

The Creation

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Date: 02 February 2003

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[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 2nd of February 2003. The preacher is Paul Dudley and his sermon is entitled The Creation.

What God like. What is he like? I asked this question about four or five years ago with a video camera as I was walking around Sydney University and a few other places.

I asked them, what is God like? Is there a God? Here are some of the answers that I came up with. You'll have to apologise for the crackly video.

It's just a slightly different format. But you'll be able to hear it at least anyhow. Do you think there is a God? Yes. Yes. Why?

Because how else have we got all this wonderful creation around us? Great. If there is this God, what is he like? No idea. It's one of those things that it's impossible to say.

[1 : 16] You know, it's completely indefinite. But in that sense, I don't believe that there's one being. I think there's maybe one feeling, you know, which governs us and is a God-like thing.

But, you know, I don't know. I don't know about this. Like there's some dude sitting here on a throne and, you know, presiding in heaven and all that. But I find it a bit hard to take in, you know.

Yes, I do. But I think that God is different for everyone. I think everyone's got their own interpretation of what God is. What's your interpretation? My interpretation of God is that it's a universal force as such.

Like I don't believe in conventional sort of type of God. But I think God can be some spiritualism and it can be something which inspires you basically.

Yeah, definitely. Why? Because there's no other explanation for human existence. I have this kind of, I think it's just a faith. It's what I've been brought up with.

[2 : 15] My parents, I had like a Catholic upbringing. But I disagree with all stuff that the church, you know, the dogmas and that sort of thing. But I have more of a kind of spiritual connection. I just experience that I've had. And I think that if I didn't believe in something, then I could live this life.

Because, you know, day to day, if this is all there is, then, you know, that's not enough. I just believe there's ultimately something more. I don't believe in jinn or physical worship. I do believe in God, but an individual God.

My own version of God. I think that's all that's necessary. Do you think there's a God? No. Why not? Because I'm an atheist. Okay, so how do you have these beliefs?

Like, what about this belief that there is no God? Well, although it sounds, there's typically no proof that there is a God, and logically there can't be one, so therefore there isn't one.

Okay. Some interesting thoughts, isn't it? It was interesting that everyone I spoke to said that there was, most people, except for that one person, said that there was a God.

[3 : 21] But all of them had this different understanding of what God was like. So what is God like? Well, it's a debate that's gone out throughout the centuries. What is God like?

Who is he? Paul, if you open up the passage tonight, page 902 in your Bibles, we see that Paul walks into Athens. This great city.

It's a city which is the centre of culture and religion and thought. It was one of the great cities. In the centre of this city is the Aragogagus, a place of enormous prestige.

It was this building that all the great philosophers, the great minds would come and argue. It was a place where the great ideas of humanity were wrestled.

It was a melting pot of ideas. There was this place in Athens. Well, as Paul came in, as we see in verse 16, he looked around and he noticed the city was full of idols.

[4 : 23] So he started speaking to the marketplace. He started talking about God. Well, the Athenians and the great philosophers in the Aragogagus decided that they would bring Paul in and

that they would question him.

They decided they wanted to find out more about what he was saying. So they brought him in. And we see there in verse 22 where we pick up some of the things that he had to say.

Then Paul went in front of the Aragogagus and said, Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, To an unknown God.

What therefore you worship as known, this I claim to you. He starts walking around and he tells them that he's seen this altar there back in the city.

They would have set up all these statues to their gods, all these Greek gods that they had. And to try and make sure they covered every single god. They even had a god to the unknown god.

[5 : 34] Just in case they missed out on one they didn't know about. Well, Paul chooses these words very carefully when he first comes in contact there.

The word that he chooses very carefully is a word that had a double meaning. So you see there that he says, I see that you're extremely religious. Now, if you were to go into that arena and you were to butter them up, so to speak, you would have been thrown out because they weren't there for flattery.

But the word had a double meaning. The word there in the Greek means they could be either very religious people or they were very superstitious people. Very superstitious.

It's kind of a negative term. And so you can see them just sitting in their minds thinking, well, hang on a moment, has he just complimented us? Or has he just sort of given us the thumbs down?

