

3. The Goal of Creation (2007)

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[0 : 00] We began a couple of weeks ago in our study of Genesis in this first book of the Bible, this foundational book of the Bible. And in doing so, in studying it, we're trying to focus on the purpose, the real purpose of this book.

That is why it was first written by Moses for God's people, Israel, and what the message was for them. And if we do that, we can also understand what God wanted them to grasp and also why God has preserved it as a message for us today and what he wants us to grasp too.

Because the New Testament tells us, doesn't it, that all the Old Testament scriptures were written for us. Paul says in Romans 15, they're written for us so that through the endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

Notice that word that he uses, hope. In other words, this is not just a message about past history. It's a message about the future, to give us hope.

That's why when he's writing to Timothy, Paul also says that these are the writings which are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. And we've seen that above all, the creation count in Genesis chapter 1 is about the God of creation, the alone creator of all things.

[1 : 21] And it's written to lead us to bow in his presence, to his person. And to bow before him alone, no other. I am the Lord and there is no other.

That's the message of the Bible. But more than that, we saw last week that Genesis is also to draw our attention to the sheer glory of God's creation. We saw that the focus is, in the account, on the order, on its abundance, on its beauty, on its creativity, on its sheer diversity.

And you see, we miss completely the purpose of this chapter of the Bible if it doesn't lead us not only to bow to God's person, but also to rejoice in his praise. God himself, all the way through the account, rejoices in his work.

He keeps saying, it's good. It's good. And we're to join in the chorus. We also are to rejoice in God's goodness of his creation. But tonight I want us to focus on a third thing that also we must not miss if we're to understand the purpose of Genesis chapter 1, if we're to grasp the message that God has for us in this chapter.

And it's all about the goal of creation. This chapter is written so that God's people way back then under Moses and now, today, here, in the 21st century, so that God's people might hope in his purpose for the world.

[2 : 51] Remember Paul? All these are written that we might have hope. So I want tonight to think about God's goal in his creation. I remember last week we saw that God orders his creation gloriously.

The focus of it all is on man. God creates an environment for man. He creates space and time and sustenance for him.

An essential environment. Also, of course, he creates over and above what's essential. He creates a glorious environment of beauty and of wonder. But man and man's destiny, all the way through this account, is the focus of what God is telling us about.

God creates the world gloriously for man. But he does so in order that God might himself rejoice in man and be glorified in him.

It's clear from the creation story that that is God's goal. Listen carefully. It's only when man takes his place as the crowning glory of creation, as the image of God, only then is the goal of creation accomplished.

[4 : 07] Only then. And that's why it's only when we get to verse 31. Do you see there? It's only when we get there that God sees everything that he has made and it's more than just good.

Behold, says God, it is very good. Only then. Only then is the time and the space that God created on the first day of creation sanctified and blessed as the seventh day of rest, the Sabbath.

And only then does God enter his rest. And you see that the whole account of creation is structured in our Bibles to show the central importance of this rest that God enters into in the completion of his creation, the realm of his own blessing and holiness, the place of rejoicing in the goodness and the glory of all that he's created.

You see, the seventh day speaks of God's goal, of his ultimate purpose in the creation of all things. Henri Blochet, the French theologian in his excellent book *In the Beginning*, points out to us that there are two peaks in the narrative, mankind and the Sabbath.

He says this, The creation of mankind crowns the work, but the Sabbath is its supreme goal. And when you look at the text, that becomes very obvious, doesn't it?

[5 : 30] Obviously, the climax, it comes at the end of the whole account. Also, as I said in the reading, we noted that the first five days, well, they don't have the definite article, the, just first day, second day, but when you come to day six and seven, it's the sixth day and the seventh day.

Marks it out. And of course, only when we come to verse 26, do you see, only there does God announce in advance the special creation, let us make man in the unique place that mankind are to have.

