

God in Genesis 1

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Date: 11 September 2011

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[0 : 00] In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was 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. And there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.

God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And there was evening, and there was morning the first day. Can I say at the very outset that what I'm going to say this evening will not touch on the debate between evolution and the Bible.

That might be surprising to you to think of anyone preaching on this chapter without including it. Well, I'll tell you why.

[1 : 23] My reason for not including it, and I'm not saying, of course, it isn't a valid debate. And I'm quite sure that most, if not everyone, has had thoughts or read books or perhaps come to some kind of conclusion on the matter.

I'm not saying that it shouldn't be discussed. Of course it should be discussed. It's a perfectly valid discussion. My problem is that if you start going down the road of evolution or creation, then that's all you talk about.

And you don't talk about anything else. And I think that's a great pity. Because Genesis 1 to me, it is a revelation of who God is in his creation.

And if you only concentrate on the finer points of what a day means and how you can get stars that are millions of miles away, light years away, and how does the light reach the earth?

And how can you have days without the sun and the moon and all of these questions? You go down that road and you end up spending an hour and you haven't got any further. As I say, I'm not saying that isn't a perfectly valid discussion.

[2 : 32] I'm not saying don't discuss it. But the problem is it obscures, to my mind, the majesty and the glory of this chapter. And I believe that that's what this chapter is all about.

I want us to think tonight about the revelation of God in Genesis 1. I want us to say, in other words, I want us to see how Genesis 1 reveals the nature and the character and the glory of God to us. In ways which will give us a better understanding of the majesty of God. But also in ways which help us to understand the gospel.

Because many, if not everything that you find that relates to God in this chapter relates to the revelation of God in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that's the way I want us to look at this chapter this evening. I want us to look at five or six different things. I doubt if we'll have enough time to cover them all. But I'm sure we'll have time to cover most of them.

[3 : 34] I want us to think tonight about what this passage tells us about God as light. God as light. The Bible tells us that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

So, when it tells us that the very first recorded words of God in creation are, Let there be light. We can understand that when God chose to create something other than himself, he is choosing to create something of himself.

His character and his nature is reflected in creation. And that's why we just sung. The heavens God's glory do declare.

The skies his handworks preach. That means that when you go out on a dark, still, frosty night, when the sky is absolutely clear and you look up into the vastness of the heavens, then there's a sermon.

It's like you go to church and they are preaching to you and they are saying, there is a God and this great, vast, majestic, glorious God has created us.

[4 : 50] And he's created you at the same time. The heavens God's glory do declare. So, when God created light, he's creating something of himself.

Something that represents what he is. Now, you imagine it. You imagine that there is only darkness and nothing but darkness. That's what this passage tells us.

The earth was without form and void. And I know that there's a question of where did the earth come from and all of that. I'm not going to go into that. But there's, in chapter, in verse 2, there's this scene of darkness, utter darkness, complete darkness.

And out of that darkness, in a moment of time, there's floods, this instantaneous light. Perhaps for the first time.

We don't know. We don't know. We don't know what was before creation. Some people say that there was, some people suggest that there was something before creation. But as far as we are concerned, this is the moment in history, the moment in eternity, when God utters his voice and light comes flooding through the universe.

[6 : 05] And that begs the question, of course, of what God, why God created anything at all. You ever thought of that question? God is complete within himself.

He's perfect within himself. There is no deficiency within God. You cannot get better. God cannot improve himself.

And yet, for his own reason, there came that point in the history of eternity when he did something new. He created something other than himself.

And from that came everything that we know as the universe, with all its complexity and vastness and hugeness. So huge that we cannot even begin to understand it.

We only understand a tiny fraction of the universe. But the fact is that he did choose. He did choose to create something other than himself to reflect his own majesty and glory.

[7 : 13] And that's why this chapter is so important. Because you read this chapter and you see something of God in the creation. The creation reflecting the glory of God.

But light in the Bible goes on to describe other ideas. For example, it's illumination. It's understanding. It's clarity.

