

Genesis 1

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Preacher: Iver Martin

[0 : 00] And I must confess that I've shied away from preaching about Genesis 1. You'll probably guess why.

It's because I don't want to get bogged down in the argument. And I always feel I have to wrestle with the argument between creationism and evolutionism.

And it gets you tied up in knots. And before you know it, you try to talk about a passage like this. And you end up having to become familiar with all the scientific notions and the arguments and the conflict that there is between one side and the other.

So in my ministry, I have to confess that I have not often spoken about Genesis 1. But I want to do so today. But in so doing so, I don't want to tackle these issues.

I'm not saying they're not important. I think they are. I remember many is an argument I had myself with fellow students way back in the 70s. And it was a regular feature of Christian student life in those days to argue between those who took a literal six-day creation approach or those who understood Genesis 1 in a different way.

[1 : 24] And these were good arguments. These were good times when we were able to... When iron sharpened iron and when we were able to learn from one another, as I hope that we did.

And that's the whole point of discussion. I do think... I don't think we should shy away from these. But today, I don't want to get bogged down in the creation-evolution debate.

I want us to read Genesis 1 from a much clearer perspective, I believe. Because I believe that we're missing something absolutely vital when we get bogged down in these arguments.

The theme of Genesis 1, I believe, is not whether a day means a 24-hour period or whether an evening and a morning involves the revolution of the earth in respect to the sun.

All of these questions are important. But the theme that runs all the way through Genesis 1 is one that I don't want us to miss.

[2 : 32] It is simply this. The revelation of God. The revelation of God. Sometimes I think that in our efforts to try and work out the minutiae scientifically of Genesis 1, we miss it.

We miss the most obvious theme, the most obvious message, the most obvious picture that Genesis 1 paints for us, which is this. The revelation, the disclosure of God.

Genesis 1 is about God. It's about the nature and the character of God. It is as if God is saying to us, I am introducing myself.

Let me introduce myself before we go any further in the Bible. Now, you could say that the whole Bible is the revelation of God.

And it is. But here is God at these very opening words, making himself known. And he does so by what he does.

[3 : 42] For many of us, when we ask the natural question, what is God like? We naturally want to know what he looks like. But that's an irrelevant question when it comes to God.

Because God doesn't look like anything. The Bible tells us he's invisible. We get to know what God is like by asking what God does.

And when we discover what God does, we get to know what he's like. And there's no better place as a starting point than Genesis 1 to discover enough about God to keep us thinking for the rest of the day.

And I hope that as we do this right now, that it will encourage you to go back to read Genesis 1, perhaps in a different light.

And for you to discover the glory, the majesty, the splendor, the power of God in what we read in this great opening chapter of the Bible.

[4 : 43] So, seven things about God that I want us to see in Genesis 1, very briefly. And this is not going to be long.

Seven things. First of all, God is creator. God is creator. Now, you might say, well, of course.

I mean, that's obvious. That's self-evident throughout the whole chapter. Of course he's creator. That's what the chapter is about. But stop for a moment and ask yourself, why did God have to create anything at all?

It's an interesting question, isn't it? It's not as if God was deficient in any way. He was complete and perfect in every way. He didn't need anything. There was no lacking in God.

Nothing lacking in God. And yet, he chose to create something outside of himself.

[5 : 48] And this was the first time in all of eternity that this ever happened. That God, who is complete in himself, chooses to create something outside of himself.

Now, if he's going to do that, I wonder what he's going to create. What I want to suggest to you is that what he does create is not only absolutely breathtaking, but it's also going to reflect his character.

I believe the whole of creation reflects the character and the majesty and the goodness of God. And when we don't see it that way, we're missing something vital.

God is creator. And the whole of Genesis 1 is the account, the unfolding account, of how he goes about this.

It's like a time-lapse photograph. You know how you get these photographs that if you get a new building that's going to be built from nothing, and you start off with this flat piece of land, and they put a camera in a strategic position, and the camera takes a photograph every day.

[7 : 03] And when it plays it back in fast motion, you can see the building start off with an empty space, and you see it building.

You see a year's worth of work unfolding between your very eyes, very clever. That's what you see in Genesis 1. And it is marvellous.

And sometimes I think that in our efforts to try and get behind the minutiae of it, that we fail to see the grandeur of what's happening here. That God is disclosing to us the process, the unfolding creativity, the genius, the supreme, perfect genius, by which he creates everything that we see and experience around us.

There is a grandeur to this chapter that I want us to rediscover. God is creator. Second thing.

God is word. You notice how he creates. He didn't need to say anything. He could have created silently.

[8 : 18] And yet he chooses to speak. The very first recorded activity of God is he speaks. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

And God said. What he did, he did audibly. I often wonder, what does that mean? Does that mean that the whole universe could hear the voice of God?

Does God have a voice without vocal cords, without a body? What does it mean? Well, it doesn't matter. Because these words are there so that we will hear them.

It doesn't matter the mechanism by which he speaks. The fact is, he wants us to hear what he's doing. He wants us to see what he's doing by hearing what he's doing.

