

Spoken Into Existence

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[0 : 00] Amen. Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning again to the book of Genesis. The book of Genesis. If you are just joining us for the first time this morning, you came at a very good time.

We're beginning a new series in the book of Genesis. We started off last week just looking at chapter 1, verse 1. And this week we're going to zoom out just a little bit beyond that and look at the first five days of creation.

And so if you would, take your Bibles and open them, turn them to Genesis 1. We'll read from verses 1 all the way through verse 23. And when you found that in your Bibles, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word this morning.

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.

[1 : 15] And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day. And God said, Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. And God made the expanse, and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse.

And it was so. And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening, and there was morning, the second day. And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.

And it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind on the earth.

And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

And there was evening, and there was morning, the third day. And God said, Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.

[2 : 31] And let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth. And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, and the stars.

And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

And there was evening, and there was morning, the fourth day. And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth, across the expanse of the heavens.

So God created the great sea creatures, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening, and there was morning, the fifth day.

[3 : 31] This is God's holy word. Lord, we praise you for this creation account, this familiar story. And we pray now, as we preach your word, would you show us Christ?

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. I asked you last week to place yourself in Israel's shoes for a minute.

As you can imagine, they received this text as a journey on their way to the promised land. And I want you to do it again this morning. Imagine with me for a moment that you are an Israelite. You have been evacuated from the place that you've called home for your entire life, you and your family. And you know that obviously it wasn't a great place to live.

The living situation wasn't ideal. You were forced to do hard labor, but at least it was familiar to you. You knew that you had food to eat and a place to lay your head. It was all that you knew.

[4 : 29] But now you and everybody else that you know has been brought out of this place. And in fact, you've been told that a God is bringing you out. Now, gods are not new to you.

You're there in Egypt. You've heard about the gods of Egypt. You've been surrounded by worship of many gods. You've heard stories of the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

But really, again, all that you know is Egypt. For 430 years, your people have lived there amongst the gods of Egypt.

But now, apparently this God is calling you out of Egypt. And apparently this God is saying that he wants you and your people to be his chosen people.

And he's promising to bring you out of this chaotic darkness and into a new home where you will no longer be slaves. But instead, you'll have total peace.

[5 : 27] And it's hard to imagine. A place with no enemies where you and your people can live happily ever after. And it almost sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? Put yourself in that situation.

Now, I want you to think for a minute here as we look to this text. I said, what questions do you think you might be asking? Probably questions like, who is this God?

What about all the other gods of the nations around us? Is this God stronger than all of these gods? Is it even possible to come out of such chaos and to come into a place of such peace?

Or can the word of this God be trusted? And it's in this context and to these types of questions that we open up and we read Genesis chapter 1.

And we see the questions are answered. Who is this God who calls us out of darkness? The answer we're given here in Genesis. He is the sovereign creator of all the universe. What about all the other gods of the nations around us?

[6 : 31] Is he stronger than them? Well, we see he made them. In fact, there are no gods at all. All things are the work of his hands. Is it possible to come out of such chaos and into a place of such beauty and peace?

Well, God's done it before in creation. Certainly, he can do it again. Can his word be trusted? Genesis chapter 1 tells us his word created the universe.

Genesis chapter 1 speaks into this moment of uncertainty to assure God's people that our God brings beauty out of chaos through the power of his word.

That's the sermon in a sentence for you this morning. Our God brings beauty out of chaos through the power of his word.

This is the message that Israel needed to hear as they made their way into the promised land and church. I believe that this is the message the church needs to hear as we journey, as we make our way into the true promised land.

[7 : 39] So let's just walk through this big idea together as we look at Genesis chapter 1. And what we'll see here is, again, our God brings beauty out of chaos through the power of his word.

We'll look at each phrase here in that statement. First, notice here that God brings beauty out of chaos. God brings beauty out of chaos.

Look there with me to verse 1. This verse we studied last week. It serves as the introduction to the rest of this creation story. In the beginning, the sovereign, eternal God of the universe created the heavens and the earth.

