

Genesis 1

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[0 : 00] Thank you. It's very good to see all of you.

Some returning faces, some faces that have been around for perhaps a long time, and then some new faces. Why are we here? Why are you here? And I don't actually mean, why are you in bon accord?

I mean, why are you in existence? What is your purpose as a human? What is humanity's purpose? These are incredibly large questions for us.

And, well, how do you find out what your purpose is as a human in this earth? How do you find that out? Well, anyway, take, for instance, if you were to stumble upon a little old rusty mechanical thing, you don't know what it is.

Find out what it's supposed to be and do is to explore it, all the intricacies of it. And that's very important, and you learn a lot about what something's for by exploring the pieces like that.

[1 : 12] Perhaps the best way to find out what something like that is meant to be is to find out from them, what is this?

What did you make it to do? And so if the artist or creator has written down, perhaps in a manual, what it's for and what it's supposed to do, well, how clear could you get?

So this morning, for a little bit, we're going to focus on Genesis 1, on the beginning, when the creator created humans, because he did say why he created humans.

He explained what humans are here for, what you and I are on this earth to be and do. So we're going to explore that a little bit. But to do that, because God says that he created humans in his image, we need to figure out a little bit about who this creator is to really understand what his image is and what it's for.

So we're going to ask two questions, two basic questions in the next number of minutes. First, who made us? And I hope you don't get bored by that question, you know, it's so obvious.

[2 : 25] Well, God made us. Are you going to take 15 minutes to talk about how God made us? No, what I mean is, what is he like? How does Genesis 1 present this God? So what is God like as creator in Genesis 1?

And then the second question is, why did he make us? Why did he make humans? For what purpose are we here? What are we meant to be and do?

So those are the two basic questions. So if you could turn to Genesis 1, if you're not already there. We've already read it, and there are probably a number of thoughts that you already have as to what Genesis 1 means.

Some of you might not have ever read it before this morning. Most of you probably have. Some of you might have thought a lot about Genesis 1. Most of us come to this text, to thinking about creation, with certain assumptions and certain presuppositions of what it means.

For instance, what did God make first? Some of you might say, light. Day one starts with God saying into the darkness, let there be light.

[3 : 37] Some of you might say, well, actually, before he created light, he had already created the earth and water. Verse 2 talks about the earth being shrouded in darkness, water covering the face of the deep.

So what are some of your assumptions? What if I ask this? In how many days did God create everything? According to Genesis, some of you might say seven.

That's one of the most obvious things about Genesis 1. Some of you might say, well, actually, God created everything in six days. Because it actually says he finished it in six days, and then on the seventh, he didn't create.

On the seventh day, he rested. Some of you might even say, according to Genesis, God created everything in one day. You might be a bit confused, but if you turn over to chapter 2, verse 4, and you read, this is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. That's the NIV that you probably have in front of you. Most other translations do word for word what the original Hebrew said. And the original Hebrew and the other translation says, in the day that God created.

[4 : 51] So this talks about one day, God created everything. So that's just something to tease your mind. What do you assume that Genesis 1 is saying about creation and about the creator?

Well, another thing to keep in mind as we now turn to a few details is that we need to think about what Genesis 1 says, but also how it says it.

Genesis 1 is a true account of creation, but it doesn't just list facts. It's actually not even exactly a historical narrative in the way that so much of the rest of the Old Testament is.

It's not just telling events that happen as a normal historical record. It is historical, but it's also somewhat poetic, actually. You might have heard a lot of repetition.

This is a highly stylized account of what happened. Why is it that way? Why does it say what it says in the way that it says it?

[5 : 54] That's what we're going to actually focus on, is how does Genesis 1 portray the creator of all things? Not just the facts that it says, but how does it portray him as creator?

And the way that we're going to contemplate that is through the repetition that Moses used when he wrote this. You probably picked up on a number of words that you heard over and over, some phrases that you heard over and over.

It's almost a bit oppressive sometimes, the repetition. For instance, well, let me tell you something about numbers first in the ancient Jewish way of thinking.

They're very important. They convey a certain reality, a certain idea, certain numbers portray something. Like our society in some ways, think about the number 13.

I don't know if it's quite the same here in the States. Unlucky number 13. Some buildings don't even have a 13th floor. I mean, obviously they do, but in the elevator it jumps from 12 to 14. They don't label it the 13th because it conveys some idea.

[7 : 01] Lucky number 7. That's actually probably borrowed from the ancient Jewish way of thinking. The number 7 was very important to Jews. It conveyed this sense of perfection, completion.

So, for instance, if you want to talk about, in the Bible, somebody being punished, being punished sevenfold. That's a way of talking about this complete punishment, a perfect amount.

