

In the Beginning God

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[0 : 00] In Genesis chapter 1 and looking this morning at verses 1 to 2. Genesis chapter 1 and verses 1 and 2. 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. The account we have of the creation as it's normally referred to in this opening chapter and the next one in the book of Genesis.

It's very obviously a prologue or a prelude to the whole of the book of Genesis. But it's more than that. It's actually a prologue or a prelude to the whole of the Bible.

Because you need to actually understand what happened in the creation in order to take account of the things that then follow on from that.

In the way that God reveals in the rest of the Bible as his revelation. Those aspects of his own being. Of his redemption in Jesus Christ.

[1 : 08] And of his provision for us. So that the prologue to the book of Genesis really effectively is the prologue or the foreword if you like to the whole of the rest of the Bible.

And indeed it's more than that as well. Because what it's doing is actually telling us that God's work of creation in the creation of the universe as described here.

Where the Lord God made the heavens and the earth. And then proceeded to create the various aspects of life that we find inhabiting the heavens and the earth. That isn't just an account that gives us a prologue to the book of Genesis and the Bible.

It tells us that the work of creation itself is a prologue if you like to the work of redemption. What we're told here is basically that God in the work of creation was setting about creating a stage if you like.

On which the great drama of redemption was going to be performed. Because it's a significant fact that it's in this creation.

[2 : 23] And in fact in this world that we belong to out of the whole of that creation. It is in this world in space and time if you like.

At a specific place in this world. And narrowing it down indeed to a specific spot on this world. That through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The great drama of redemption was accomplished and performed on the stage of the creation. The creation is God's work.

And there are so many important aspects to the creation itself. As it reveals to us something of God. But it is more than that.

As we say the stage on which that greater work of redemption is performed by God. In the work, in the ministry, in the activities of Jesus Christ.

[3 : 25] The Lord and Savior. So in setting this stage it is really important for us. That we understand what's happening here. What happened when God created the heavens and the earth.

Because you will come across. And you know very well for yourselves. You will come across many versions of what the world is like. And how it came to be in the form it's in.

And where the universe came from. Or did it have a beginning. And if so, what kind of beginning did it have. Will it have an end. Will it just go on forever. All different kinds of ideas that you come across.

But many of them will readily dismiss the account that you have in Genesis 1 and 2. And then 3 of the fall of man. As just a mythical account.

And that's to say it's really an attempt. That view says it's an attempt by human beings. By their own sort of imagining.

[4 : 26] Or by their own minds. To come to an account of how things came to be the way they are. In the Christian faith. We take these chapters of the book of Genesis.

To be factually. Historically. Accurate. It's not something that is designed. To just make us think about possibilities.

It's something where God himself. Because this is his revelation of himself. This work of this book of scripture. Giving us this account of the work of creation. This is God's account of how the universe came to be the way it is.

How it was formed by him in the beginning. And then in chapter 3. How it came under the curse of God. Due to man's sin. And we really need to take very careful account of how these things are specified for us.

Or else we're not going to be in a position to actually think properly of the rest of the Bible. And what it says to us about redemption in Christ. About God becoming human in the person of Christ.

[5 : 38] About the work of Christ. And how that achieved redemption for his people. So I want to spend a number of weeks. Just maybe five or six studies. Just going through this opening chapter of Genesis.

And looking at the various ways in which the account of creation. Actually sets out for us this stage. On which redemption was then subsequently going to be placed.

And worked out and performed. And we're just taking these two verses today. 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. Two things. Creation and formation. Because we're told first about God creating the heavens and the earth.

And the first verse simply says. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The first word that you find of importance in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

[6 : 39] And therefore of the whole Bible. Is the word God. That's what the Bible is really about. It's not about us. Though we're involved in it obviously.

It's not about the creation. Though this is an account of the creation. And how it came into being. The Bible is the revelation of God of himself. He is the great subject of the Bible.

That's why it's so important. That we regard this as factually accurate. Because it's God telling us about himself. And about how he did this. And how he went about creating the heavens and the earth.