Let us make them in our image and after our likeness. Now, you see, this phrase, in our image and after our likeness, is the key to everything here. Now, people have had all kinds of ideas about what constitutes the image of God in man, the *imago dei*, as people rather pompously call it.

I always get suspicious when people throw in Latin phrases into sermons and things, don't you? But people have had all sorts of ideas what this is about the image of God in man. Is it our intellect?

Is it our physical being? Is it a spiritual sense? Is it a moral sense? What is it? Well, of course, all of these things have some truth in them, theologically speaking, but if we look at Genesis 1 itself, the focus doesn't seem to be particularly on that.

[6 : 51] It seems to be somewhere else. The focus isn't so much on what man is, if you like, but it's on what man does. So in verse 26, immediately, we're on to the function of man, aren't we?

Man is to be made, let us make man, and let them have dominion. So, man is to be God's representative within God's creation.

He's to image God, he's to represent God in God's world. And he's to do so by reflecting God and what he is and what he does and how he does it. And to respond to God in a unique way.

It's different from all the other created beings. Now, that's not a totally foreign concept of what it means to be the image of God in the ancient world. It may very well be that this is another polemic, a deliberate disagreement with the views of the ancient world.

In the Egyptian theologies, for example, Pharaoh was often thought to be God's image. He represented God on earth, he reflected divinity, but it was only Pharaoh, nobody else.

[8 : 00] Well, no, says the Bible. Not just kings, not just Pharaoh, but every human being, and male and female also, by the way, are in the image of God. They're all bearing God's marks.

They all exercise God's rule. They all bear God's responsibility. So God makes his human beings as representatives on earth, in his image, or maybe as his image, and after his likeness.

But what does it mean for man to represent God in the created order? That's really the great question, isn't it?

It's a question people are always asking, but don't always find the answer. It's really the question, what does it mean to be human beings? Well, I think if we look at the text here of Genesis 1, we can see at least three things very, very clearly.

that man is to represent God by reflecting God first, in exerting rule for God. And second, in engaging in relationship with God.

[9 : 05] And thirdly, in enjoying rest like God. So three R's, if you like, of what it means to be human. If you prefer three D's, he can exercise dominion for God, he exists in dependence on God, and he enjoys a destiny with God.

Well, let's look at the first of those just now and we'll come back to the other two later. First of all, rule. Man is to reflect God by exerting rule for God. He has a responsibility over the whole realm of creation.

And human beings, therefore, are created to exercise dominion for God in the world. Now, right away, we've got to face up to a charge here. There are many in the Green Movement who see this very thing as the cause of all the environmental abuse that there's been in our world.

To them, it speaks of Christian arrogance towards nature and the idea that nature is ours to do with whatever we please and to exploit solely for our own whim.

So one writer says this, we must reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence but to serve man. Well, is that a Christian axiom?

[10 : 27] That everything's only to serve man? And does Genesis 1 therefore bear a huge burden of guilt for the rape of our planet? Well, I've no doubt that there have been and are plenty of people who have raped and do rape our planet.

Perhaps they even do so in the name of God. But let's look at what the Bible really says. Yes, it's true. I've said that everything in creation in Genesis 1 is ordered around man and for man.

But, it's for man as the image of God, as God's representative to rule not for himself and against God but for God and for God's glory.

So, it's preposterous to say that Genesis could ever give us a license for destroying the world. I mean, which of us if we were getting somebody to manage our whole estate or our business for example, which of us would choose somebody who would just go out and destroy it?

Well, of course we wouldn't. You would choose somebody who understands you and your values and who loves you and has respect for you and will do everything they can to act solely in your best interests.

[11 : 44] At least, I hope you will. You'd be nuts if you didn't. And so it is with the creation of man. God's call for man is to a responsible dominion. One that reflects in every way the creator's own pattern of rule over his world.

Look at the text in verse 26. You see, it says in our version let them have dominion or let them rule as the ESV says. There again in verse 28 let them have dominion. Now that's in verse 26 stating the general position, isn't it?