That's a term that means all things, the heavens and the earth, everything that we see. But as we get to verse 2, we see something seems a little off, doesn't it?

He describes this creation with three key terms. He says the earth was without form and void, and it was dark.

[8 : 45] This description is important. The creation here is formless, it is void, it's empty, and it is dark. It's not all hopeless. We see the spirit of God is there.

He's hovering over creation like a bird hovering over her nest. It is nurturing this universe that God is bringing into being. But when you hear those words, formless, void, empty, dark, those aren't very positive words, are they?

It's not that there's sin in the world. That's not introduced until chapter 3. But this is a picture of chaos. The earth, the job is not yet complete, is it?

There's work to be done to take this chaos and then to turn it, to shape it, to form it into something beautiful. And so that's exactly what we see God doing throughout the rest of this chapter.

Look there at what he does. In fact, I put a chart there in your bulletins. Hopefully you have one. Hopefully you can see this. Over the first three days of creation, God forms the formless.

[9 : 49] Days 1 through 3 are marked by forming. God begins to get to work over the first three days of creation. He works like an architect. He takes what is formless and he begins to give it shape and structure and form.

And the very first thing he does in this dark, formless, empty creation, what is it? He gives it light. He turns on the lights. God said, verse 3, let there be light.

And there was light. And right away here, here's one of the scientific questions that we might come across that we want answered here in Genesis. And I won't deal with all of our scientific questions. I just want to put that out there here at the beginning. But I want to deal with this one because how in the world can there be light on day one before he makes the sun and the moon and the stars on day four?

You ever think about that? If we're thinking naturally and scientifically, we should take issue with this. We should ask because ordinarily, you're right, there is no light without the sun.

[10 : 56] Just like ordinarily, there couldn't be vegetation and plants on the third day before the sun is created on the fourth day. And ordinarily, you couldn't even count day one or day two or day three before the sun and the moon are created on day four.

For one thing, we shouldn't expect Genesis to read like a scientific textbook. It's not a scientific textbook.

It speaks to our scientific questions, absolutely. It's the foundation of all truth and all science. And it gives us the foundation of the world. But it's not primarily a scientific textbook.

We shouldn't expect it to answer all of our scientific questions. But also, we have to realize that this really isn't an ordinary moment, is it?

This is what a miracle is, by the way. It is a suspension of the ordinary and natural ways of the world. And if you rule that out from the start, I'll just go ahead and tell you, it's not going to get better for you the more you read in this book.

[12 : 00] And in just a couple of weeks, we're going to meet a talking snake. As you keep reading and make our way to the New Testament, I don't want to spoil the ending for you, but there's a man who gets up from the grave.

Here's my point. We shouldn't be surprised that our God often works in extraordinary ways. And if you rule out the extraordinary and the supernatural from the beginning as a possibility of what is able to happen, well, then you've just ruled out God as a possibility.

But if there is a God, as Genesis 1 verse 1 asserts, why shouldn't he work in extraordinary and supernatural ways?

But also, you know, we should also realize, well, God isn't really breaking any laws of nature here because these laws don't even exist yet, do they? What laws of nature are established before the earth itself is established?

God, what we see here is God is in an extraordinary moment of creation. These first five days, he is using extraordinary providence to create and sustain all these things that he will then use ordinary providence to sustain for the rest of time.

[13 : 21] So that's day one. Day two, he forms the heavens and separates the waters below from the waters above. It is a poetic language here. He hammers out the firmament.

He gives form and shape to all the skies above. Psalm 104 verse 2, it says, he stretched out the heavens like a tent. And so now there's a clear distinction between skies above and earth beneath. Third day, he separates those waters below from the earth and he brings the earth forth. He gives shape to the land. So you see here how he's forming and he's shaping the universe.

On the first three days, he's making divisions and distinctions and he's putting everything in its place. We see here, don't we, God is a God of structure. And order and design and purpose. He is forming the formless on days one through three. And then he shifts his attention to filling what he's made.