You can just see them trying to listen. And so they continue letting him to speak. He then speaks about this unknown god that he has seen.

[6 : 41] Well, after capturing them and getting them hooked in, he then talks about this unknown god. And he talks about the great god, the god of the universe.

Let me read verse 24. If you may have a look to verse 29.

Paul tells the Athenians that god, this unknown god that they have not recognised, is the creator of the universe.

He is the one who has made everything. This god is not their own creation. He is not something that they have made up. It is not a god that lives in temples or shrines.

He is the true god. A god that cannot be contained. A god that cannot be tamed. Not the creation of man. But man is his creation.

[8 : 05] When we look at Genesis 1, Genesis 1 speaks of this. In picture language, we see the way that God makes a beautiful world. A beautiful universe. The way that he has made it harmonious.

The way that he speaks. And he creates effortlessly. Just stop and reflect on the moment. The universe that we live in. This great God.

Our God created it all. The trees. The stars. The fish. Humans. Sexuality. Just stop and ponder for a moment.

While you're pondering on that. Reflect on the human body. Just for a moment. I was going to bring some of the things that I've made.

I've made some Thomas the Tank stuff. And you know, big pieces. I like building things with my hands. But at this very moment. At home. Michelle, my wife.

[9 : 03] Inside her tummy. There is a baby. Growing. A nervous system is coming together. Little hands and feet are growing. She has no idea how she does it.

But there is this thing growing inside her. This little human. Think of the miracle of it. The way that God has designed the human body.

To be able to create human life. God is an awesome creator. An absolutely awesome creator. Well, not only is he creator of the universe.

He is also the sustainer. So my first point I wanted to make. Was that God has created everything and everyone. The second point is. God sustains everything and everyone.

God hasn't left us alone. He's not the God who just creates. And then leaves. He is a good God. A caring God. A God who takes responsibility for what he has made.

[10 : 03] The Athenians. They had their gods. They were imaginary. Capricious gods. Who demanded service. And if they didn't bring needs to their gods.

Then they would suffer consequences. Look there in verse 25. Nor has he served human hands. As though he needed anything. Since he himself.

Gives to all mortals life. And breath. And all things. He is the sustainer of all. He's intimately involved in his creation.

Every little electron. Spinning around in molecules. He knows about. Many thought that God was like a God. Who was a clock maker.

And built himself a clock. And once he made the clock. He wound it up. And then put it up on the shelf. And just left it there. Many thought that God was like that. That God made the world.

[11:02] Wound it up. Put it on the shelf. And just left it there. And looked at it. And went wow. That's great isn't it. Look at ticking over there. Now God is intimately involved in it. He loves his creation.

And as Jesus says. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground. Apart from our father. Our father's will. Well because God is our creator. And sustainer of all things. These two points that I've just made. Therefore he has rights. He is the ruler. Over the universe. And over this world. He has the right. To say how the world should be. And how it run.

It's like. If you're the host. Or a hostess of your house. And you invite some guests over. To your place for dinner. And they come in. Well you have the right. To determine. How your guests should behave.

At your dinner party. If they start throwing food around. Well then. You might ask them to leave. Then again. You might invite. The cream pie on your face. It might be the type of thing.

[12:01] That you'd really like. I don't know. But you're the one. As the host. Or hostess. That is able to determine that. This is God's world. He's the creator.

The sustainer. He has the right. To rule. The second point I want to make about that is. Because of that. We should trust him. Like a child.

Trust loving parent. We should trust our loving creator. Well that's my second point. That I want to make from this passage. The third point. Is the fact that God has created us.

For special relationships. Look there in verses 26 and 27. From one ancestor. He made all nations. To inhabit the whole earth. And he allotted the times. Of their existence.

And boundaries. Of the places where they live. So that they would search for God. And perhaps grope for him. And find him. Though indeed. He is not far. From each one of us. We see.

[12:57] That God. Seeks. A relationship. With us. He has designed us. To have a relationship with him. A relationship. With God.

He longs for it. He seeks for us. To grope out for him. To reach out. Well as this passage says. He is not far. He's not just asking.