And how he went about then forming it. And bringing it into the final shape and form. That you find at the end of the chapter. When it says that God looked of everything that he had made.

And it was very good. Thirty-five times in the opening chapter of the Bible. You find the word God.

[7 : 39] It's about God. In the beginning. God. And we've come here today because of God. Because God is important to us.

Because it's God that we worship. Because we recognize God as our creator. The one that we all worship to. This God that's mentioned here.

As creating the heavens and the earth. And our great problem in human life. Is that we've lost the knowledge of God. That we don't realize that God really.

Ought to be the most important thing in human life. And in our thoughts of the creation. And it's a sad fact that. The fall that's described in chapter 3.

Has led to. Man using his. Considerable abilities. Intellectually and otherwise. In trying to find out more about himself.

[8 : 39] And more about the creation around him. And the vastness of the universe. So often leaving out the fact of God. The most basic fact of all.

How little we can understand. Even if it takes in the whole compass of human understanding. And that's pretty big in itself. The ability that human beings have.

Of understanding. Of working through. Different facets of what they see around them. And what's happening in their own lives. And in the world. And further afield. How little we know.

Without taking account of God. How constricted. How narrow our understanding is. Unless we begin with the very first words of Genesis.

In the beginning. God created. The heavens and the earth. The reality of God. That is so missing from many lives sadly.

[9 : 39] Is the reality that today we are aware of. That we actually come to worship this God. Well what is it saying in the beginning? God.

And this word. God is actually interesting. Because it's a plural word. And yet. It takes a singular verb. Now mostly.

It would be wrong. If in English. We said something like. They is good. You would say. They are good. Because the plural word.

Noun takes the plural verb. But here. This word. God. Elohim. In Hebrew. Is a plural word. And yet. The interesting thing is. It always takes.

This singular verb. God is. Good. Not God. Are. Good. And that's really. That's really. The very beginning. Of this revelation.

[10 : 35] That God is. giving us. Of himself. The very opening words. Of the Bible. Bring us. Into. Not yet. Very clearly. And yet. There is. In it.

An indication. That there is. A plurality. In the being. Of God. God. Is the great subject. And he's the greatest subject. Of all. And when you.

Come. To take account. Of the rest. Of what he says. About himself. In the Bible. This is one of the great facts. That becomes. Increasingly. Clear. As God revealed himself.

Down through the generations. Of mankind. Right through to his pinnacle. In Jesus Christ. That God. Is. Three. Persons. As we put it.

Usually. But one God. Father. Son. Holy Spirit. And that too. Is important.

[11 : 28] We're not going to dwell on it. Right now. But the plurality. Of God. Is so significant. To the Christian faith. Because the God. We worship. Is the God.

Who is triune. Who is Father. Son. And Holy Spirit. And the rest of the Bible. Goes on to explain. And tell us. That each of these persons. Has a specific role. In the drama.

Of redemption. That was performed. On the stage of creation. The Father. Sent. The Son. Into the world. To work. The work. That he worked. To die on the cross.

To rise from the dead. On the third day. The Son. Came into the world. He came. And took out human nature. To be in the form of a servant. To give his life.

For his people. The Holy Spirit. Comes. To take. That redemption. That salvation. That the Son. Has purchased. As the servant. Of the Father.

[12 : 22] And the Spirit. Applies that. To us. And the Spirit. Comes to live in us. To inhabit. To inhabit. God's people. To make us dwelling there.

In other words. Our Christian faith. And our Christian religion. Importantly. Is a. A Trinitarian religion. It is significant. That it is so.

And we have to retain. That very important emphasis. That God. Is a plurality. In his own being. And that. In the. Relations. Between these persons. Our redemption. Our salvation. Was achieved. In this world.

In the history. Of this world. That's the first thing. Then in creation. The word. God. In the beginning. God. And obviously. It shows that. When he created. God himself.

[13 : 18] Existed. That he did not have. A beginning. The Bible. You see. Never sets out. To try. And prove. The existence. Of God. You never find.

