

Genesis 1:1-25 (PM)

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[0 : 0 0] Yes, let me add my welcome to Chris's. It's great to see you. Great to see you guys. Like Chris said, we're starting a brand new series looking at the first 11 chapters of Genesis.

And I think this is a very important book for us at this time. And I say that because we live in such a disruptive space right now. The world is quite polarized and there's a lot of fear and lots of uncertainty. And socially we're disconnected. We feel destabilized in many ways. And so what do you do when you're destabilized? Is you rely on your foundations, which is why Genesis is going to be such a gift to us because it lays before us the foundational truths of the world. Doesn't that sound good? So we're just going to crack on and get straight into it. I want to start with just some general observations before we get to the main points.

Okay, so just a few observations before we get to the main points. So this first chapter is about the creation of all things. That's low hanging fruit in terms of observations, right?

It's about the creation of all things. And I think we all know that. But what's important to note here is that it's mostly about who did it, who created it, as opposed to how it was done.

And this is very clear through the repetition of ideas and phrases. God said, God said, God said, God said, God saw, God saw, God saw, it was so, it was so, it was so. All of the verbs that were written. And I think it was so. All of the verbs that were created, God said, God said, God said, God, is so. And that's really important because we can get into this and ask all the wrong questions about this first chapter. Genesis 1 is not interested in dinosaurs or your thoughts on evolution. And I don't think it's particularly interested in letting us know about the linear timeframe either. Like if you look at verse three, it talks about something called a day. But then it's not until verse 14 that the sun is made. So I don't think timing is on its radar.

[2 : 2 8] So was it, you know, six literal days or was each day like a million years? It just doesn't, well, I don't know. Like, I don't know. We can't press the passage for those kind of details. They're not in there. It's not a scientific document. It's not a typical sort of story.

It's something else. It resembles poetry, but it's more than that. So my first observation is don't press it for details and questions it's not going to answer. Another observation, another comment to make. It's telling us a story. And it's a story that in its day and today, contrasts other stories of creation in very important ways. So way, way, way back in the days, the stories explaining creation, you know, like pagan mythology and stuff, they involved, often involved various gods fighting each other and the earth and the universe and everything in it were basically byproducts of these interactions of these battles. So like the Canaanite story of creation talks about a god fighting a sea monster and their names were, what were their names? Mardok and Tiamat, I think. I think Tiamat and Mardok were their names. And the sea monster gets cut in half and half the sea monster forms the heaven and half the sea monster forms the earth and the blood splatter is the stars. I mean, it's, it's, it's, don't get me wrong, it's a cracker of a story. But in all of these stories, creation is derivative.

They're not, all these, in all these stories, creation is not valued as something good. The earth is an accident. The universe is an accident. The stars are accidents. They're byproducts of something else valued more highly. So I'll read again verses one and two. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void and the darkness was all over the face of the deep and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters and God said, let there be light, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. In contrast to all of these other creation stories, ancient and modern ones, Genesis says, Genesis says, God took something desolate and empty and with intention made it beautiful and functional and fruitful. The world is not an accident. And it's important. We know that, isn't it?

Because it means all of this has meaning, has intention behind it. Okay, that's just a few initial observations. Let's have a look at the main points of Genesis chapter one now. And they are simple, I think. Genesis chapter one is about the supremacy of God and the goodness of God. The supremacy of God and the goodness of God. So first, the supremacy of God. So the essential message of Genesis one is this. There is a sovereign creator of the universe. It's God. God spoke it all into being and he, and he just had to speak it. Let there be light. Let there be an expanse. Let, let the earth sprout vegetation. Let the earth swarm with living creatures. And it was so, and it was so, and it was so, and it was so. He spoke it and it happened. God is the sovereign king who has the authority to create by his word and everything obeys. And what a thing. And the implications are huge, aren't they? You know, today the prevailing and celebrated ideology of the day is I am my own God. I'm the captain of my own ship. I have complete authority, complete authority over my body and my actions. I am the moral authority on all my decisions. And Genesis one says, no, Genesis one says, no, there is a God. It's not you. And this

God has all authority. Aldous Huxley was an English author, a very clever man. He wrote A Brave New World. He wrote another book called Ends and Means. And I want to read a quote from it. And I'll start by saying, um, so this is not a Christian, this is not a Christian man saying something great about Jesus, but you've got to give him credit for his honesty here. So let me read this little paragraph from him.

[7 : 08] He says this, I had motives for not wanting the world to have any meaning and consequently assumed that there was none and was able without any difficult, without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. It's great, isn't it? Like it's very, it's very clear what he's saying. The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with the problem of pure metaphysics. He is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do. For myself, as no doubt for most of my friends, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom. The supporters of the system claimed that it embodied the meaning, the Christian meaning they insisted of the world.