Eightfold, ninefold, that doesn't mean much. Sevenfold, it's complete. Eightfold, or somebody approaches a king, they bow down seven times to the ground. Why not ten times?

Why not twenty? Well, seven, it conveys something. What you'll notice in Genesis 1 is the amount of times a word or a phrase occurs seven times.

For example, let me draw your attention to a few things. The word good. Did you notice that phrase? God saw that it was good. Well, that occurs seven times.

[8 : 03] Pardon me. There's also another number that's significant. And that's number 10. I'm going to bring these together in a second.

The number 10 is very significant. It's also the idea of completion. The first phrase I actually want to draw your attention to is the phrase, and God said. That, you've noticed, at the beginning of every day, it says, and God said, let there be such and such.

Well, that phrase, and God said, occurs ten times throughout Genesis 1. God speaks, and something happens. And Moses is presenting, simply by recording that phrase ten times, rather than nine times or eleven times, that God's speaking is something complete and perfect.

That phrase is also followed by a phrase, and it was so. Did you notice that when David was reading it? God said such and such, he did such and such, and it was so, and it was so, and it was so.

Well, it's interesting. That phrase occurs over and over, but it doesn't follow everything that God says and does. It conveys the idea that what God says happens in this manner, exactly as God says, yet not every time God says something does it say that.

[9 : 23] Some scholars have seen that, and they say, well, does that mean that not everything that God says goes? That he says something, but a few times it isn't so.

Well, that's not it is all, at all. The phrase, and it happened in this manner, or and it was so, that occurs seven times. Moses is recording creation, but he's not doing it in a mechanical way, that every time he repeats the same phrase every time.

He's repeating it a certain number of times to convey something about the way God is acting. His speech is vital to this. God says it, and it happens, and it happens in the manner that he says it perfectly.

Seven times it repeats that. Other times throughout the Old Testament and New Testament when it talks about creation, one of the phrases that comes up over and over is God created everything just as he willed, just as he desired.

That's the idea of Genesis 1, that it conveys through repeating this seven times. God says it, and it happens in this manner, perfectly, sevenfold.

[10:32] I mentioned a second ago, and God saw that it was good. Again, that doesn't happen after every single thing that God says and does. So some people say, does that mean that those things aren't good?

But when you recognize that that phrase, and God saw it was good, occurs seven times throughout this narrative, you realize that what Moses is portraying about God is he's doing things perfectly.

It's good in completion. It couldn't be more perfect. Everything that God produces in creation is good. It's for life. In fact, the seventh time that this phrase is repeated is in verse 31.

God saw that it was good. In chapter 1, verse 31, it expands this phrase, the seventh time. Sort of the climax. It's repeated over and over, and God saw that that was good, and God saw that that was good, and he saw that was good, and then the seventh time, it says, and God looked at all that he had made, and look, it was very good.

Literally, the wording is, God says, look, behold, it is exceedingly good. This is the climax, the seventh time. This is portraying, Moses is portraying the creator in a way that highlights the perfection of what he does.

[11:59] it is beautiful, good. It couldn't be better. I'm going to summarize all of this in a moment. I'm just going to highlight one other interesting feature of Genesis 1.

It's the phrase evening and morning. Did you notice that phrase over and over? Look at verse 5.

And there was evening and there was morning the first day. Verse 8.

And there was evening and there was morning the second day. Verse 13. And there was evening and there was morning the third day. And you could carry on at the end of each day. And there was evening and there was morning.

Such and such. Very repetitive. Guess how many times Moses writes that phrase? If you say seven, you're wrong. It's six.

He repeats that phrase six times. He doesn't repeat it for the seventh day. Now, now that's curious. With as important as the number seven is for Moses in this account, conveying completion, perfection, it's sort of unthinkable that Moses just would have forgotten to have written it the seventh time.

[13:09] Or that he decided, well, that's obvious enough. You know, I've said it six times. I don't need to say it for this last one. It seems intentional that he's left that out.

And so, people have racked their brains trying to figure out what's the significance of that. And one possibility, and this is actually not what I'm going to focus on, but I'm going to throw it out to you so that you can be thinking about it.

One possibility is that the seventh day, God's rest, didn't finish. It's still going on. Now, I don't make this stuff up myself, and I didn't get that from a modern commentator.

The book of Hebrews in the New Testament talks about how there's this day of God's rest that is available for people to enter into his rest.

But throughout history, the biblical history, God's people have, who he's been guiding towards his rest have constantly fallen short of this by their sin and disobedience.