It's clearness. It's perception. It's understanding. And in the gospel, the Bible goes on to talk about God having shone his light in our hearts in the person of Jesus Christ.

Here's what the apostle Paul tells us. He says, For God who said, Paul's going all the way back to Genesis chapter 1, and he's saying, For God who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

And what that means, of course, is that people like ourselves, who hear the gospel and have heard the gospel and have heard the voice of God, it's like God has shone his light into our hearts and given us that understanding and that clarity that draws us, that power that draws us into a greater knowledge of himself, a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as our Savior.

[8 : 34] So that's the first thing then, and something for us to take away and for us to develop in our own minds and in our own hearts. God has light. He is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.

Second thing I want us to see in this passage in which God tells us about himself is his word. His word. Isn't it interesting that the first thing that happens in this passage is that God speaks.

We don't see God until we see him in what he has created, but he speaks. He says, let there be light. He chooses. God could have created the universe by not saying anything.

He's all powerful from beginning to end, without beginning, without end. He could have chosen to create the universe by choosing whatever method he wanted to.

But isn't it interesting that he chooses to speak light into existence, that he speaks the sky into existence, that he speaks the sun, the moon, the stars, the dry land, the vegetation, the animals, the humans.

[9 : 52] He says, he commands, and it comes to pass. Genesis 1 doesn't tell us how all this happens. It's not a scientific book, but it tells us that it does happen at his command.

It was an act of will and purpose that the creation came into being, and it's an act of will and purpose that you and I... See, this is a direct bearing on you and I this evening.

And it gives us a reason why you and I are you and I. We are not just blobs of flesh. We're not just random beings having evolved from nothing or from lesser beings which evolved from even lesser

beings.

We are an act. We are the product of God's command. And surely that gives you that sense of dignity in which nobody has any right to describe you as just some molecules thrown together by time and chance.

God says you are much more than that. You are inexistent because I want you there. I know you. You have searched me. The psalmist said you have searched me and know me.

[11:16] You know my sitting down and my rising up. You are you, an individual person. I am me created and brought into being by an act of God's will and command and purpose.

That means he has a purpose for you to be in this world and you will not find what that purpose is until you come to know God yourself. How do you come to know God?

Through Jesus Christ, his son who came into the world to give his life for us in order to open the door for God to forgive all our wrongdoing and to bring us into fellowship and into the knowledge of him.

That's our purpose. That's why we were created. The problem is that as the Bible goes on to say that we choose to find our fulfillment in all the wrong things.

We choose to find our fulfillment in trying to seek instant happiness and pleasure from this world instead of coming to know God through Jesus Christ who said, I am the way and the truth and the life.

[12:24] But God has said to us, you are not a blob of flesh. You're not an animal. You're not the product of just time and chance. You are you.

There's nobody like you in all the world. And you're here because I have commanded you to be here. I know you. I know everything about you. And I have a purpose for you.

And the question is, are you going to obey that purpose or are you not? Are you going to listen to him or are you not? Are you going to accept his love and his grace in Jesus Christ and come to know him as he has invited you to do?

You haven't begun to live until you come to know Jesus. You haven't begun to live. That's when you begin when you come to know the Lord.

The third thing I want us to look at this evening is the separation. Do you notice this word separation occurs time and time again?

[13:23] And it says this, let there be light and there was light and God saw the light was good and God separated the light from the darkness. Then in verse 6, let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters.

Let it separate the waters from the waters. Let it separate the waters from the waters. All the way through this chapter, God is not only creating things, he's putting them into the right categories. He's slotting them into the different levels and the different structures of creation. Creation is not a random mass of meaninglessness, it is carefully planned and constructed.

He separates the light from the darkness. He separates the land from the sky. He separates the land from the sea. He separates one species of fish and bird and animal from another, each according to their kinds all the way through this chapter until he comes to man and man is separated from woman and man is separated from the animals and so on and so forth according to their kinds.

And that is the basis of true science. Science is all about the discovery of all of these categories that God has created within the universe.

[14:47] God has said to us, he said to humankind, he said, go and he said, subdue the earth and that word subdue, it means discover what this earth is all about.