A chapter. Or a passage. In the Bible. That will lead you. Step by step. Towards the conclusion. Therefore. God exists. It doesn't do that.

It actually. He begins. With the fact. Of his existence. Without questioning it. Without any. Philosophical arguments. About it. Or whether indeed.

It's true or not. In the beginning. God created. The heavens. And the earth. And if this Bible. Means. What it should mean. To you. And to me. Then we don't. Doubt the existence.

Of God. Because God. Is telling us. In fact. He's shouting out. At us. From this very. Opening verse. Of the Bible. I am here. And I've always been here.

[14 : 14] In the beginning. God. Created the heavens. And the earth. And in the beginning. Is more than just. A reference. To time. It's much more.

It's inclusive. Also. Of. The idea. Of the knowledge. Of God. Isaiah chapter. Forty six. Verse ten. Quotes. Almost. Verbatim.

This opening verse. Of the Bible. Where God says. I am he. And before me. There was no God. And. Speaks about. The heavens. Being without form. And void.

And so on. But. I know. He says. The beginning. And the end. Is how the passage. Goes on. In other words. The heavens.

And the earth. As they were created. By God. Came out. Of his knowledge. Out of his mind. He's the great planner.

[15:08] Of the universe. As he is of our redemption. When the world. Was created. When the heavens. And the earth. Were created. They were not created. Accidentally.

By God. He did not just decide. To create these things. And then. Cast them out. Into the expanse. As if they would just land. Somewhere by themselves. They were very deliberately.

And. In an ordered way. Structured. Just as the way. Life on earth. Was structured. By God. You see. It all came out. Of his own knowledge. And out of his mind.

And God. Is not a God. Of chaos. Or disorder. But the very opposite. And the very creation. In the beginning. Bore the mark. Of the fact. That God.

Is a God. Of order. And not a God. Of chaos. Or accident. And. The word. Created. Is also important.

[16:02] Because it's a verb. That's never used. In the Old Testament. Of any other. But God. Himself. There are other ways. In which.

Human. Creations. Human. Ability. In creating things. There are other verbs. That are used. Obviously for that. But this one. Is always confined. To God.

And to the work of God. In other words. Only God. Can do this. Only God. Can take. What's in his own mind. And speak it. Into being. Isn't that how the chapter.

Proceeds. And God. Said. Before. These things. Were in existence. Actually. The heavens.

The earth. The light. The moon. The stars. The sun. Human beings. The animals. The fish. The birds of the air. Before any of them. Came into being.

[16:55] They were in the mind. Of God. They were arranged. In the plan. Of God. Who existed. From all eternity. And he. Created them. And in order to create them. He needed no assistance.

He spoke them. Into being. And God said. Let there be light. And there was light.

When God commands. Something to be. Something to come. Into existence. Or something to cease. Then at his word.

What he himself. Plans to happen. Takes place. And doesn't that itself. Remind us. Of the greatness. Of this God.

Of the. The. Unspeakable. And indescribable. Greatness. Of this God. Because this is not just talking. About the power. Of God.

[17:52] To bring. Into being. Things which didn't exist. Actually. Till he spoke them. Into being. And created them. It's also telling us. That this God. Has the authority. To do this. And the authority.

To place things. Where he placed them. And the authority. To decide. Where they would go. And how they related. To each other. And where mankind. Would be. In that creation. Nobody told him.

How to do it. Nobody told him. Where to place us. God. Created. The heavens.

And the earth. And then there's secondly. Along with creation. That's creating. Something that did not exist. Until God brought it into being. And then.

You find. Formation. Because 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.

[18:47] Of the water. The earth. Was without form. And void. And that's a phrase. Which. Is difficult. To. Explain.

This word. These words. It was without form. And void. But it generally means. Basically. The earth. And the. The earth. As God created. First of all.

Did not have the final form. That it took. After God was finished. With the six days. Of creation. It did not have. The specific shape. The elements. Were not arranged.