[14:10] They haven't entered into his rest. And the author of Hebrews says, it's still there for us. For those of us who trust in Jesus, we will enter into God's rest. And the way that the author of Hebrews proves that there is a day of God's rest that has been available and still is, is he quotes Genesis 2, the day of God's rest.

So, that's just something for you to think about. What the implications are for what a day means in Genesis 1 would still need to be wrestled with. At least for day 7, it appears that we're dealing with

something in Genesis 1 that there's more than meets the eye.

But what I actually want to draw your attention to now is what, what is the picture of God that is conveyed by how Moses is wording what he says.

And there was evening and there was morning each day. What happens on each day is that God creates something special, light or plants or animals, something special.

he creates it and it's as if God steps back and he looks at that, he's finished that particular thing, he looks at it and he says, that is good. And then there's evening and then there's morning and then we're ready for the next day for him to create something and the same pattern happens.

[15:32] That sounds an awful lot like an ordinary work day to me. Think about your own work day. You work, you complete something, hopefully we can look at it and say, that's good, that's what I intended, that's not always the case with us.

It was with God. He looks, that's perfect, that's what I want, that's good. But then evening comes. He's not working. That's not what the text says. Morning comes.

Evening is that time when the daylight shifts into night time and it's that blending time, the dusk, that's what evening is. And then the morning, that's the time when the darkness shifts into light.

It's that dawn, the rising of the sun, although in days one to three there is no sun, so that's not quite the same. But it's that time of blending, evening and morning. But the picture that Moses seems to be painting for us as he's telling accurately what God was doing at the beginning, the way that he presents him is as if all of these incredible things, the mountains, the water, bodies, neurons firing, everything you can possibly think of in creation, God is doing, it's like it's an ordinary work day for him.

I mean, that's incredible, the power that this God has, the ease with which he accomplishes these incredible feats. So let me draw now, before we shift to what humans are created for, let me draw a few of these things sort of to a conclusion.

[17:01] A picture of God, an image of God that Genesis 1 has been portraying. Think about the ease with which the creator, our God and savior, is doing these phenomenal things.

So what should our response be to that type of God that Genesis 1 portrays? We should glory in, glorify God for his power and his ability. And in fact, trust this God for any need that we have.

If he can do this creation as just another work day, what can he not do? Or anything, is anything that you need something that is too great a task for God?

Another thing, what God desires and what God wills, he says it and it happens exactly as he says it. And it happened in that manner.

This should lead us to be able to trust God still further. Trust his purposes, his will, his desires because they will be done.

[18:12] As Isaiah talks about it, God says, what I send out my word to accomplish, it will happen and there is nothing that can thwart it. So we should be able to trust God's purposes because of who he is as Genesis 1 presents him.

So when God says, trust my son Jesus and I will save you, we should be able to trust that perfectly. He is going to accomplish that will. The third thing about God is that what God produces is good, is only good and is always good.

It's perfect. So when we're contemplating creation, the least that we should do is say what the text says. Say, wow, look, this is exceedingly good.

That's the least we should do is be elated at what God can do and again, cast ourselves in trust on this God whose purposes and work is good.

[19:15] So that's the God of Genesis 1, the God who created all things. Now it's that God who is sovereign in everything and who is always producing what is good and living, that God then sets his hands to create, to craft a special creation.

Something very particular. Humanity. In Genesis 1 verses 26 to 28. And so this is where our minds now will focus on why are we here?

Humans, what am I doing as a human? What's my purpose in life? What does God say? Now there are two places here in the creation account where God talks about creating humans.

Right here in Genesis 1, 26 to 28 and then in Genesis 2 where he, this male and female that he creates in his image were given sort of a zoom in on how he creates.

The male first, Adam, and then the female, Eve. So Genesis 1 says why God created humans and Genesis 2 focuses on how he created us.

[20 : 28] So let me make just one or two comments on Genesis 2, how God created us and then we're gonna focus on why he created us as humans. Genesis 2, 7, it says, the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being.

You see the picture, what God was doing. God doesn't have hands but it's as if God was getting his hands dirty. Literally, he's taking dust from the ground like a potter and he's crafting this form, this human form perfectly as he wanted to craft it and then he breathes life into this form of dust and this person becomes a living being, that male of Genesis 1.

And then God in verses 21 to 22, God, look at it, the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and while he was sleeping he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib that he had taken out of the man and he brought her to the man. Now that's something very similar. He takes the piece from man and he literally says he builds a woman.

He makes, he builds, he's this construction worker. He crafts her just as he wants her to be and brings her to the man and there's the first male and female.