[14 : 24] In fact, the end of day three, the description on the third day, it serves as sort of a hinge here between forming and filling. He commands the earth to sprout vegetation and plants with their seed, fruit trees with their fruit, each according to its kind.

Again, notice there's structure and order here, isn't there? There's a pattern to be followed for life and flourishing. The mold is made. The forms are put in place.

And now, days four through six, he begins to fill his creation. Days four through six are marked by filling. He's got a blank canvas in front of him.

And so now he begins to work as an artist. And he fills this blank canvas of the universe with life and with movement and with creatures and with beauty.

On day four, he makes the sun and the moon and the stars to rule over the light and the darkness, to mark off days and times and seasons. Day five, he fills the waters with swarms of living creatures.

[15 : 26] He fills the skies with birds. And day six, which we'll spend a whole week on next week, he fills the earth with living creatures and eventually with people made in his image.

By the end of these six days, this dark, formless, empty nothing has now been transformed into life and beauty and order.

Now ask yourself again, why in the world would that matter to an Israelite on the way to the promised land?

Why would they need to be reminded of these truths? I'll tell you. It's because this creation story is a picture, it's a foretaste of exactly what God is doing with them.

This God was bringing them out of the darkness of Egypt and into the light of his presence.

[16 : 30] This God who formed the earth and the universe was now forming them as his people. God who created all things was now recreating them. He was taking what was formless and empty and dark and he was turning it into something beautiful.

He redeemed people for his own possession. God was showing them that this incredible work that I've done in creation is the same sort of work that I am doing in you.

I am bringing you out of chaos and into something beautiful. Do you trust me to do it? Not only this, he's showing us something else here in the creation story.

He's showing them that he and he alone is the God who brings beauty out of chaos. So second, second, we see here that it is our God who brings order out of chaos.

Our God brings order out of chaos. You remember the situation, don't you? They're surrounded by the gods of Egypt. Now they're coming out. They're surrounded by the gods of the nation.

[17 : 38] This text is a firm rebuke to anyone who would serve any other God besides the one God of creation. This text demands that there is one God and that there's one God.

He stands above all else as king of the universe. Look there with me again. Did you notice how often he separates in this story? You see it there in verse 3.

God separated the light from the darkness. See it in verse 6. God separated the waters above from the waters below. Verse 9. God separates the waters from the earth.

Verse 14. The lights separate the day from the night. You really, you can't miss this idea, can you? This God is one who makes division and distinction.

He draws boundary lines and he makes separation. Light doesn't go with darkness. The sky above doesn't belong with the earth. The waters don't go with the land.

[18 : 39] There's even divisions on what can bear fruit. An apple tree, it doesn't bear fruit with a palm tree. A bird doesn't reproduce with a fish. God is structuring and setting apart and dividing and separating.

And again, that's exactly what he's doing with his people, isn't it? He is separating them from the spiritual darkness all around them.

They are to be distinct from the nations all around them. And the number one way that they are to be distinct, what is it? It's by worshiping and serving God and God alone.

It's by separating themselves from the gods of the nations. And so look here with me. This is so interesting. This creation story is almost like a roast of all the false gods of the nations.

And when you start reading it like this, it takes on a whole new level. God is showing supremacy over the false gods of the nations. If you spend some time studying the ancient Near East and their religion and their stories, you'll see these ancient cultures, they viewed the waters as eternal.

[19 : 55] In fact, there's some ancient creation myths that even talk about their gods using this pre-existent eternal waters to create all things. But what does he say here?

God makes and separates and names the waters. They're his handiwork. The God of the Bible has supremacy over the waters.

The Canaanites, you know, they worshipped Baal and they thought that Baal was the God of fertility. There's even a creation story of Baal and his time of his death corresponds with the death of the crops.

And then he's resurrected and that corresponds with the growing season of the crops. But again, here we're told the God of the Bible Baal has supremacy over life and fertility and produce.