As they were later. Arranged. That was the work. Of formation. He brought them. Into being. But then he set about. Forming them. And giving them shape. And give them. A specific place.

But you notice this. First of all. The earth. Was without form. The earth. What's the most. Important. Planet.

[19:42] At least. As far as. God is concerned. In the whole. Expans. Of the creation. Of the universe. It is the earth. Now there's nothing wrong.

With. Human beings. Setting out. To explore. The universe. To try to find out. More about. The universe. That we ourselves. Belong to. As part of that. Creation.

But here is the bible. Telling us. There is only one planet. That God has singled out. For particular attention. And that is this earth.

Because it's on that earth. On this planet. That he. That he. Placed human beings. When he created them. And formed them. It is on this planet. That the son of God.

Came. To take our nature. To live. And to die. And to rise. From the dead. And this planet. And God's sight. Is the center. Of his universe. And it's a sad thing.

[20 : 46] Isn't it? That you find. Millions of children. And adults. Starving in the world. And yet. Some of the countries. In which. You find. Such deprivation.

And starvation. And so many other problems. As well. Even in the richer countries. Of the world. You find. Millions. And billions. Of pounds.

And dollars. Spent. In research. As to. How did the world begin? Is there life. Anywhere else. In the universe? What does it matter. If life.

On earth. Is not as it should be? What does it matter. If we're spoiling. The resources. That God has given us. Rather than trying.

To improve. Human life. Rather than trying. To actually. Better the welfare. Of many people. In the world. And we're going to hear. Tonight from. Marshali. And her work. In dwelling places.

[21 : 39] And that's just. An example. An important. But small. Example. Of a project. Of recovery. For children. For street children. For people. In this world. Deprived.

Through poverty. And through neglect. And through misuse. And yet. You read. In the Bible. That this earth. Is the center.

Of the universe. As far as God. Is concerned. In the beginning. God created. The heavens. And the earth. And the earth. You see. He's. Homing in.

On that. He's zooming in. On the earth. Was without form. That's. Already giving you. The sense of. Significance. About this planet. And when you reach. The end of this chapter.

You see. Why it's significant. The life. That God. Created there. The human life. Especially. That he. Placed there. And the special.

[22 : 32] Relationship. That he had. With these human beings. That's why it's mentioned. As singularly. Important. But it was without form.

And void. It was. Shapeless. And the work. Of the days. That follow. In these. Six days. Of the creation. The work. Of these six days. Is really giving.

Shape. And form. If you like. To this creation. That God. Had created. In the beginning. And each. Particular day. Has its own. Specific. Forming.

Of different. Forms of life. As God. Forms them. As God. Brings them. Into being. And into relation. With each other. Culminating. Of course. In that great work. Of God.

In forming. And creating. Man. As you find it there. On the sixth day. The pinnacle of creation. Where he sets them. Over the rest. Of the creation. And gives them. A specific privilege.

[23 : 28] And command. To look after it. For him. And to multiply. And to have. A proper dominion. And we'll come to that. Eventually. But it's not.

The kind of dominion. That exploits. The creation. For his own ends. It was to be a dominion. That was to. Glorify God. And to bring benefit.

To mankind. As well. God. God. But there is. What he's saying. About the. Earth being without form. And void. And then you need. The rest of the. We're not going into.

Just now. The rest of the days. That brings about. A shape. And a formation. To that. And yet. That's always. A mark of God's work. Isn't it? Even in redemption. What God is doing.

Is bringing order. Out of the disorder. That sin has caused. And bringing human lives. Back into order. Back into shape. If you like.

[24 : 23] Again. So that ultimately. God's purpose. For his people. Is that they. In glory. Will be. Like him. Perfectly. In the image. Of his son.

As Romans 8. Puts it. That's the final. The final. Form. If you like. Of the life. That God has. For his people.

But here's the beginning. Of it. That's where God. Created us. In the beginning. As part of this creation. And beginning. With the heavens. And the earth. They were without form. And darkness. Was over the face.