[22 : 01] So that's how God created humans. We're just as he wants us to be. Now why? Verse 26, then God said let us make man or humanity, it's a general word for humans, let us make humanity in our image, in our likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

He created humans in his image according to his likeness. What does that mean? Well, what does it not mean?

Let me mention a few things that it probably does not mean. One, did you notice that it does not say, God does not say, I'm going to create a person and make part of this person in my image, like me.

That's what a lot of people think about and they try to figure out what part of us is in God's image. What part of us is like God? They say, well, God is not a body, God is a spirit, so obviously our bodies are not like God.

So what part of us is? Is it our intellect? Is it our will, our ability to make choices? Is it our sense of morality? What is it? Is it that we're relational beings and can relate in complex ways with others?

[23 : 34] And while all of those things are like God, that, I don't think, is what the text is saying because it focuses in on God creates the human in his image like him.

The human as a whole, the whole of us, the whole person, which involves physical and non-physical things about us. All of this in some way is made in God's image.

And one way to think about our bodies, for instance, can you, can you imagine what would happen if God were to create a mind like humans have?

So a mind that can contemplate and figure out the things that we have like computers and mobile phones that, you know, you can type something in here and it goes to outer space and somebody on the other side of the world in this little tiny box can get the exact message.

The minds that can think of things like that, can you imagine if that type of mind was put in the body of a fish? Could it do what its mind could think about?

[24 : 44] Our bodies have been crafted by God for the same purpose that the rest of us were. And in some way our bodies work, how we function works together with who we are intellectually, creatively, and everything.

Together to in some way image God. Be like God. So what does that mean? That's what it probably doesn't mean that some part of us is like God.

What does it mean? Think about a self-portrait and a piece of artwork. An artist takes this blank slate and paints an image, paints a picture of a person that is in his own image, in his own likeness. It's a self-portrait. Now, whenever somebody comes and sees that portrait, they have an idea of what the artist himself is actually like. It portrays not just the physical look, but the qualities about this artist.

Self-portrait is sort of a way to look at this. A better way, a more full way, is the idea that was prevalent in the ancient world at the time when Moses was writing Genesis.

[26 : 00] A practice that a lot of different pagan communities were doing. the king would create a statue in his own image, just like him, create a statue, and in those lands over there where the king is not physically present, he owns them, he rules over those places, but he's not physically there, he

would take this statue, this image of himself, and he would place that, different ones, in the lands where he's not there physically.

So that when the people of those lands would come and they would see the statue, or the image of the king, they would be reminded that they are under his dominion. They're being ruled by him, he's the one who's in charge.

But that's only one aspect of what they would be reminded of when they see his image. They'd be reminded of his rule over them, but they would also see something about his character.

That's why king, another reason kings would make a statue of himself, was to present something about himself, his power, usually his glory, so that when somebody saw this, they thought, alright, king's in charge of me, and also, wow, he must be pretty glorious, because that's an amazing image that he has made of himself.

Those two things, the statue, or the image of the king, declares the king's rulership over this area, and it depicts the king's characteristics, his glory especially.

[27 : 33] Now, that is the idea that Genesis 1 is presenting. Perhaps those, those pagan lands got it from the fact that God has created humans in this way. I don't know where they got their ideas from, but that's the idea of Genesis 1, of humans being created in God's image, and placed on earth to rule.

That's the image, that's the way that the New Testament talks about it as well at a number of points. except in Genesis 1, it's not a statue like the king's maid. It's a living, breathing person.

People, male and female. People who, who don't just, who don't just declare God's sovereignty by standing there, but statues of God who actually have mouths to, to really declare God's rule.

people. And it's not just a statue that depicts a bit about the king's characteristics. It's a living, breathing thing that can act and move and do God's characteristics.

This is a much richer idea than any of the pagan nations were ever contemplating. This is very unique. In fact, in those cultures, the reason that the gods created humans was just to serve the gods and bring them food and make them happy and give them pleasure.

[28 : 49] That was the purpose of humanity in all those surrounding, surrounding nations. The purpose of humanity here is to portray God and to rule as God rules.

And that's, that's the purpose that he says. He makes people in his image like him, puts them on the earth and says they are to rule, to govern this world.

That's incredible that this God, this creator, would create us to participate with him in ruling this world.

That's a tremendous, tremendous privilege that he's given us to help him like little vice regents taking care of his earth and others. So let me now summarize the purpose of humanity that I've just been trying to highlight from Genesis 1.

And after I summarize what we've said so far, I'm going to mention a few things about a problem. Our purpose as humans is to declare that God is the sovereign one.

[30 : 05] To declare it with what we do and what we speak that God is the one who's in charge.

He's the king. He's the one to be obeyed and listened to. His voice is to be heard and done. In fact, that king is to be respected and loved with all of our hearts, minds, and souls.