Look at it. Man is to rule over the whole realm of creation. Over the fish and the birds and the livestock and the creeping things all the living things and also over all the earth itself.

He's to rule. But then look at verse 28. You see how that dominion is elaborated a bit further. He's to show that dominion by both filling the earth and subduing the earth.

Now that's very significant, isn't it? If you were here last week I hope you realized that. Because again it speaks, doesn't it, of the way that man is to image God himself in God's rule over the world.

[12 : 58] So God showed his own rule, didn't he, in the very act of creation itself. Remember the two emphases. First of all, God subdued the darkness and the waters.

He brought order out of chaos. He brought the formless into something that was beautifully formed. And then God filled the earth that was empty.

He made it teem with life. God subdued and then filled. And so man is to show his rule in exactly the same way imaging God's rule.

So what does it mean for man to subdue the earth? Well it means to show the same care and ordering and creativity as God the creator. Abundance and beauty and creativity and diversity, that's the way we're to subdue the world.

That's a very antithesis, isn't it, of the rapacious spoiling of the world for mere greed and for gain. We're to subdue chaos and disorder and we're to bring order and beauty.

[14 : 03] We're to bring form, we're to bring everything that brings glory to God our creator. And fill the earth? Well surely in the command to humankind to procreate and to multiply there's an echo of the very creativity of God himself.

In fact, when we get on to Genesis chapter 5 we'll see that again we're told at the beginning of chapter 5 about God creating the heavens and the earth and then immediately we're told that Adam fathered a son after his image in his likeness.

In other words, he's going on creating like God filling the earth bringing into the world progeny who both reflect God and respond to God. Now we don't have time tonight to go into the implications of that in terms of marriage and child rearing and so on.

I'll point you to our recent series on that and the purpose of marriage and so on that we did just not long ago. You can get the CDs on the stall. But let's just note that according to God filling the earth with his images is essentially a good thing.

It's part of what it means to be human. I know that there are complex issues for us to think about today in terms of population growth and density and limited resources in the earth and so on but fundamentally we cannot see people and procreation as a problem in the world.

[15 : 32] It's intrinsic to our humanity. It's a blessing of God that we be fruitful that we multiply. That's why the tragedy of our abortion culture is so terrible isn't it?

It dehumanizes us. It dehumanizes our society. It's a regression to bestiality to a denial of the purpose for which we're made in the image of God to bring beauty to bring form to bring splendor to bring multitude to the earth.

We must hurry on but don't lose sight of this. We are made to represent God by exercising his pattern of rule on the earth.

Care and creativity and nurture for his world and in it to bring beauty out of ugliness to bring form and order out of chaos. That's what it means to be God's image.

So just think. Think about your attitude to your work and to your career and to your life. Does it reflect that pattern? Subduing things for the good and for the glory of God and society.

[16 : 40] Are you laboring in your work and in your life for these kind of goals? Well if you are be encouraged. You're ruling as God wants you to do. That's what he made you for. And what about your attitude to your own family?

Bearing fruit and developing the image of God in your own children and in others in our communal family in our life together. Is that what we're doing? Well Genesis 1 says we're made to reflect God in exercising his rule.

And we have responsibility to exercise dominion over life in every area of our life together and in our individual lives. Anything less than that is subhuman.

God made us to exercise a rule for him in this world in all these kinds of ways. Well Genesis 1 tells us that we are made for a rule to represent God by reflecting his rule in this created world.

But that's not all. he tells us also that we are made for relationship. That is man is to reflect God by engaging in relationship with God.

[17 : 57] We're not just to rule on earth but we're to respond to God in heaven. And human beings are created to live to exist always in dependence on God.

Now the careful wording of verse 26 in our image or as our image and after our likeness emphasizes both man's uniqueness amid all the creatures as reflecting God but also a distinction from God.