The spiritual people to do this. It's from every nation. He is the loving creator. He seeks everyone. From every nation. To reach out. It's very different.

This understanding of our God. To many other religions. Many of the eastern religions. They think that. That God. Is a part of everything.

That God is in everything. That there is not this special relationship. But. That you sort of. You know. Everything is a part of God. And there is this. It's not a relationship as such.

[13:59] Well some other eastern religions. You can't even know God. God is so other. So different. He wants nothing to. We can't get to know him. But the message of the Bible is.

That there is a God. Who wants relationship. A God who is loving. Genesis picks this up. We see that.

In verses. 28. In Genesis chapter 1. Verse 28. Sorry. Verse 26 and 27.

No. I was right. Verse 28 and 29. God blessed them. And God said to them. Be fruitful and multiply. And fill the earth and subdue it. And have dominion of the fish. Over the sea.

And over the birds. And over the air. And everything that lives. Everything that moves upon the earth. God said. See I have given you every plant. Yielding seed.

[14:57] That is upon the face of the earth. Every tree. With its seed in its fruit. That you shall have for food. Here we see a God. Who not only seeks a relationship with us.

But also. A God. Who wants us to have a relationship with the world. That we have this relationship with God. Because of the fact that we are created in God's image.

If you look there in verses 28 and 29 of Acts chapter 17. For in him we live and move and have our being.

As even some of your own poets have said. For we too are his offspring. Since we are God's offspring. We ought not to think that the deity is like gold or silver or stone.

An image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. Paul is talking to these Athenians. And he says. You think that God is something that you can create.

[15:54] That you can make an image of this God. But the reality is. God has made us. And God has made us in his image. This image language is important.

In Genesis. As I've just pointed out just there a moment ago. We see that God has made us in his image. In Genesis. This is a great privilege that we have.

We see that we are the pinnacle of God's creation. We are the final and most important thing that he makes on day six. And he makes us in his image.

We are not like animals. We have personality. We are able to make intelligent choices. We have a conscience. We are capable of love. And compassion.

We have the extraordinary ability to communicate with words. And so to relate with one another. God has equipped us for a relationship. This is part of the things. What it means to be created in the image of God.

[16:55] But part of that we see there in Genesis. Is that as a part of being created in image. He made us male and female. So not only do we have a relationship with God. We were created for.

But we also have. As a part of our special relationships. We have a relationship with each other. God has made us for relationships with one another.

Marriage is the most profound picture of it. That we have in the Bible. You see God is not a unity. But a trinity. A God relationship. For us.

We can reflect this. This trinity. By the way that we relate to one another. That's the second part of relationship. We see that we have a relationship with God.

We have a relationship with one another. But the point that I made before. Was that we have a relationship with the world. In that relationship. We have. We are created rulers. Over the world.

[17:53] Rulers under God. The passage I read from Genesis just a moment ago. Picks out the fact that we are to rule over his creation. But he's authority. We are not to be exploitive or destructive.

But to reflect God's creative care. So there we see. The third point. That God has created us for special relationships. Firstly with himself. Secondly with one another.

And thirdly with the world. Well when we look at that. We see that. Within creation. There is purpose. God has created things purposefully. We can see that.

In the way that God has created us. In relationship. We can see that in Genesis chapter 1. The way that it was created. In an ordered way. And we can see it in today's passage. Look there in verse 30.

While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance. Now he commands all people everywhere to repent. Because he has fixed a day on which he will have. Have the world judged in righteousness.

[18:53] By a man whom he has appointed. And of this he has given assurance. To all by raising him from the dead. Here we see God. Appointing a person.

We see creation. Moving to a point. A point of judgment. A point. Of also. Of restoration. We see God raising Christ.

To life again. A picture here. Of a time when. Christ will come in. And we'll be raised with him. We see that creation has a purpose.

But notice. As these verses point out. That Christ. Is intimately involved in this purpose. For creation. Colossians chapter 1.

Verse 19 and 20. 15 and 16. Picks this up. He is the image of the invisible God. This is Christ. Jesus. He is the image of the invisible God.

[19:51] The firstborn of all creation. For in him all things in heaven and earth were created. Things visible and invisible. Whether thrones or minions or rulers or powers. All things have been created through him and for him.