They come forth at his divine will. He commands the earth and it bears fruit. The Canaanites worshipped a God named Prince Yam. He's supposed to be the God of the ocean.

[20 : 57] But again, here God calls the waters forth. God puts the boundaries of the waters in place. He separates the waters. He tosses it around like it's putty in his hand. And again, of course, all the pagans worshipped the sun.

All the pagans looked up and thought that the sun was a God. They worshipped the moon and the sun and the stars. But did you notice how Genesis 1 talks about them? It doesn't even call them by name, does it?

It's not that he doesn't know the name of the sun. It's not the sun and the moon here. It's greater light and lesser light. He's not even giving them the respect of calling them by their name.

This was a God to the nations. But here he says, yeah, the big one over there, God made that. And the little one at nighttime, yeah, God made that one too. And he put them right in their place.

And he tells them exactly what to do. And he has a purpose for them. And they listen and do exactly what our God says with no backtalk. You really worship the sun and the moon and the stars?

[22 : 03] Are you kidding me? You want to seek guidance from the stars? Are you serious? Our God spoke and made all of this.

Our God is the one who creates our things. Our God is the authority. He's the one who names all things. He has authority over all things.

He orders all things and designs all things. He commands all things. He's the source of blessing for all things. He's the one who determines what's right and what's good and what's orderly and what's true.

And if this is true, why in the world should his people turn to serve any other God? I hope you realize that we need to hear this truth as well, church.

Our God is the creator and ruler of all the universe, which means, church, church, our God alone is worthy of our devotion, worthy of our worship.

[23 : 17] You know, we may not bow down and worship the sun and the moon and the stars or water or fertility or life or anything like that, but don't you think for a second that our nation around us doesn't have her own gods and that we're not tempted in our own ways to bow down and to serve the gods of the nations around us.

We may never encounter the gods of the Canaanites, but we encounter the gods of America. And we, as the people of the one true God, are called to be distinct.

We don't worship and bow down and serve the gods of this nation. We don't worship and bow down to earthly politics or to any political leader or political party.

And many make these things absolute and ultimate, but we know we're called to be distinct. We don't worship affluence or success, climbing the ladder as much as that's the norm in our culture around us.

We don't worship others and live for the approval of others, live to build a following from others, even though that's much the norm in our culture. We don't worship money or stuff or status.

[24 : 33] We don't worship so-called sexual freedom, self-determination. We are called to be distinct. We worship the creator of the universe, and we will have no other gods before him.

Ask yourself, in what ways are you tempted to bow down and to serve the gods of the nations? Our God has made all things and put all things in their place.

He's created all things for our good and for his glory. Our God brings order and beauty out of chaos. But look here in our third point. Look here how he does it.

Third. We see our God brings order out of chaos through his powerful word.

It's by his powerful word. Look there back at the passage with me. And notice here how is it that God brings order and harmony and beauty out of the chaos?

[25 : 38] How is it that he brings forth the sun and the moon and the stars and the day and the night and the water and the land and the creatures? It's by the power of his word.

He doesn't do what I do when I want to make something. If I want to make a snowman, what do I have to do? I've got to wait about six years until it snows. And then I can roll up a ball if I'm able and I can stack it up together.

And when I want to make dinner, I need to go and get some ingredients. Then I mix them up and I make something to eat. Sometimes it's edible. Sometimes it's not. God doesn't do it like that, does he?

He doesn't take from what's already there and turn it into something else. He simply creates everything out of nothing by the power of his word.

Ten times we see it here in this story. Ten times in the six days of creation, we see the phrase, God said. God said. God said.

[26 : 43] God said. Seven times we see it was good. It is good. It is good. It is good. If any Israelite might wonder whether or not the God of the Bible is trustworthy, whether or not his word can bring forth what he plans to do, if they can believe the promise that he's going to accomplish what he says he's going to accomplish, all they have to do is look up, look down, look to the left, look to the right, at all that he's made by the power of his word.