Of the deep. And incidentally. When you find. In the Bible. In the likes of. Jeremiah. Chapter 4. It's interesting. Just mention this. In passing. Because I know. The time is passing. God's work.

Of creation. And of redemption. Is about bringing. Order. Bringing structure. Bringing a specific. Shape. That glorifies himself. God's work.

[25 : 19] Of judgment. Is in the opposite direction. It's interesting. Jeremiah. Chapter 4. Verse 23. Speaks about God's judgment. Particularly upon Israel. Or Judah.

For their sins. And it's a picture. Of the creation. Reverting back. To its wild state. If you like. Desert. Thorns. That sort of thing.

And it tells us. That. The creation itself. Really. In a sense. Mirrors. The work of redemption. In the way.

That you find. God. Bringing order. In his blessing. And yet. In his judgment. It becomes. Again. Disorder. And in that.

The darkness. Next thing. That's just in passing. But darkness. Was over the face. Of the deep. The deep. Being. The waters. Where the.

[26 : 15] The waters. That were created. There at the beginning. They were not yet. In the final. Shape. Or state. Because. You read. Later on. The God creating. Bringing about. The seas. And the expanse.

In the midst. Of the waters. And putting them. Into that final. Arrangement. But darkness. Was over the face. Of the deep. And the spirit. Of God. Was hovering. Over the face. Of the waters.

And the first. Step. In the creation. After God. Had created. The heavens. And the earth. Was actually. The creation. Of light. Now that's interesting.

Too. Isn't it? It says. Darkness. Was over the face. Of the deep. And it remained. Like that. Until God said. Let there be light. And that. Too.

Introduces us. Into. The wonderful. Work. Of redemption. In Christ. Who is the light. Of the world. God. Because into our darkness. Our spiritual. And moral darkness.

[27 : 08] God has come. With the light. Of his redemption. With the light. Of his grace. With the light. Of his truth. With the light. Of salvation. And there.

At the very beginning. Of his account. In Genesis. You find a mention. Of darkness. And the next thing.

God is. Doing. Is creating light. And how wonderfully. That Paul. As he wrote. To the Corinthians. In 2nd Corinthians. As he wrote.

There. And spoke. About Jesus. Being the light. And about the light. Of God's redemption. Where he says. That God. Who. Called.

Light. Out of darkness. Has. Shined. Or shone. In our hearts. To give the light. Of the knowledge.

[28 : 05] Of the glory. Of God. In the face. Of Jesus Christ. He's beginning. With the darkness. We are. And he's saying. In that darkness.

Just as in the creation. At the beginning. Which is really. If you like. An image. Or a picture. For us. Of what God does. Redemptively. What happened. In the creating. Of the stage. If you like.

Tells us something. About the drama. That was going to be. Accomplished. On that stage. Because here is God. Saying. Here is darkness. Over the face. Of the deep. And the next thing. I'm going to do.

Is command. That light. Will be formed. Will be created. And God said. Let there be light. And there was light. And God saw. That the light. Was good. And it talks about.

Separation. We're leaving. All that. To next time. God willing. But here is the. The initial.

Introduction. To light. Are so important. In God's creation.

[28 : 59] And in God's redemption. Because into the darkness. Or rather in the darkness. God creates the light. And the light. Once it's created.

Spreads out. As light does. It's the property of light. Isn't it? To dissipate. Or to scatter the darkness. That's what it's about. And darkness.

Was over the face. Of the deep. Until God said. Let there be light. And the spirit of God. Was hovering over the face. Of the waters. Now we've mentioned.

That the triune. God is really. Indicated to us. Very. In a very minor way. In a sense. In the word. Elohim. Or God. God. But here is a specific.

Mention of the spirit. Of God. Just drawing us. More. A little bit more. Into the triune. Life of God. And it's the spirit. Of God. That's mentioned.

[29 : 52] As hovering. Over the face. Of. The waters. In other words. God is the great. Sustainer. As well as the creator. Of the universe. Not only did he bring it.

Into being. By his power. And authority. But having brought it. Into being. Who's going to sustain it. Who's going to keep it up. Who's going to maintain it. In existence.