Discover how it works. Discover your body, how your eye works, how your brain works, how your heart works, the circulation system, the central nervous system, the bones and the blood flow and all of these things in your body.

Go and discover it, he says. Go and discover it. Don't be afraid to discover how the earth works. Go and dig and find out the different types of rocks and the different types of strata, the different types of earth, all the animals on each according to their kinds and find out how they behave and which ones behave one way and which ones behave the other way and so on and so forth and catalog them and work out whatever you can work out.

That's the basis of true science. It gives us knowledge of the world and the universe in which we, and do you know this? All knowledge is God's knowledge. All true facts and knowledge belong to

God.

And I say this because there's this myth that people have that somehow or other that science contradicts God. True science doesn't contradict God. True science is obedience to God.

[16:06] It's doing what we were created to do which was to reflect the way in which God has categorized his creation and to find out. We haven't even begun this evening to discover what God has done and what God has created.

But it was never intended to set out to disprove God. That's sinful science. That's the science that says let us build a tower. That's what they said in Genesis chapter 7.

Let us build a tower. And let us reach to the heavens. Let's make a name for ourselves. You see there's always that element in sinful humankind that wants to undermine the sovereignty and the rule of God and wants to be above God.

And you find it not just in science you find it in every area of life. True science though ought to lead us into a sense of awe and wonder at what God has done.

And every discovery that humankind makes whether it's something about astronomy whether they find a difference another star that they'd never seen before or whether they find out something about technology or metals or chemistry or whatever it is it ought to bring us to our knees to thank God for the way the complexity.

[17:37] In fact you know the more you discover the wonder of for example you go into the chemical properties of various substances you see the complexity and they're even saying now that we've only partially discovered what they are atoms protons neutrons electrons and the way in which they interact with each with each other it's absolutely marvelous and it points to the designer to the creator to the person to the being the plan everything from the very beginning but then the fourth thing I want us to look at this evening and the fourth thing that that we find here is that God is life God is life that's what John tells us his life his light was the light of man and again

God is life in himself and so it's not surprising that when he creates something he creates what he is himself he reflects what he is himself and here he does so in this chapter he begins by creating what we would call the lowest level of awareness and consciousness he creates the plants and then he creates the fish and then the birds and then the animals and it's only after all of these life forms have been made that he stops and he creates mankind last of all we'll see in a few moments time why that was so and life itself has its own mystery hasn't it it has its own wonder when you look at your dog don't ever underestimate you know we are completely wrong to diminish the importance of animals animals preach to us they tell us that they are made fearfully and wonderfully made you look at the behavior of your cat absolutely marvelous intriguing it's a very important place in the bible for animals when you go to the zoo you stand there and you watch this majestic tiger going from one end of the cage to the other or one end of the enclosure to the other and you see him sometimes roaring and you're filled with terror when you hear his roar and when you watch the way he moves the way he conducts himself the way he eats you look into his eyes and you see the beauty the marvel takes your breath away strikes me you know that I don't know if you ever watch these great programs that you have that describe animal life and they get close up to them and we live in a world where we know more about animals than anyone ever did before in their natural habitat we're able to catalog all of these things and you're able to go up with the use of high technology high definition cameras you're able to get right up into their face you know it strikes me that we should be the most believing generation of all time and yet we're not

I can't understand how you can look in the face of a lion and not see the reality of God the wonder of God but God didn't stop with the animal life he only stopped after he had created humankind and in verse 26 it's not without reason that's a different paragraph there's a pause between everything else that God has been doing up until then and this moment in time where he's been using one kind of language he's saying let there be you notice that up until verse 26 he's saying let there be but now he uses a different kind of language and he says let us make we're on to a new level here we're going to do something unique it's almost like God is saying stop stop for a moment and listen this particularly carefully to what I'm going to say because I'm about to do something utterly unique I've been creating up until now things which are marvelous and things which reflect my glory but now I'm going to create the crown of all living beings let us make man and the reason why man is so different is because we're told in verse 26 in our image after our likeness why does he use our why not my why the plural some people would suggest that because he's talking to his angels in heaven I don't believe that I believe that this is the trinity speaking father son and holy spirit the new

testament tells us that without Jesus nothing has been created that has been created Jesus the second person of the trinity was there as well as the holy spirit