And we are to declare to people as his images on this earth, declare to them that God is the one who produces goodness, only goodness. But not just to declare his reign, but actually to depict his character, to do what he does, to rule as God rules.

So, mastering whatever situation you're in. Mastering it for God. So, what situation are you in at this moment? Gardening? Engineering?

Parenting? Perhaps animal care or teaching? Perhaps surgery or food product care and distribution? Whatever situation you're in.

Learning. Is that your situation? Whatever situation God has put you in on this earth, we are to master that and govern it as God does. So, let me move on to the problem.

[31 : 27] How good has humanity been at this? This is a purpose of every human to be God's images in this world. But how good have we been for the history of humanity?

Declaring God's dominion and actually ruling this earth and governing our situations like God does? Producing goodness and life only? How good have we been? But not just humanity as a whole, how good have you been at doing this?

Think about how you speak to your family or how you interact with other people or with animals. Think about what image people get of you when they're looking at your Facebook, when they're browsing through what they see.

Are you doing a good job of portraying God as He really is? Now, I'm not bringing these things up in some sort of legalistic way that it's just about appearance, that's all that counts, that's not it at all. What's at the heart of this is do you realize that you are portraying God because you're a human? That's what you do, that's what we do as humans. So do you realize that you are portraying something about God and do you want to portray Him correctly?

[32 : 56] Think about who He is, the power and goodness. Do you want to in whatever you do portray Him accurately? And that's part of the problem too, is that we are God's images, whether we want to be or not.

Every human that's around, I'm not speaking just with Christians, every human, by being human, is saying something about who God is. The matter is whether you're doing that in a twisted, lying, distorted way, or whether you're doing that in a truthful way.

So, do you portray that God is somebody who exploits others for their own self-preservation? Is that how you act and therefore how you're claiming that God is?

Are you one who belittles others so that you will be gained? Belittling them through gossip or through slander or whatever? Is that what you're saying God is like?

That's what people will get if you're doing that. But God decided to remedy this situation. How humans have, how His images have just made a botch of it.

[34 : 12] God decided to remedy it because He announced all along the way, I'm going to make a new creation. The problem is that one way to do that is just to wipe out the old creation that is twisted and distorted and is portraying Him in a lie.

That's one way to have a new creation. Wipe out all of His false images and start again with something truthful. Well, that would be completely justified.

He could do that and would be completely just. But that's not how He decided to begin a new creation. The way that He decided, this Creator who is sovereign and good, the way He decided to start a new creation is to send His Son to enter this old creation that is twisted and painful where death is what we produce instead of goodness and life.

So that His Son in that situation could be the obedient one that Adam failed to be. Obedient to the point of dying to take the twistedness and the pain and the sin of God's images who would trust Him taking that on Himself and being crushed for our faults.

And yet, the Creator, because of His Son's obedience, the Creator scooped down into death and raised up His Son. Is it any wonder that the New Testament presents the resurrected Jesus as the new Adam, the first person of this new creation, raised to life and perfected in glory.

[35 : 56] Jesus declares who God truly is. Jesus depicts God's characteristics as Jesus rules over the earth. He shares God's true glory, the glory of one who would die for us who don't deserve it.

Jesus is, well, as the New Testament says, Jesus is the image of God. You know what is tremendous? Is that God, the Creator, has decided to send His Spirit.

His Spirit that was there active in creation as the Spirit of God hovered over the waters and brought life about in creation in Genesis 1. He has sent that Spirit into our hearts if we trust His Son.

And the Spirit of God that can do all things is shaping us and changing us, untwisting, making us new so that we can accurately, properly, truly display who God really is to this world.

That's the grace of our God. He has not left us twisted and as lying images. He is making us from one degree of glory to the next truthful images of His sovereignty and His goodness.

[37 : 18] So, what is the purpose, then, of humanity at large and especially for those who have been bought by the blood of God's Son? what is the purpose of us?

Well, to glorify the Creator by enjoying His Son forever and becoming more like His Son every day. Our purpose is to enjoy God, the Creator, by glorifying His Son in our lives, in our families, and to the world at large.

That's our purpose. That's what it means to be human. And I hope it's toward that end that you will be praying. And now I'm going to pray for us towards that end.

So please bow with me. Our Father, You who created all things, by Your will they exist.

You who produce goodness in life, we praise You for changing us. But would You by Your Spirit change us more in every situation that we're in to portray You correctly?

[38 : 45] You are the goal of this creation. Please help us by Your Spirit. and we pray this because of Jesus. And we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Pray for luci■ston,■■■ good review. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Heping.