

Why creation matters

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[0 : 0 0] For the first reading, which is found in 2 Corinthians 5, I'll mention it to you. It's where Paul is proclaiming that we are a new creation, the old is gone and the new has come.

And this is by God's working. If you were to read 2 Corinthians 5, I would like you, sorry if you're already turning there, sorry. I would like you to turn to Genesis 2.

I was just paraphrasing 2 Corinthians 5 to save a bit of time. Not that it needs to be saved in that sense. But 2 Corinthians 5 is the very famous chapter of reconciliation with God.

That God sent forth his son. So who put us at peace with God? God did. How did he do it? Well, he did it through his son. Who reconciled man to God? Well, God did.

How did he do it? Well, he did it through his son. Who made sinners perfect? Well, God did. How did he do it? He did it through his son. That's really how 2 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians chapter 5 that is, explains the work of Christ.

[1 : 1 0] It is actually a work of God through the person of his son. You know, don't leave God out. In Genesis chapter 2, just in case you're...

If you're confused when you read Genesis chapter 2, the best way to understand Genesis chapter 2 in light of chapter 1 is that it is a retelling of chapter 1 in greater detail.

So in chapter 1 you have what's known as the macro understanding, which is the big picture. And then in Genesis chapter 2 you have the micro understanding. So it's telling you the same events now in detail.

This is a pretty important understanding, especially when you're dealing with days and you have the creationist people who make a big deal out of these type of topics.

Now, it's right that you make a big deal out of them, but it's important that you understand that God has written an account to reveal him, not a scientific account of how the world began, however much scientific truth you can gain from it.

[2 : 1 9] So we're going to read verses 1 through to 8. Sorry, 1 through to 4. Verse 4.

These are the generations of heavens and the earth. When they were created in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

And so if you carry on reading chapter 2, what you would read is that that creation includes the creation of man and woman. It includes the creation of other things within the garden itself, an explanation of the rivers that flowed through the garden and separated out into the world.

But verse 4 is, of course, the pivotal point of our understanding. So we're going to come back to that on why does creation matter after we have come before God with this next song.

Please turn again to Genesis chapter 2. And as you do that, our emphasis this evening is really to look at these two passages, one which I've summarized in 2 Corinthians 5, and again here in Genesis chapter 2 in particular, on why creation matters.

[4 : 0 8] Now for me, obviously I'm not a scientist, and neither do I come at Genesis 1 or 2 from a scientific point of view, or do I come at Genesis 1 and 2 to answer scientific questions.

Now, there may be some clever people out there who can do that, but I'm clearly not one of them. For me, I treat Genesis as a letter that's for me, in that I am a Christian, I am one of God's people, but I appreciate entirely that it was not to me.

And that's a clear distinction whenever you're reading any part of the Bible, to understand one, who it is written to, even though you understand that it is for you. So, if I can put it simply, the book of Genesis was written for God's people who came out of Egypt.

It's the first book of Moses, and Moses is explaining to the people of God, of course, as a revelation from God to Moses to explain to his people, that I am the one true God.

I am the God who created the world, the universe, and everything in it. And I am your God, Yahweh. So, if you remember, when Moses says to God in conversation, I want you to go to my people, Moses says, okay, but who do I say sent me?

[5 : 38] And God says, well, simply say, I am sent me. And of course, God is bringing home, hopefully, sort of a covenant conviction that they would have heard through other people, you know, passed down through generation after generation after generation, of the biblical account, of the true account.

But Moses recognized that all of these people are coming out of a land with over 600 named gods, of whom Egypt worshipped. And the first thing that God would have them know, you know, that Moses is declared to them, is that, no, I am the Lord God.

I am, Yahweh, the Lord, your God, okay, who brought you out of Egypt, but that the same God that brought you out of Egypt is the one who created the world and everything in it.

That's pretty important, because it allows us to understand the beginning of Genesis is to convince these group of God's people of who God is and their relationship to him.