God is having a conference within himself in which he's saying let us in which he's deciding collectively God is one and God is three and there's this collective decision let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth there was going to be something entire we're on to a new level all together in his creation in which this new being is able to think differently from the animals the animals can only act according to their instinct marvelous as that is they can only do things as they're restrained and constricted by their instinct and their behavior but now here is man and man is going to think for himself he's going to reason he's going to be able to find out he's going to be able to ask and wonder and inquire he's going to be able to draw conclusions from his questions and he's going to be able to speak speak to his fellow human being when eve was made to compliment man and as the person in whom adam saw himself and the two of them were to be a compliment pair they were to speak to each other and converse with each other something which is unique to human beings but above all human beings had the capacity to speak to God and to know God and to be aware of who

[25 : 09] God was and to enjoy God God the world as God created it was a world full of nothing but thorough and utmost enjoyment of God it was perfect joy not the kind of instantaneous here today gone tomorrow joy that we play around with in this world that's not the kind of place it was at all it was a world which was full of bliss because it was oriented in the right place which is God that's what we were created for and that's where we were made so uniquely to reflect the greatness and the grandeur of God the image and the likeness of God that's what we have that's what we are some people will ask well did we destroy that image when Adam and Eve sinned and when they rebelled against God did they destroy that image

I would say no they destroyed it in part they lost it in part but we still possess even as sinful rebellious human beings we still have been left with that capacity that registers with God we know that there's a God something within us here's the way that Solomon puts it in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 God has put eternity into our hearts that's what makes us different from the animals he has put eternity into our hearts in other words our understanding goes beyond what we're going to have for our next food our understanding asks and wonders and longs and inquires after why we're here if I was an animal I wouldn't be asking this and the reason I'm asking that question why I'm here is because there's a reason God has put me here for a reason he's put eternity into my heart in order through the gospel for me to find him in Jesus Christ so I hope tonight that as we read this chapter this great chapter don't get bogged down in all the questions that people ask because that will drag you all the way down and you'll fail to see the majesty of the creation in which God created the universe the work of God the hand of God the will and the purpose of God in bringing this great universe and you and I into existence so that we can recognize him and so that we can yearn after him and seek him and once you begin to seek God you'll find him only in Jesus Christ and in him and in his death and resurrection alone this chapter is lastly about God's delight God saw everything that he had made and he was satisfied he said it is good and what that means they tell me is that he was absolutely thrilled with what he had made it couldn't have been otherwise God cannot do anything that he's not thrilled with because in the Godhead if you and I were able to go to heaven today it would be a place of unbroken blissful perfect joy that's what real joy is it's sourced in heaven it's sourced with God God is delighted but he also tells us tonight that he's delighted with his son Jesus Christ this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased listen he says to him and so creation this first chapter in which we discover who we are in this world he discover why we are here we are here to glorify and to enjoy God it connects with the good news in which God invites us to know him fully we can only have a partial knowledge of God in this chapter we can know something of the majesty and the grandeur and the splendor and the power of God in this chapter but by coming to Jesus Christ we can know God fully we can know his forgiveness and his grace we can know his guidance and his friendship his lordship in our lives and once you have that let me tell you you have everything does this chapter not draw you does it not create within you a sense of wonder does it not make you think I need to know this God for myself I want to know him as never before let's pray our father in heaven we pray that your word will truly draw us to know you as never before we give thanks oh lord for it we give thanks for the way in which you've described your own power and your own work and we give thanks for the way in

which you've described what we see around us in this wonderful world we also are conscious that the world has been spoiled by our sinfulness and by the separation that has taken place when humankind when they rebelled against you and yet it was that world that [30 : 58] God loved so loved that he sent his son into that world that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life give us this everlasting life in Jesus name Amen