He reflects God, he corresponds to God but he is not God. And again that's rather against the Egyptians and the Babylonians and their idea of things where kings reflected God and effectively were gods.

but no. Psalm 8 puts it very clearly also doesn't it? God made man lower a little than the heavenly beings. Man is not God clearly.

And yet he also crowned mankind with glory and honour. He's not just like one of the other animals. Man is the one that God is mindful of. Man is the one whom God cares for says the psalmist.

[19 : 07] And that's because man is made for relationship, for communion with God. Now you see verse 28 it's obvious there isn't it?

God is speaking directly to human beings. He says to them be fruitful and multiply. Did you notice that? In verse 20 for example about the waters God does not speak to the waters.

He just says let them swarm with life. In verse 24 he just says let the earth be filled and so on. But no he speaks directly with human beings.

Because human beings are made to be with God. To have relationship with him. To respond to him. And as chapter 2 elaborates more and we'll see in due course to live in utter dependence upon God.

Now I think we are to see that this reality is reflected in the fact that we are told about man's creation as being a creation also in relationship with one another.

[20 : 12] So look at verse 27 In the image of God he created him male and female he created them. Now obviously the animals were created male and female also but no attention is drawn to that is it?

But here God's image is created and we're specifically told that they are created with one another. Male and female like one another and yet distinct from one another.

And that also seems to be something that reflects the very being of God himself. Not that God is male and female but that man is created to mirror God's own life in relationship with himself.

Now if you read the commentaries you'll see that the scholars are very reluctant to acknowledge any of this in verse 26 when God says in verse 26 let us make man in our image not let me make man in my image they don't want to admit too much of that.

But it needs some explanation doesn't it? It can't be a sort of royal we you know like the queen we are not amused that just doesn't exist in the Hebrew language. Many scholars even evangelical scholars take it to be God addressing the heavenly host the angels but I find that unconvincing there's nothing about angels or a heavenly host anywhere in the chapter it seems rather strange to suddenly presuppose that that's what's going on.

[21 : 43] Part of the reticence among many seems to be an assumption that the so-called Hebrew mind couldn't conceive of plurality in God certainly couldn't possibly perceive anything to do with Trinity.

but there are all kinds of problems with that assumption not least if you take the New Testament seriously because well Jesus himself tells us that Moses spoke of Christ of the Son of God and Jesus himself when he came he condemned his generation for not recognizing immediately his deity.

Victor Hamilton in his commentary on Genesis says this it's one thing to say that the author of Genesis was not schooled in the intricacies of Christian dogma theology it's another thing to say he was theologically too primitive or naive to handle such ideas as plurality within unity.

What we so often blithely dismiss as foreign to the thought of the Old Testament may in fact be nothing of the sort. Henri Blochet points out to us that the text itself has already clearly drawn us to the Spirit of God in the very first verse.

He says this God addresses himself but this he can do only because he has a Spirit who is both one with him and also distinct from him at the same time.

[23 : 09] Here are the first glimmerings of a Trinitarian revelation. They illumine all the more brightly the announcement of the creation of mankind.

And personally I can't disagree with that. And that's why I think the theologian Emil Bruner is right to point out a link between the us of verse 26 let us make man in our image and the them of verse 27 male and female he created them.

He says this we are created for life in relationship that mirrors or corresponds to God's own life in relationship. relationship. We are created for relationship with God and therefore we are also created in relationship with one another.

And our very nature as human beings is to reflect, to image or should do God's perfect relationships within the Trinity. And to reflect also the interdependence and the order of the life of God himself.

Now again there are all kinds of implications that can be drawn out there especially in relation to the sexual differentiation, the equality of male and female but also the distinctiveness, the complementarity of male and female.

[24 : 28] And again I would direct you to our recent series on marriage and relationships and also to Edward Lobb's series on the ministry of Christian women. But here in Genesis 1 just notice the broader point.

Not so much about the sexes. But God has made us for communion with himself and therefore he has created us in community with one another.

