

The God of Creation

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[0 : 0 0] But we're going to turn now this morning to our Bible readings and if you're a visitor here and you don't have a Bible with you, we have a pile of Bibles over to your right here at the back and also at the back of the room, so do please grab a Bible if that's helpful.

And we're looking at the very first book of the Bible, Genesis. And we're glad to have Willie back from his summer of writing. He's been writing a book on Genesis, so we're looking forward to our time together.

But please do turn to Genesis chapter 1. And the first page of your Bible. And we're looking at the first chapter here. And chapter 1 serves as something of a prologue to the rest of Genesis.

And there are 10 units in the book of Genesis. And you'll see in chapter 2, verse 4, it begins with these words. These are the generations. And 10 times you get that little phrase through the book of Genesis.

And it marks the beginning of each new unit. And so chapter 1 is really the introduction to the whole thing. And the different units begin in chapter 2, verse 4.

[1 : 0 5] So we're going to read the first chapter up to chapter 2, verse 3. So let's begin. Genesis 1, verse 1. In the beginning.

In the beginning. God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void.

And darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, let there be light.

And there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day.

And the darkness he called night. And there was evening. And there was morning. The first day. And God said, let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters.

[2 : 0 5] And let it separate the waters from the waters. And God made the expanse. And separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse.

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

And let the dry land appear. And it was so. And God called the dry land earth. And the waters that were gathered together he called seas.

And God saw that it was good. And God said, let the earth sprout vegetation. Plants yielding seed. And fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed. Each according to its kind on the earth.

And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation. Plants yielding seed according to their own kinds. And trees bearing fruit in which is their seed. Each according to its kind.

- [3 : 12] And God saw that it was good. And there was evening. And there was morning. The third day. And God said, let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens.
- To separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs of the seasons and for days and years. And let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens. To give light upon the earth.
- And it was so. And God made two great lights. The greater light to rule the day. And the lesser light to rule the night. And the stars.
- And God set them in the expanse of the heavens. To give light on the earth. To rule over the day and over the night. And to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening.
- And there was morning. The fourth day. And God said, let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures. And let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.
- [4 : 12] So God created the great sea creatures. And every living creature that moves. And every living creature that moves. With which the waters swarm. According to their kinds. And every winged bird according to its kind.
- And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them saying, be fruitful. And multiply. And fill the waters and the seas.
- And let birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening. And there was morning. The fifth day. And God said, let the earth bring forth living creatures.
- According to their kinds. Livestock and creeping things. And beasts of the earth. According to their kinds. And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth.
- According to their kinds. And the livestock according to their kinds. And everything that creeps on the ground. According to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said.
- [5 : 08] Let us make man. In our image. After our likeness. And let them have dominion. Over the fish. Of the sea.
- And over the birds. Of the heavens. And over the livestock. And over all the earth. And over every creeping thing. That creeps on the earth. So God created man. In his own image.
- In the image of God. He created him. Male and female. He created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them. Be fruitful.
- And multiply. And fill the earth. And subdue it. And have dominion. Over the fish. Of the sea. And over the birds. Of the heavens. And over every living thing. That moves on the earth.
- And God said. Behold. I've given you. Every plant. Yielding seed. That is on the face of the earth. And every tree. With seed. And its fruit. You shall have them. For food.
- [6 : 03] And to every beast. Of the earth. And to every bird. Of the heavens. To everything that creeps on the earth. Everything that has. The breath of life. I've given every green plant. For food. And it was so. And God saw. Everything that he had made. And behold. It was very good.
- And there was evening. And there was morning. The sixth day. Thus. The heavens. And the earth. Were finished. And all the host of them.
- And on the seventh day. God finished his work. That he had done. And he rested. On the seventh day. From all his work. That he had done. So God blessed. The seventh day.
- And made it holy. Because on it. God rested. From all his work. That he had done. In creation. Amen.

- [7 : 0 0] May God bless. His word to us. This morning. Well do turn with me. If you would. To the first book of the Bible. The book of Genesis.
- And really our focus this morning. Is on this very first verse. In the beginning. God. Created. The heavens. And the earth.
- As many of you know. I've been. Immersed. In writing. On the book of Genesis. All summer. And. One of the things that has struck me. Is just how. Foundational.
- These truths. In. Especially the early chapters. Of Genesis. Are. Because they teach us. Everything. About. The beginning. Of everything.
- And therefore the meaning. Of everything. So we're going to look at some of these early chapters. In what we call the prehistory. As. We run up between now and Christmas.
- [8 : 0 1] But before we. Get into more detail. In chapter one. As we'll do over the next couple of weeks. It's very important that we get clear. On certain things. We need to start by asking very basic questions.
- Why is this book here? What's it for? Why was it written by its. It's human author. Under the inspiration of God. And why has it been preserved by God.
- In the scripture for us today. We don't ask. These very basic things. The chances are we'll get off. On a completely wrong track. We may get very bogged down.
- Even confused. It's actually possible to become a real expert. On the details of Genesis. And actually miss completely. The entire message. Of the whole book.
- And many Christians. Over the years have done that. But that is not what God wants. Not at all. The New Testament tells us. Very plainly. That the purpose of all scripture. Is to make us wise.
- [9 : 0 0] For salvation. Through faith in Christ Jesus. And so. Right from the start. The primary focus. Here in Genesis. Is not. To expose.
- The secret mechanisms. Of creation. But rather. It is to reveal to us. The chief meaning. And that is God's plan.
- Of redemption. His gospel. So that's why I'm calling this first study. Not the creation of God. But the God of creation. Because Genesis as a whole.
- And Genesis 1 in particular. Is above all. A word of revelation. From God. About God. To lead us to God. So that we will know God. So I want to think.
- Today by way of introduction. About three things. The place of Genesis. Its purpose. Particularly in these early chapters. But above all. The person.
- [9 : 5 7] Of Genesis. And that is God. Himself. First. In the place of Genesis. If we're going to. To read scripture properly. And not abuse it. It's very important.
- When we come to any part of the Bible. To ask basic questions. Where is this text? How is it presented? By whom? And for whom? Was it written? And why?
- And what above all. Is the central message. It carries? Well where is Genesis? That's easy. It's at the beginning. Of the Bible. The Hebrew name.
- Of the book. Just comes from the very first word. Which is one word in Hebrew. It says. In the beginning. We get our name. Genesis. Through the Greek translation. And then the Latin translation.
- Liber. Genesis. The book. Of Genesis. The book of beginnings. Actually the New Testament. Begins. Exactly the same way in the Greek. In Matthew 1. Verse 1. The beginning. Of.
- [1 0 : 5 1] The gospel. Of Jesus. It talks about the genealogy. The beginning. The genesis. Of Jesus Christ. And Genesis. You see. Is the beginning. And the unfolding. Of three key things.