And he wants everything to come to being by the word of his power. You see, notice as you read this chapter.

[9 : 21] As God speaks, it comes to pass. There's a particular power in his word.

He speaks the universe into being. Now, that's really important. Because of what I said before. Because the universe comes into being by the choice of God to bring it into being.

In other words, we are here because God wants us to be here. The sun, the moon, the stars, the galaxies, the universe, everything in them exists because God chose to bring them into being.

God said. And he said for our benefit. So that we would hear. And so that by hearing, we would know that the source of existence is God.

And that's the bottom line. The whole Bible, of course, is God speaking. And if you want to know, you want to continue to listen to God, then read the rest of the Bible.

[10 : 34] Where we discover the unfolding, not only of creation, but the unfolding of history. And what God did as a remedy to when things went wrong in the world and in the universe.

The whole Bible is what God wants us to know about our origin. Him. What happened to bring sin into the world.

And what God did to restore our relationship with him in Jesus Christ. So God is word. He is communication. He is clarity.

Third thing that I want to suggest that this explains to us about God is quite similar. God is light. So we've seen God is creator.

God is word. And God is light. What were the first recorded words of God as he began this creation process? Well, you know them, don't you?

[11 : 43] Let there be light. Again, my scientific brain wants to know where the source of this light was. After all, the sun doesn't get created until, was it day three?

So where's the light coming from? Some people say, well, of course, it was God himself that was the light. Ah, but if it's God himself who is the light, then why was there darkness beforehand?

Intriguing, isn't it? I love the Bible. I love the intrigue in the Bible. I love not knowing. I love the way that God says, you're not going to find out so much about me. You're not going to find out everything.

So don't think that you can research your way into discovering. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's thoughts above our thoughts. But I still love to ask the question.

And it's by asking these questions that we get to understand more what the Bible says. So we don't know what the light was. What we're supposed to do is we're to close our eyes and to picture this momentous occasion, this millisecond, this nanosecond in the universe, where beforehand there is utter darkness and there has been nothing except darkness.

[13 : 01] Can you imagine that? It's hard to imagine, isn't it? There's nothing but darkness. You can't see anything. And then a moment later, the whole of the universe is flooded with light.

Now that's a significant moment. Let there be light. And he says that because everything he creates is a reflection of himself.

God is light, we're told. And in him there is no darkness at all. And that light is not confined to the light that we see or the light by which we see.

That light is a motif that goes on to explain how God communicates. It means clarity. It means illumination.

Not just in what we see around us, but in what we understand. And in what God does in shining his light in our darkness.

[14 : 15] So we get to understand something of the nature of God in this creation process.

As you read through the Bible and as you discover what God went on to do to restore the world and to rescue the world from the invasion of sin, He uses, the apostle Paul uses the imagery of light once again to describe what happens in a person's heart when they come to discover the gospel.

And he says this, For God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So what that tells us is that there was a second moment when God said, let there be light. And that was a moment when God shone his light in my heart to illuminate my understanding and to draw me into a relationship with him.

And the same happened for you if you're a Christian today. God shone his light in our heart. Let's move on. Four. Number four. God is order.

[15 : 45] Do you notice how everything's differentiated in the creation process? Everything's put in its own place. God is the divine separator.

The divine differentiator. He could have told us so much more, couldn't he? He could have told us the plethora of information that we've gone on to discover, particularly in the last 200 years.

He didn't tell us that. But he tells us enough for us to know that everything is created in its own order. There's no chaos to this at all.

God separates the light from the darkness. He separates the land from the sky. He separates the land from the sea. He separates one species from another.

There are fish. There are birds. There are animals. There's livestock. There's animals that creep on the ground. Animals with legs. All kinds of you know what they are. He separates man from animals.

[16 : 58] And he separates male from female. And so on and so forth. And what this means is that it's given us the opportunity to discover more and more about the substance of creation.

That's what science is. Science is how men and women have used their knowledge to further their knowledge and to discover what matter is composed of.

Science is how men and women have used their knowledge to discover what matter is composed of humans. And that's reached the extent to which we know about protons and neutrons, electrons, atomic structure, molecular structure, central nervous system, the way our bodies work.

And it's gone on to help us to create medicines and technology by which we're able to have this service and so on and so forth. Science is possible because God is the God of order.

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[18 : 27] Science is possible because God is the God of order. And I have no doubt whatsoever that a vaccine will be discovered and it will be invented for COVID. Why do I believe that?

Because I believe in a God of order. And I believe that God has given man the capacity to be able to tap into that order in order to reach a solution to the current problem.

Number five. God is life. He's life. And that life. He creates life because he is life.

He's light. He's word. He's also life. By the way, these three words come together in John chapter one. In the beginning was the word. And the word was God.

And the word was with God. In him was life. And that life is the light of men. These three ideas are found in the person of Jesus Christ.

[19 : 28] God is by now. He has gone beyond the rocks and the mountains. And he's created a different order of creation. To live with a capacity to live and to grow and to develop and to reproduce.