And only in community and relationships with one another can we be truly human. We're not talking about sexual relationships but human relationships, love relationships, belonging.

We know, don't we, that isolation dehumanizes people. That's why when you want to punish somebody you put them in solitary confinement. It's a terrible thing, isn't it? Dehumanizing. We know that emotional deprivation dehumanizes.

All these pictures of babies in orphanages where they get no relationship, nobody even talks to them and even these babies are physically stunted, they don't grow. Because we need relationship.

[25 : 36] We're made for community, for communion. And if neglect of even our human relationships dehumanizing, us, how much more does neglect of the relationship that we were made for dehumanize us?

The relationship with God himself. You see, we were created for relationships with one another to teach us that fundamental to the very heart of our being is the need to look beyond ourselves for our purpose in life.

And above all, to look beyond merely this world for our ultimate purpose in life. Human relationships themselves are prophecies, they're living prophecies to point us beyond ourselves, to point us to God.

And that's why broken relationships are such a cause of terrible pain for us. Isn't that right? That shouts to us loudly of the great broken relationship between us and God.

Genesis 3 tells us, doesn't it, that that's why God has cursed our human relationships. It's so that we will never forget the tragedy of the broken relationship, of our rebellion against God, of our rejection of the relationship that we were all made for.

[26 : 55] Again, we'll come to more of that later on in our studies, but before we go on, let's not miss two very important implications of this. First, it's quite straightforward, it's relationships that are at the centre of our humanity.

It's relationships that matter in our lives. And that means it's a tragedy, isn't it, when other things can intrude so much as to spoil them and to leave no time for them.

It's a real danger, isn't it, in our crazy world, our hectic, busy, 21st century world? But you need to ask yourself that question, and so do I. Is my job really worth so much that I'm missing out, or I'm spoiling, or maybe even losing altogether the relationships that are most important to my life?

The Bible's answer is very clear on that. It's no, it's not. Because that's part of what it means for you to be human. And as Christians, we also need to ask, don't we, am I really allowing other things to so get in the way of my relationships with God's family that I'm spoiling it?

My work, my leisure, my hobbies, whatever it might be. Well, again, the New Testament is absolutely clear, isn't it? Don't give up meeting together.

[28 : 13] Do it regularly and often. We need one another, encourage one another, daily, says the book of Hebrews. Relationships with God's family, above all, are the relationships that we were made for, not just for this world, but forever.

Don't let anything get in the way of those. That must be an implication, mustn't it? But secondly, human relationships are above all to teach us about and to draw us closer into a relationship with God, our Heavenly Father.

Therefore, no human relationship, not even a marriage tie, not even a family tie, is ultimate. No human relationship must be neglected, but no human relationship can be our God.

Each one is a gift of God, but it's given us to point beyond itself, to point us to God. See, above all, to be human is to reflect God himself by engaging in relationship with God.

So we are to have dominion, we are to rule for God. But we are also to do so always in dependence on God. Not without him. We were made for a relationship with God, our creator.

[29 : 27] It's the purpose of our creation. So we are made to rule, we are made to have relationship, but also, thirdly, we are made for rest.

Man is to reflect God by enjoying rest like God. We are not only to rule for God and respond to him in relationship, but we are also to rejoice like God in his rest forever.

human beings are created for a destiny with God. And this is where we get to the real heart of this message. The goal of everything for which God has created this world.

Because the creation of man on the sixth day and God entering his rest on the seventh day are intimately connected. The creation crowns the work, but the Sabbath is the supreme goal.

And even here in Genesis 1, we're getting an information that there's something more than just the created order. There's a destiny, there's a supreme goal that lies behind and beyond God's creation.

[30 : 39] And that's built into the whole account because it's set forth, isn't it, as a pattern for man's life, as the days of the week, the rhythm of work. But not only work, it's a pattern, isn't it, that always leads to the time and the place of blessing, the completeness and of rest, of Sabbath.