He is. The same authority. And power. That brought it into being. Is now. Sustaining it. By the spirit of God. Hovering over. The face of the waters.

And that too. Introduces us. To something. Really important. That it's the spirit. Of God. In redemption. That applies. Redemption. To us. Because. The image you have here.

Is really interesting. It's the word. Hovering. Is a good translation. Although. It actually. Literally means. What you find. A mother hen. Doing. When it's brooding.

[30 : 49] Over eggs. Because the purpose. Of that brooding. Is that these eggs. Will hatch. That life.

Will actually come. From these eggs. In the form of the chicks. That will be hatched. Eventually. So. The hovering. Of the mother hen.

The brooding. Of the mother hen. Is indicative. Of something. That's going to happen.

Subsequently. In which. There is. Life. And that's what it's saying here.

The spirit of God. Is hovering. Over the face. Of the waters. It's not just. Maintaining. But it's doing. Something. That is. Indicating. Life. Is about. To follow.

In the other days. Of the creation. And it's from that spirit. Of God. That the creation. Is brought. To maturity.

[31 : 43] And it's really interesting. And significant too. That there's a connection. With redemption. I'm going to finish. By a quotation. From Romans. Chapter 8. A chapter that deals. Very much.

With the spirit of God. And redemption. Which from. Verse 18. I'll just read a few verses. From verse 18. For I consider. Says Paul.

That the sufferings. Of this present time. Are not worthy. Comparing to the glory. That is to be revealed. To us. For the creation. Waits. With eager longing. For the revealing.

Of the sons of God. For the creation. Was subjected. To futility. Not willingly. But because of him. Who subjected it. In hope. That's in the way. That the curse. Of the.

Of God. Came on the creation. Through human sin. So that the creation. Itself. Will be set free. From its bondage. To decay. And obtain. The freedom.

[32 : 34] Of the glory. Of the children. Of God. And then it goes on. To speak about. The spirit of God. And the role. Of the spirit. In the redemption. Of God's people. That we have that very spirit.

Within us. As a confirmation. Or as a first deposit. If you like. Of that glory. That is to await. God's people. So you see.

Here is God saying to us. In Genesis. I am your creator. But I am also. Your redeemer. And just as darkness.

Was over the face. Of the deep. So darkness too. Came. Into human life. And existence. Through our sin. But as God.

Commanded light. To be created. In the darkness. Of the creation. So his. Commanded light. To be created. In the light. Of redemption. In Christ. That's what the gospel.

[33 : 30] Is about. That's where the light. Of life. Is to be found. By us. And isn't it.

An amazing fact. That to bring us. That life. God himself. The creator. Became. The created. In the humanity.

Of his son. And in that. Died for our sins. For our redemption. Let's pray.

Lord God. Bless to us. Your word. Once again. We pray. We thank you. For the account. It gives us. Of the origins. Of the universe. Of your authority.

And power. In creating it. Of our own place. Within it. And how important. These things are. To us. In our understanding. Of ourselves. And all that is around us.

[34 : 26] And particularly. In our understanding. Of you. As our God. Bless us. Now we pray. For Jesus sake. Amen. We're going to conclude.

Our service. Now singing. In Psalm 146. 146. 146. In the Scottish Psalter. You'll find that. On page. 445. Singing to the tune. Winchester. Verses 1 to 6. Praise God. The Lord. Praise. O my soul. I'll praise God. While I live.

While I have being. To my God. In songs. I'll praise. Let's give. Page 445. Singing. Verses 1 to 6. To his praise. Fuck God.

To his praise. Lord. While I am.

[35 : 34] ■■■■. The slothly prince is norm and son, in new little stay.

His breath departs to serve eternally the day his thoughts became.

O happy is the land and west, whom take on strong that face, whose hope upon the Lord the rest
and on this God is safe.

Who made the earth and heaven's eye, who made the swearing knee, and all that is within us sing,
who to the love ever keep.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the
Holy Spirit be with you now and always. Amen.