It's the word of God that brings all things into being and brings beauty out of chaos. His word never fails to accomplish all his purposes.

Isaiah 55. It's one of my favorite verses. Like the rain and the snow that come down from heaven and do not return there, but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth.

It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

The word of the Lord is 100% effective in accomplishing all his purpose. When he speaks, it happens just as he says.

[28 : 19] In fact, it's the act of speaking that brings it about. Immediately it happens just as he desires. I wish I had just a fraction of that power. Parents, you know what I'm talking about.

But I don't. Nobody but God has that sort of authoritative, life-giving, productive power simply by speaking the word.

But as we look ahead, out of the pages of Genesis, and flip forward to the New Testament, and move forward in history just a few thousand years, we see something extraordinary begins to take place.

And we see somebody else comes onto the scene, and someone starts to speak, and we see that he seems to have this sort of power. Jesus of Nazareth appears on the scene, and he begins to speak simply by his word.

He heals the sick. He casts out demons by his word. He steps right into the brokenness and the chaos of the world that we live in, and he speaks and causes the lame to walk, and the blind to see simply by the power of his word.

[29 : 41] He calls a dead man out of the grave simply by speaking and saying, Lazarus, come out. He speaks to the waters and speaks to the wind and the waves, and immediately they calm down, and there's peace.

And over and over and over again, when people hear and see the power of his word, they ask, who is this man? Who is this who teaches and speaks with authority?

Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him? Who is this who can bring order and even beauty out of such chaos? Simply by the power of his word.

We know the answer, don't we? Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. In fact, as John tells us in John chapter 1, Jesus is the very word of God.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

[30 : 51] All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. Jesus Christ is the life-giving word of God.

And it is through Jesus that God brings beauty and order out of chaos and darkness and brokenness and emptiness.

The church, the story of creation, all the way back here in the beginning, is preaching the gospel. And ultimately, this is pointing us forward to an even greater creative act of God through the power of the word.

If you are a Christian this morning, let me tell you what Paul says, God has done for you in 2 Corinthians chapter 4. We read it this morning. God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. To be a Christian is to experience the life-giving power of the word of God. It is to be brought out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

[32 : 11] It is to be rescued out of the chaos of this present evil age, this fallen world that we live in. It is to be given a new identity, a new form, a new shape and structure to your life, all of it governed by his word.

It is to be filled with his spirit. To be filled with life and hope and peace in believing the gospel of Christ. To be a Christian is to be a new creation, marching forwards towards the true promised land, a new world.

A new world. Where God will once again, for good, take the chaos of this present evil age and remake it into something beautiful. A place where there is no need of sun or moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light and its lamp is the Lamb.

Church, this is where we're headed. And this morning, if you are still in darkness, the call to you from this text is to trust in the word of God.

Trust in Jesus Christ, the living word who entered into the chaos of our lives and our mess and our sin, who lived and died and rose from the grave so that even you can be recreated as a child of God.

[33 : 33] This morning, if you're wrestling with doubts or questions or uncertainty this morning, questions like, is it possible to come out of such chaos into such peace?

What about the gods of the nation around me? Is this God worthy of my trust? Friend, cling to the power of His word.

Cling tightly to Christ. And if you're tempted to bow down, to serve any God but the one true God, come and cling tightly to His word.

If you're in a season of chaos this morning, a season of darkness, would you cling to the power of His word? Where else can we go, Lord?

Where else can we go? You have the words of eternal life. It is by His word that our God brings order and beauty out of chaos.

[34 : 34] Let's pray. Lord, we thank You, Father, for Your wisdom in creating all things. We thank You, Father, for the life that You've given us. We thank You for the world that we live in that proclaims Your glory.

And Lord, we thank You especially for the gift of the new creation by faith in Christ who's come and stepped into our brokenness, Lord, to redeem what's been broken and to bring a people out for Your own possession.

We love You, Lord. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.