And that's to remind us that there's always something still in the future for man. See, God's work in creation is finished. And he enters his rest on the seventh day.

But man's work is not finished, is it? Man's work has just begun. Man must rule in relationship with his heavenly Father until he has done what God made him to do, subdue the whole universe, put everything under his feet, make everything complete for God's glory.

And only then, listen again, when man has at last taken his place as God's glorious image, filling the creation with the knowledge and the glory of God, only then will all things be accomplished, so that God may be all in all in heaven and earth, through the glory of his glorious image in man.

Only then is the goal of creation reached. Only then may man enter his rest and rejoice like God and with God and enjoy his satisfaction and his rest forever.

[32 : 11] So you see, if that is so, that means that Genesis 1 is not ancient history. It speaks of a future. It speaks of a future hope. It speaks of a goal. Now just think of Moses' first readers, the Israelites in the desert, traveling in hope to the promised land of God.

Think what it meant for them to hear that God created the whole world with a goal, that humanity would at last enter the place of glorious rest with God himself. What had God said to the Israelites through Moses?

I'm taking you up over the Jordan into the land of rest. Read Deuteronomy chapter 12. Later on when you go home, God promises there that in that place you will have rest from all your enemies round about, that in that place you will rejoice with God forever.

That's the goal of the Exodus, said Moses, that you will enjoy God's rest with him, that you will rejoice with God in his rest. But look, he's saying to them, that's the goal of God's whole creation.

That's why he made the world. And as surely as he laid out every single detail and every wonder of that, just as surely your future rest will come to pass.

[33 : 36] God will bring it to completion, to climax in the place of his rest. It's a message of hope for the Israelites under Moses. But isn't it an even greater message of hope for you and for me today?

Paul says, remember, all these things are written that we might have hope. That the great goal, that the purpose of all God's creation, of the whole cosmos, is that we should take his place as the crowning glory of that creation.

And that having gloriously subdued all things, we also should at last complete our work and enter God's rest and rejoice like God and with God forever.

And that's the gospel of Genesis. That's the purpose of all things. But I know what you're going to ask. How can that be? Because we also know what comes next in Genesis chapter 3.

We know about the great rebellion and man's exclusion by God from his place. Of course, that's where we need the whole of the rest of the Bible story, isn't it? But the rest of the Bible only confirms that that great goal is God's ultimate purpose.

[34 : 52] Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians chapter 1. He tells us that before even the foundation of the world, before Genesis 1, quote, God chose us in Christ that we should be holy and blameless before him according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time.

God's plan, his goal for creation was always that it should be fulfilled only in Jesus Christ. And yet it's true that this image of everything subject to man as God's perfect image is something we do not see yet in our world, do we?

But, if you were reading Hebrews 2 during the offering, you'll have read these words, but we do see Jesus who is now crowned with glory and honour, having tasted death for everyone.

He's now risen in glory to reign. And the whole New Testament tells us that Jesus coming is the beginning, the climax of, well, creation.

The recreation of the whole world through the redemption that's in Jesus Christ. Just as God was recreating his place of rest for the Israelites through their great redemption out of Egypt.

[36 : 11] That was just a shadow, a prophecy of something far, far greater. The ultimate goal for the whole universe in Christ, the climax of God's whole creation story.

And that's exactly how the New Testament describes the gospel, isn't it? The work of creation. Begins, you know it so very well, don't you, in John's gospel. Just repeating the words of Genesis.

In the beginning was the Word, Himself God. He was life and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. And in Jesus God says, let the light shine forever.

Do you remember Zachariah's song in Luke chapter 2 when he sings about the coming Messiah and says, the sun sunrise from on high has visited us. He gives light to those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death.

In Jesus Christ, the new creation has begun. And its goal, the goal of man in his true place, imaging the glory of God, well that has come.

[37 : 15] Read Colossians chapter 1. Christ is the image of the invisible God. He's the firstborn over all creation and he's the firstborn from the dead that in him everything may be preeminent.