That's the main purpose of Genesis as it begins to unfold. Now, when a Christian begins to proclaim the fact and even defend the fact that God created the world, they're making a very simple distinction between what God creates and what man makes.

[7 : 04] Now, the difference between God creating and man making is found in what's known as pre-existing materials. So, man can make almost a lot of things in this world, but man can only make something out of something that previously exists.

So, man may enjoy the fruit of his garden and the labor of his work, but he uses all the things that God created to bring that type of work about.

So, the distinction we're making whenever we talk about creation is the distinction between God who creates out of nothing and, strictly speaking, it's not out of nothing, is it?

Because he creates these things out of his spoken word and what man creates or rather makes out of the pre-existing materials that are found in the world.

Now, a distinction has to be made here because man is not, strictly speaking, created out of nothing. Man is made from the dust of the ground. So, from the dust of the earth you came and back to the dust of the earth you shall go.

[8 : 10] So, God did make man out of a pre-existing material, but that pre-existing material was brought into existence by God speaking. That's really important because the point that we ought to proclaim, whenever we proclaim why creation matters, is the fact that God can bring something into existence by speaking it into existence.

Whatever man brings into existence means that it has already existed somewhere, whether it be under the ground, under the sea, okay, out of paper, whatever it may be, that the materials that he uses have already been provided for him by God.

One very famous economist says, whether he was a Christian or not, but I've never forgotten his words, he says, don't you find it interesting that God, how he spoke about God and not entirely sure, has put all the very precious metals and minerals and oils in some of the poorest parts in the world?

And yet, who benefits? I think he goes on to say that God's going to have something to say about that. All those diamonds, all that oil, all those precious commodities are often found in the poorest countries in the world.

I think God is going to have something to say about that in the future. And this economist, whether he was a Christian or not, or just speaking sort of in that way, made a brilliant and wonderful point.

[9 : 44] His point could be stretched further by saying, yes, God did put them there. And how they are used must be used in accordance with how God wants them to be used.

If I can just stop there for a moment, because this is a pretty important point. One of the ways that you try and teach sharing in the home if you've got children is you put one glass in the table full of orange juice with five straws.

Okay? And then you make them run up and down the road for ten minutes. Okay? And then you say, come to the table, now share. Who do you think is going to drink the fastest?

Okay? And that's how God wants us to understand the world. But what happens is you get some people, okay, that just get a bigger straw. And they just take more.

And they're not considering the people who are drinking out of the same glass. And God created a world with all these pre-existing materials for those he created to put in it in order to share.

[10 : 46] Not to exploit others at the expense of... So you can see how important this issue is over why creation matters. God creates a world with lots of good things in it to be used in a good way, but it is man who doesn't share.

The other thing to notice here as we read through is the clear link between 2 Corinthians 5 new creation and the Genesis 1 and 2, chapter 2 in particular, the original creation.

That they are point for point making the same clear statement that God is the only one who can bring something out of nothing. In 2 Corinthians 5, it's put this way.

The old is gone, the new has come. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus, of course, and this is a work of God. It is not a work of man, which means that the Christian church, Christianity, and you as a Christian, are so because you were brought into existence through God's word.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. So already you can see how that New Testament truth reflects back to the original creation of God speaking and bringing things into existence.

[12 : 03] Christianity is not man-made. The Christian is not man-made. The church is not man-made. The building, of course, is. But these things are brought into existence by the power of God's spoken word.

So creation matters in more ways than you might think. Creation is about what God can bring about by speaking. So the main distinction that we are, as Christians, need to be settled with is this one.

To be able to constantly tell people the difference between what you can make and only what God can create. So let's look at this under the two readings. 2 Corinthians 5 in particular.

When a person becomes a new creation, it is because they have been reconciled to God out of the old world, out of the old self. They have been brought to God through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This is God's doing, but he does it through his son. They've gone through a dramatic change. And the change that they have gone through is down to God, not down to them.