He himself is before all things. And in him all things hold together. He is the creator. He is the creator. He is the creator. He is the creator.

He is the creator. He is the creator. All things were created for him. But we're going to learn more of that. And Christ's role later on.

But important at this point to see that Christ is intimately involved with creation. He is part of this whole series that we're going to be looking at.

Let me just take a sidetrack just for a moment. In relation to things that we've been talking about. How God is a creator. There seems to be throughout history that people want to pit Christianity versus naturalism.

[20 : 53] By naturalism I mean by those who want to think that science and evolution and naturalistic views are different to Christianity. And should be held completely and utterly apart.

Let me make three points. The first point is science and Christianity are not odds. Because God has created order. And God has given us minds. We are able to look at this order that God has created. We are able to use our minds to investigate the way that God has created things. In fact some of the great scientists are Christians. We see there that many of the great early scientists were Christians.

We have the Royal Society of London which was founded by Christians. And even there are still many Christians involved in science today. But the second thing is science is about the how of things.

The Bible is not about the how but about the who and the why. Many want to look there to the how of creation. How was it done?

[22 : 00] And you know it was exactly seven days. And there's all these questions that fly around. The Bible wasn't written to answer the how. But more the who and the why.

Why did God create? Who is this God who has created? The third point that I want to make about this comparison. Is that Christianity has a more comprehensive world view of naturalism.

Christianity doesn't just think that we're a lump of molecules. That all that we can see with our senses is it. Christianity has a far greater world view.

We recognise that we are not just a lump of molecules. Moving along. Ready to die. But that there is a God.

A God seeking relationship. Well what does this mean for us? Let me just draw out two points.

[23 : 00] Before we close. The first thing is. God is ruler. God is the mighty ruler. And we need to accept that.

During last week we had a children's holiday program. And it was great fun. And one of the Colin Buchanan songs talks about Jesus being the mighty, mighty king.

The boss of everything. Because God and Christ are our king. Because they are the rulers. Because they have created the world.

We need to accept them as our boss. Is God the boss of every part of your life? Your money? Your time? Is he only just boss on Sunday nights? Is he boss on Monday mornings? Tuesday afternoons? What about Wednesday nights?

[24 : 01] Particularly when there is a show on that you probably shouldn't be watching. Is God boss over everything? The second thing that we know. That we can see from this.

Is because God is the great creator and the great sustainer. He is also the God who is in control. When I woke up this morning to put television on for my two daughters.

On the ABC. Normally there is lots of kids programs. I turned on to see the news break that Columbia burnt up in re-entry. You only have to look in the newspapers to look around.

We are on the brink of war perhaps. There is so much chaos going on. What we see here is. There is a God who knows what is happening.

He is a God who is ruler. He is in control. And the great thing that we see from the passage is. There will come a day.

[25 : 00] When God will judge the world. But again I am dropping ahead. For that is next week. Well let me conclude this.

I was going to show you some of the two ways to live. On the video projector. But my little laptop went kaput tonight. As I turned up.

But I was going to show you some of the pictures. Of two ways to live. One of the pictures starts that Mel was going to draw. Was a world. And it is represented by a circle.

We know that God has created this world. He has made it. He sustains it. Above this picture of the circle representing the world.

Was the picture of a crown. God is the mighty ruler. He has rights to rule it. He has rights to rule it. Because he is the creator. And underneath that crown.

[25 : 59] He put man. And there is a picture between the crown and the world. With a man standing on top of. Just a little stick figure. Standing on top of the world. There is a picture of the

way that God has created things.

But it is certainly not the way that we see the world at the moment. Next week we are going to look at the fact that humanity comes under the judgment of God. I hope you can come back for the next enthralling part.

Let me pray. Father we do indeed thank you that you are the great ruler of this world. Father help us to accept this. To recognise that you have rights over our life.

That you need to be boss over everything. We thank you Father that you are so also a God who is in control of everything. That you know what is happening.

And that one day you will judge this world. We pray Father that you will help us to live lives in accordance with this. We pray this in your son's name.

[27 : 07] Amen.