You see, man at last has God's glorious image as his king. And the fullness of God, we're told, does dwell in him bodily that he has reconciled all things through the blood of his cross.

And just as God's word of power relentlessly went forth across the disorder of the darkness and brought beauty out of ashes and brought order out of chaos.

And made the whole creation fruitful and wonderful. So now, Paul tells us in Colossians 1, the gospel of Christ is even now being fruitful and growing throughout the whole world.

It's creation language. And God said, and it was so. And that's happening now. This is the new day of creation. Paul says, where anyone is in Christ, behold, new creation.

[38 : 31] And just as surely as God's ordained perfect work of creation, as a pace of beauty, came into being, so the gospel of Christ tells us that God shall at last declare the same goodness of his new creation.

Read Revelation chapter 21 and 22. It speaks of a new heavens and a new earth. A place where there's no more sea. No more darkness and chaos. Only land. Only the place of God's wonderful rest.

The place where God dwells with humankind. Where every tear will be wiped away. Where there'll be no more darkness of death. Where there'll be no more disorder of mourning and crying.

Where there'll be pain. No more. Because the former things have passed away. The place at last. Where God will at last say and man will say, behold, it is very, very good.

And a place where not only does God enter his rest forever. But where we also shall enter that rest with him.

[39 : 40] Revelation 21 verse 3 says, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man and they shall be his people. And that's why if you were reading Hebrews 4, you'll see that it says to us, there remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

And he urges us, strive to enter that rest. You see, that's the goal of all creation. That's where it's all been going since the very beginning. In fact, since before the beginning of the creation of the world.

And that's why Jesus Christ came. To make that rest ours. To assure it to be ours forever. To finish his creation.

What did he say? Come to me and I will give you rest. The rest that you were made for. From the very beginning of the world.

So you see right here in the very first chapter of the Bible in Genesis chapter 1 we have a gospel. We have a message of hope. It's not ancient history.

[40 : 44] Because Genesis 1 tells us of the goal of a creation that will only be complete at last when man as man takes his place as the crowning glory as God's perfect image over all things.

And God at last will announce behold, is very good. Come and enter the joy of the Father. Enter my eternal rest with me. Now what a message of hope that must have been, mustn't it?

For the beleaguered Israelites with all their struggles in their desert journey to have before them the goal of God's promised rest. And to be reassured weekly by the very Sabbath itself that the future lies beyond it all for them.

It's a message of hope for you and me too, isn't it? Can you sometimes doubt whether God really is in control? Whether he even cares?

Do you get discouraged sometimes like I do? Do you wonder really if it's really worth it with all these struggles in your Christian life? Well read the gospel of Genesis chapter 1.

[41 : 53] See the goal of creation. Renew your hope in God's great purpose. And look around at the trees and the flowers and the mountains and the seas and everything that God's created and the wonderful relationships of love that you have with other people.

And look up at the risen Christ in glory who reigns as the firstborn from the dead in glory and honor and realize that that is God's goal for you.

That's God's promise and his purpose for all his people. And as surely as he finished most wonderfully and beautifully his first creation and entered his rest on the seventh day so just as surely and just as certainly our only God and Savior Jesus Christ at the last will appear and usher in his new creation and bring you also and me into his rest forever.

And it's then and only then that the goal of creation will be fulfilled forever. Just listen as I close to these words that Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15 in the great resurrection and recreation chapter.

For as in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive but each in his own order Christ the firstfruits then at his coming those who belong to him then comes the goal when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet subdued all things the last enemy to be destroyed is death for God has put all things in subjection to him and when all things are subjected to him then the Son himself will be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him that God may be all and in all that's the goal of creation that is the purpose for which God made this world at last accomplished in his perfect image Jesus Christ the Genesis 1 is not ultimately about past history it's about future glory and it's written to lead us to hope in his glorious purpose and he to block in