[13 : 11] God brought it, them, into existence. But here's the problem that you have, and it's the same problem that Adam and Eve have just shortly after their sin.

So here you are, a brand new creation, okay, the old is gone and the new has come, and you're living the Christian life, and you look around you and go, well, it doesn't look much different. Okay.

I turn on the news and it's still filled with the same problems. I go outside the door and the world doesn't look all that different. My neighbor's just the same. Where's the change? How is it that the old is gone and the new has come?

Now, this is where Christians can trip themselves up because they need to understand the context in which the old is gone and the new has come. As a Christian gets older, they look at their life and go, haven't changed much.

How is it possible that the old is gone and the new has come? Because even I'm struggling to see it. Well, you've got to understand one of the ways that God brings about the new.

[14 : 14] Let me explain it in a slightly different way. God has a very specific way of working out of his purposes and one of those ways is that he takes his time, a long, long time, to fulfill his plans and purposes.

So, a Christian is a new creation. The old truly has gone and the new truly has come. But in what sense do we get to experience all that newness?

Well, we know it through conviction. We know it through the fact that God, by his spirit, allows us to be completely assured that we belong to God and no longer belong to a world order.

We are completely his. But we have the same problem that Adam and Eve have but only in reverse. So, think about it this way. Adam and Eve just sinned.

What did the world look like 20 minutes after they sinned? Just 20 minutes after they sinned. I think they would have still looked around and go, still looks like paradise to me.

[15 : 21] Everything looks fine to me. There's still fruit on the tree, wind blowing through the trees. I think the rivers are flowing, fish are in the water, birds are in the air. Okay?

What about a hundred years after? Well, suddenly now you begin to see that the sin that entered into the world in its tenth minute, in its twentieth minute, in its thirtieth minute, didn't have the maturity of all of its devastation with it.

But over time the world got so wicked that God decided to flood it. Remember? God flooded the world because of its wickedness. And then he says after the flood, well that, not that it didn't work but his purposes were fulfilled, but he makes the comment that the world was no better after the flood than it was before.

Sin had permeated the world throughout people's lives and throughout the creation itself. Now we are born into a time where we see the extent of sin around us.

We see the wars, we see everything else that sin can create either in people's lives or in the world geographically, economically, even through the ecosystems and all of that.

[16 : 35] We see everything. And here we are being told by the Lord Jesus Christ that not only has the kingdom of God come on earth, but we're a new creation.

The old is gone and the new has come. But how does that make any sense? Well, it's the reverse. It's the reversal of the fall. That too will take time. And over time we will begin to see God's kingdom being played out until there is eventually a new heavens and a new earth.

Remember what Romans says that through one man sin entered into the world and through that one man it spread to all men, women, boys and girls. And it also spread out into the creation itself where the actual creation now groans to be set free from its captivity.

You can read that in Romans 8. But back in Romans 5 it then goes on to say that through one man Christ Jesus life and righteousness and all the goodness of God has been brought into the world.

So through one man ruin has been brought in but through one man life has been brought in. It's a total reversal. This is why Jesus is called the last Adam.

[17 : 52] The first Adam ruined it all in the garden at a tree and the last Adam recovered it all on a tree.

That's the picture that the scripture wants to show us. A beautiful reversal. But it doesn't happen overnight. Okay? It takes time for these purposes of God to work themselves out in creation.

So while we experience the old and we'll continue to experience the old we experience the old along with the new and we all know that to be true. We all experience our new life in Christ but we experience it in an old fallen world.

Okay? One of them is going to continue and the other one is going to come to its natural end or not its natural end it's going to be brought to its end according to the purposes of God. One will continue and one will end.

So here in Genesis 2 which is what we can move on to we learn something really beautiful as much as it is important.

