened and put out of mind and Satan just outright liar saying there's no punishment you won't be found out there's no such thing as judgment day there's no such thing as hell just don't worry about all that he offers a different motive let me read verse five for

God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil in other words God is holding the best back from you he's not only strict he's withholding life from you he's not good he's not good God's boundary isn't like a mum who says don't play in the pool by yourself it's not a good boundary like that he's withholding the best from you so at the heart of this is God isn't good his word you shouldn't trust it at the root cause of sin is how we see God and whose word we're going to believe whose word do we believe the Lord who is the source of life and wants to dwell in peace and abundance with us in his home his word or

Satan's word he's holding the best back from you you can do a better job running your life you can bless yourself at the root cause of sin is belief whose word are we believing which means someone's lying someone's lying so sin is rebellion against our creator his house his rules sin is rejection of his love sin is not believing God's word sin is not believing that God is good that he's strict he's holding back and so our daily struggle is a constant reminder that we're in exile we need to be brought back home we need things restored if the best thing about home about paradise is that the

[38 : 54] Lord is there our greatest problem with sin is that we're afraid of his we're rightly afraid of his judgment we need him to solve that problem we need reconciliation with him we need him to redeem the whole world including our bodies we need to be brought back home so God's word at creation seventh day it is finished creation is finished but from the fall from this moment on God's work of redemption began creation is finished but the rest of scripture is God working to redeem us and redeem his world our only hope is that the creator who is above the chaos and darkness at the beginning is still above the chaos and the sin and the evil and death he's above it and he can rescue us creation was all

God's work and I think we seek redemption is all God's work we get two glimpses of hope in Genesis three and it's all God's doing the first glimpse we get even when he's handing down the judgments we get a promise in verse 15 that a descendant of Eve a human being is going to crush Satan's serpent's head now it's just a little promise we're like what does that mean and we need the rest of the Bible to hear what that means but from this point on we're looking for a descendant of Eve who's going to crush Satan and his lies about God for good so we get that promise the other glimpse of hope is in verse 21 Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves with fig leaves God would have none of that stop hiding your moral religious effort they're like fig leaves they are not a good enough cover but amazingly verse 21 the Lord

God made for Adam and Eve and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them animal skins this required death we need clothing to stand unashamed before God but we don't make it he gives it and it's going to require death so God's house God's rules his purpose for creation saying it is finished is for him to move into his house to dwell with us to be present in his home with us in abundance but we're in exile the good news of the rest of the Bible is that God's working to bring us home creation it is finished when we come to

Abraham and the people of Israel the high point of their story is the building of the temple the emphasis when Solomon finishes the temple is it is finished it is gold everywhere they're in the place God is with them but they go into exile sin is too deep a problem we need a greater redemption and so the plan no one was expecting is the creator himself becomes an offspring of Eve and we hear those words again on the cross it is finished it is finished reconciliation even adoption Jesus said before he went to the cross in my father's house are many rooms if I go and prepare a place for you

I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am you may be also that's why he went to the cross to finish to bring us home to finish that work and so we're leaning forward now as Christians waiting for that final word that final promise I'm going to make all things new and again we hear those words it is done it is finished I'm the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end it's God's work to redeem us he's above the chaos and the darkness it is finished all good news will you pray with me let's pray oh father we've we've covered so much ground and so

[44 : 29] I pray that you would help each one of us to see you as you truly are help us to see you as Lord of all help us to love the fact that you are a relational God who wants to dwell with us Lord help us to see ourselves in light of you to recognize our rebellion and our rejection of you and help us to see that you're a God who comes and finds us and to bring us home Lord I pray that you would just enlarge our vision of who you are in each of our hearts in Jesus name I pray Amen you

I want to