And that's why we see the wonder of life forms around us. And with all their beauty and majesty and loveliness.

And right now I am watching out my window a blackbird eating berries. And there is something incredibly majestic about that.

We see it so often. We take it for granted. And we don't look at it in terms of here is a life. A living being going about his or her instinctive business.

Because God has created it that way. God is life. God is life.

[21 : 03] Now we'll go on to humans in a minute. Number six. God is good. Do you remember? As we read that.

Did you notice that at every stage of the process. God looks at everything that he creates. And he says it is good. He saw all that he had made. And it was very good.

He reaches the end of the creation process. And he looked at everything that he had made. And it was very good. But I want you to notice something that I mentioned last time I was in Aberdeen.

I want you to notice the satisfaction that God takes. When we read that God rested at the end of this process. What that means is that God took delight.

And what that points to is a God who is in himself perfectly and blissfully happy.

[22 : 00] Is that the first word that comes into your mind when you think about God? Well it should be.

God is in himself perfectly happy. And when we read that he saw everything that he had made and that it was good.

It means that he took pleasure in his creation. And it points to a God who is 100% content within himself.

And the reason, and by this we're going on to number seven in the last part, the last characteristic of God.

The reason he created man was a very specific one. So that he could share that happiness with a creature who could relate to him.

[23 : 12] The seventh characteristic of God in Genesis 1 is this. God is my originator. God is my originator.

He could have a very little power. There was no artist. This is a series of Wirth Lambsleast which84s showed us savez in ■emig.

I think he was only one of the good ones that geography. And I think that he could potentially start this moment. He could have been resistor and haveam. But no question. God, I think it's only one part of a woman. He could spend quick time to confidence each other■ glam setting that collaboration atCómo I get furthermore to discover that the human race is distinct.

It is unique. We are unique. We've got to separate us from the animals by giving us a capacity to relate to him and to be conscious not only of one another and the world around us, but to be conscious of him and to find our joy and our happiness in him and relating to him.

Did you notice that when we read Genesis 1, there was a pause. It came to a pause. After God had created all the animals, God paused. And there's this moment where God's done everything.

[25 : 05] He's now going to do something brand new. He's going to do something different. And he says, let us make man in our likeness, in our image.

Wow. Do you know what that means? This is breathtaking. It means that humankind were created to possess the likeness of God.

Just let that sink in. It means that we are unique. Uniquely created. Created differently. Created by a different form of words.

And if you go into chapter 2, you realize that we're created uniquely. God took a special interest in humankind.

And that's why I know where I came from. I know where my origin is. I know why humankind has been created.

[26 : 10] And as a member of the human race, I'm not here by random chance. The Bible goes on to tell me that God continued to place his interest, his concern about the human race.

Now, whilst at the beginning, God saw all that he had made and it was very good, things didn't continue that way.

We know that the history of the human race is not a pleasant one because there came a moment. We carry on reading. To Genesis 3, it came a moment where humankind took his own future into his own hands and decided to go his own way and to disregard what God wanted.

And that was the moment where all kinds of evil invaded the world. Because from then on, humankind was in rebellion against God and came under the condemnation of God.

And that is why we suffer what we suffer. Whether it's coronavirus or whether it's disease or war or conflict or hatred or jealousy or envy or covetousness.

[27 : 24] You name it. And that is why, as well as the world being a good place, it is also a bad place.

If I was to ask you today, is the world a good or a bad place? It's got to be both, isn't it? There's so much good in the world. And there's a recognition of what is good.

There's also a bad place. A bad place. And the Bible explains to us why that badness has come in and where it originates.

But here's the good news. God has continued with humankind. Despite the death that was introduced at the time when Adam and Eve sinned against God.

God has continued to show mercy. And he did so by going to the length of sending his own son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world. The son of God.

[28 : 29] The second person of the Trinity. Who became a man himself. And on the cross took our guilt upon himself.

And he suffered what we deserved as the righteous anger of God because of our departure from him. And because he suffered that anger, his goodness can become ours.

His righteousness can become ours. And God can create within us a new life. A new beginning. A new relationship.

In which we can rediscover what that fellowship with God was once forever and ever. Seven things that Genesis 1 teaches about the being and the character of God.

Seven things by which I hope that we will grow in our understanding. That we will develop in our own hearts and in our own minds.

[29 : 44] Go away and read it again. And then read the rest of the Bible. But more than that. Come to faith in Jesus. Because then you will not only know what God is like.

But you will know him for yourself. And that's the greatest gift of all. Because when we know him. We're able to face anything with that confidence that God is on the throne.

And that God will ultimately take us to be with himself. To glory. Where we will, like in the Garden of Eden, have perfect fellowship.

And blissful enjoyment of him. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven. We pray now that you will apply these words to our hearts.

We pray that we will discover God as never before. We pray that your process of creation, as it is made known to us in Genesis chapter 1, will encourage us to come close to you.

[30 : 51] Because you have invited us to come close to you in Jesus. And we pray that they will fill, this truth will fill our understanding and our hearts for the rest of the day.

And indeed for the rest of our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.