There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and justifying ourselves in our erotic revolt. We would deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever. So I love his honesty and I love his clarity here. He is saying, I was very motivated to believe that the world was an accident without meaning because that meant I could do whatever I wanted. But Genesis 1 says there is a creator.

And if there is a creator, well that just, that changes things, doesn't it? Genesis 1 says there is meaning, there is intention, there is purpose.

It comes from the ultimate authority, the creator of everything. Because there is a creator. Because there is a creator. That means something about the way you live, doesn't it? It means something about the way you relate to others. It means something about the way you relate to the land, to his creation. There's a lot more to say about that, which we'll do over the next few weeks. But I'm going to move on to the second point. The second thing to say about this passage is it talks about the goodness of God and his creation. The goodness of God and his creation. So God has all authority, but is he good? Is God actually good? Well God shows us his goodness in Genesis in a number of different ways. I'll point out a few. First, God says it is good.

He says the light was good. The sea and the earth were good. The plants were good. The stars were good. The animals were good. God makes it and he says it was good. And this word good, it's a great word. It doesn't just mean morally good. It means beautiful. Isn't that great?

[10:21] It means beautiful. Like Amy and I went to a really nice restaurant before Christmas. And it's the kind of place where you pay X amount of dollars and then they bring you five courses and you don't get any choice. Have you ever been to one of these restaurants? Oh, they're fantastic. So you just pay X amount of dollars and they say, are you allergic to anything? And you say no. And then they just bring you food and you don't get any choice. And the great thing about it is it's five random things that are just delightful that the chef chooses for you. That's different to what other people are receiving.

It's fantastic. So you get to try all the stuff you've never tried before. You don't know what's coming. And I remember at this dinner, the very first course was this kind of a hard cracker that I'd never seen before. And this soft cheese in this kind of bowl of something like a, it was edible. It's really hard to explain. I'd never heard of any of this stuff before, right? This, this, especially, I'd never heard of this cheese before. And both Amy and I dipped the cracker in. And when we both, at the same time, we both put the cracker in, put the cheese in our mouth and tasted it. And we both were like, oh, that's really good. Have you guys had that experience? Like the first bite of a fantastic meal? And it's like, oh, oh, that's really good. That's the sense of this word. God makes something good. And he's enjoying it. He's delighting in what he has made. Isn't that a wonderful idea?

We also get the goodness of it, and that God wants to be with his creation. So the Christian God is not some like Olympian God or goddess staring down her nose at us. We see this in verse 2. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void. Darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

It's an interesting image, isn't it? Hovering, hovering over the face of the waters. The only other place that's used in the Old Testament, I think, is in Deuteronomy. And in that place, it's used to describe an eagle sort of hovering over a nest, a nest of hatchlings in encouraging them to fly. So it's this picture of intimacy and love and protection. And later in Genesis, this connection to creation gets cemented as God binds himself, this eternal, ageless, omnipotent, omniscient being binds himself to his people, to his creation in covenant.

A covenant based on love that is so strong that God would rather die than be without us. God's goodness is showing in that he wants to be with us. He wants to be with his creation and not separate from it. We also see God's goodness in the fact that he blesses his creation. Verse 22, and God blessed them saying, be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters with seas and let the birds multiply on the earth. The substance of this blessing was flourish. Go and flourish. God's making a home, a place to be with his creation, and he wants that creation to flourish. But did you notice also in the passage that there are boundaries? Did you notice that there's this separating of things? There's also a lot of stay with your own kind kind of things with regards to the animals?

[14 : 24] So clearly, there's also this order and a structure. So there are boundaries. But God creates those boundaries to give us the best opportunity to flourish. And obviously, there are a lot of implications right there as well, which we'll get to over the next few weeks.

We're going to finish up. We're going to finish up here. So how do we respond to the message of Genesis 1? I think, goodness, so many ways. Can I just give you two ways, two reminders. Firstly, just, I think, gratitude. God has given us this stunningly beautiful home. And you might say, well, the world's a bit of a mess right now, but God created it good. And there's still lots of good in it.

God gave us a stunningly beautiful home, a place to be with us. It's a sacred place. We should care for it and be grateful for it. Another implication is, of course, accountability. All of this, our own being, as well as all that's around us, we owe it all to God. Therefore, we are accountable to God. We're not just accountable to our whims and desires and being true to ourselves. No, we're accountable to God ultimately. And again, these are things we're going to unpack over the next few weeks. I'm going to finish here and we're going to respond by singing. So let's stand together.

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