[18 : 58] But before we look at verse 4 I want you to look just at chapter 5 verse 1. It says here in chapter 5 verse 1 that this is the book of the generations of Adam.

When God created man he made him in the likeness of God male and female he created them and blessed them and named them man when they were created.

When Adam which this is the generations of Adam verse 3 had lived for 130 years he fathered a son in his own likeness after his image.

So no longer is the next generation in the likeness of God children are born in the likeness God not anymore. They're born in the likeness of sinful men.

This is how sin permeates the world. Now it's true that they still retain certain things that you know the God conscience that's there as we can address in Romans chapter 1 that God has put into the heart of every man that consciousness that tells them that God does exist and displayed that truth in the world.

[20 : 13] But it's equally true that man is no longer resembles God in the world but resembles fallen man. This is the generations of Adam. But if you look back to Genesis 2 4 here's what we read.

These are the generations of heaven and the earth when they were created in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens when there are no bush in the field when there's no land or no small plant of the field had yet sprung up for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land and there was no man to work the ground.

Verse 6 And in a mist and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground. Verse 7 Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living creature.

And of course you have the creation of the woman as well. But do you notice what's being told there? Where did Adam come from?

These are the generations of heaven and earth. Adam was born from above. His birthplace the generation of Adam preceding him up to his life not his generations afterwards beginning with Seth and moving onwards but he and his wife were born from above.

[21 : 49] They were created by God from above. Now the reason why this is so beautiful is because in 2 Corinthians 5 when God calls you a new creation what do you think God is telling you?

You're not born out of this world. You're born from above. That God in the same way that he brought the first man into existence though in a slightly different context has brought you into existence from above.

The God who came down into the likeness of man becoming man brought us into his very likeness again restoring that image by him becoming like us.

And I think you have a beautiful picture here of God demonstrating where you began. Whether you where you began originally in the Garden of Eden or where you began your Christian life.

Your birth is not down to any generation in this world. You're not a Christian because your mum was. You're not a Christian because your gran was. You're not a Christian because her great great gran was or your grandfather was.

[22 : 54] None of those generational reasons family lines are the reason why you're a Christian. Now it may be possible that the gospel has been passed down through them but it's the gospel the word of God that has made you born from above.

That the word has come to you in the same way God spoke Adam into existence God speaks us into existence by his word. So Christians have this beautiful picture of knowing that the reason they exist is for the same reason God created in the first place.

Out of his own good will did he bring us into existence through his spoken word. God creates and man makes.

The Christian is a creation a new creation a beautiful creation which only God can bring into existence by speaking by his word.

Why does creation matter? It matters because it makes the clear distinction between that which God can only do bringing something into existence out of nothing and that which man can do i.e.

[24 : 09] set up a cult a religion or anything else for that matter. The picture you have here by combining 2 Corinthians 5 and Genesis 2 is a picture of creation original and new through the spoken word of God.

And so a Christian can easily conclude that they are a different kind of person altogether. not because they have made themselves different but because they have been born from above.

In other words their originality now their origin is no longer this world but God in heaven. So unlike the fall where sin increased over time and ruin everything you are being renewed bit by bit day by day inwardly until all of that which is old just leaves you and it's gone and it comes to nothing.

So in the same way the world got worse you are gradually being renewed by God. It is a wonderful reversal which Paul calls reconciliation. A wonderful reversal of the fall.

So here's the exhortation then as we close. In order for you to proclaim that you're a Christian you're admitting that not only does God exist but that God creates and the creation is distinct from any other type of making because God is able to bring something into existence out of nothing but as I said strictly speaking it's not out of nothing it's out of his spoken word.

[25 : 47] He speaks and things come into existence you being one of them. The other thing that we notice in Genesis 1 and 2 in particular that God of chapter 1 is referred to differently in chapter 2.

Now we don't have time to do this but if you were to go through Genesis chapter 1 you'll read over and over again and God said and God said and God said and God said he speaks and then things come into existence but you will notice that as you come into chapter 2 verse 5 in particular when no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land and there was no man to work the ground and of course God goes on to create man.

This name change or God being referred to differently is he goes from Elohim to Yahweh Elohim which simply means that God has moved into relationship with his creation.

It means that God doesn't create something and then walks away and just let it get on with it. Now some people believe that. If you ever come across the children's books by Philip Pullman one of the main themes that stretch all the way through his children's books is that this world was wound up at the beginning and then left alone to simply unwind.

There's no governance over it. There's no care over it. It was simply one big event which will eventually unwind to the point until it eventually stops.

[27 : 24] No, that's not true. The God who created the world and brought it into existence then moves into relationship with his creation. In other words, he moves into a position of responsibility and care where he takes care of what he has created.

He looks after the very things that he has brought into existence and in turn we now relate to this God who brought these things into existence.

That, of course, was broken when Adam fell into sin, sinned along with his wife, and of course, that separation then took place. Jesus comes along years, thousands of years later, to reconcile us back to God through his life, death, and resurrection.

So here's a point worth remembering. Now, there are some who want to use creation for scientific arguments, and I've got no problem with that, I'm simply just not clever enough to do any of that.

But one thing that creation does make clear, which we can all understand without any difficulty whatsoever, is that the original man came from a generation from above. He was born from above, he was brought into existence by God who wanted him to exist.

[28 : 41] And the new creation, the Christian, is no different. God wants you to be new. And the way he gets you to be new is by speaking his word to you, exactly the same way that he brought the first man into existence.

So, all the other bits aside, if you want to study Genesis for scientific reasons, great. Okay? I'm just not clever enough to do that. But what I am able to understand, and hopefully share with you, is the reason Genesis was given to the people of God in the first place.

It was to tell them that the God who created the world has moved into relationship with you, wanting relationship with you, and to share in the benefits and blessings of that relationship.

God to Lord God. So, here's the final consideration as we close. When a person denies creation, what they're really denying is responsibility to a God exists.

Okay? That's what's really been run away from. Because the moment you admit God creates, that God, that something, someone, somewhere brought this into existence, then that is clearly a higher order in being than the existence itself.

[30 : 01] And therefore I must in some way be responsible to that. So the reason why creation is such a sore point is not for the scientific reasons that most people would have you believe.

It really comes down to basic responsibility. Do I want to be answerable to God or do I want to get rid of him somehow? And the best way to get rid of him and say is, well, science explains the world in a different way.

I understand that. I can understand the argument, but I don't think that the argument is a science argument. I think it's plain old-fashioned avoidance of responsibility and being answerable to a higher authority.

I think it's as simple as that. Because the beauty of creation is that God brings us into existence to relate to us. To relate to us.

Now, it's sure that that relationship was broken through sin, but it has been restored through Christ. And the way it's been restored is in the same way it began, by God speaking.

[31 : 04] Now, the point here is a simple one. If you have a good understanding of Genesis 1, 2, and 3, you're going to be able to really understand the rest of the Bible. Because the rest of the Bible, after Genesis 2, in the first part of 3, is all about returning to the garden.

It's all about how do we get back there. Okay? How does God sort out all the problems in the world so that he can get us back to the place which he has created for us?

In simple terms, the Bible has two halves. Okay? We're sent out of the garden and being brought back in. We're sent out because of one man's sin and we're being brought back in through one man's life, death, and resurrection, and his righteousness being imputed to everyone who believes.

At the end of the day, what creation is really arguing and why creation matters is to make the basic distinction between a God who can and man who can't.

man can do many wonderful things with the pre-existing materials that God has given them, but only God can bring something into existence that cannot be found on earth.

[32 : 17] So Paul puts this in a very simple way, that the world was destroyed through one man, which then led to all men, but it has been redeemed and rescued and reconciled through the one man, Jesus Christ.

And that's why creation matters. Amen. Amen.