First of all. In chapter 1. The whole world. The cosmos. Then from chapters 2. To 11. The beginning. Of humanity. And our alienation. From God. Through sin. And then at chapter 12.

The beginning. And the unfolding. Of Israel. That is the people of God. God's new initiative. To save. The whole cosmos. So it really is. The beginning.

Of the gospel. Of the kingdom of God. Well how is Genesis written? What's its composition? What's its structure? Well you could say.

It falls broadly. Into two parts. The prehistory. In chapters 1 to 11. And then the patriarchal history. From chapter 12. To the end. The story of Abraham. Isaac. And Jacob.

[11 : 47] And so on. But in fact. As Paul pointed out. Actually. There are 11 parts. To Genesis. There's the prologue. That we read together. Down to chapter 2. Verse 3. And then there are 10 books.

Of beginnings. Or unfoldings. Each of them begins. With that same formula. Like you see there. At chapter 2. Verse 4. These are the generations. Or some versions.

This is the account of. First of all. The account of. The heavens and the earth. Next one begins. In chapter 5. These are the generations. Of Adam. Next one.

In chapter 6. Verse 9. These are the generations. Of Noah. And so on it goes. It's the generations. It's what this person. Or this thing. Brought into being.

And the first five generations. Take up chapters 2. To 11. That's a fifth of the book. But the second five generations. Take up the rest of the 39 chapters. Four fifths of the book.

[12 : 42] And that tells us. That the main focus. Is the beginning. Of God's. Covenant promises. That is his gospel. And his gospel people.

And that's really important. Well by whom was it written? Well the rest of the Old Testament. And the New Testament. And Jesus himself. Assume. That the full authority.

Of Moses. Lies behind. The first five books. Of the Bible. Of course. There were. Later emendations. And updates. And so on. Changes to place names. And things that happened. After Moses died.

But Moses. Is surely the chief. Author and authority. Now if you read Genesis. And other. Ancient stories. Of creation.

From Babylon. From Egypt. And so on. You'll find. That there are many similarities. In the style. And in the format. So some scholars. Liberal scholars.

[13 : 40] Will say. Well there. That just shows you. See. These are all just. Different versions. Of the same thing. They're all much the same. But that is not so. That's rather like saying. That because.

Two Oxford scientists. Richard Dawkins. And John Lennox. Both write. Using the same language. And they both write. About science and God. That they're just. Two versions. Of the same thing. Whereas in fact.

They're absolute opposites. Genesis. And Genesis. Is full. Of decisive. Differences. And rebuttals. Of all. The other. Ancient ideas.

About the world. Well that leads us. To the question. For whom is it written? Well Moses wrote it. For his people. For the Israelites. Following the Exodus.

To expose. Fully. False. Pagan views. Of the world. And to teach them. Clearly. The truth. About this world. Now Moses. Was.

[14 : 36] In a unique. Position. To be able to do that. And to use the concepts. Of the day. To do that. Remember Moses. Was educated. In the palace of Pharaoh. In Egypt. He knew all the Egyptian.

Contemporary beliefs. Of their philosophy. Their religion. Their science. And so on. He was educated. In a very. Very sophisticated culture. The culture that built. The pyramids. Which we still don't understand.

How they built. And that's why. He was someone. Able to write. Such a literary. Masterpiece. As we have. Before us. In Genesis. But what's it.

Really. All about. What's the. Chief message. Of Genesis. Well Genesis. Is not. Primarily. A book. About human beings.

Not even. About the great patriarchs. The heroes. Of the faith. Genesis. Is a book. All about. God. God. The real hero. Is the covenant.

[15 : 31] God. Of Israel. And it all comes. From what God. Generates. In chapter 1. Verse 1. In the beginning. God. That's why. It's so relevant. Today.

Because it's not a book. About people. Who are long dead. It's a book. About the living God. That's why. The New Testament. Quotes Genesis. In the present tense. As Moses says.

Says Paul. It's written for us. It's a word from God. And about God. And above all. It's about God's promise. To establish his kingdom.

His place. Of gracious. Sovereign rule. Through his grace. That overcomes. Sin. And evil. So Genesis. Is really the beginning.

Of the gospel. Of the kingdom of God. And its purpose. Is salvation. For sinful people. All the strands. Of theology.

[16 : 27] About the kingdom of God. You find in the New Testament. Gospel. They're right here. In the first book. Of the Bible. That's especially. Focused of course. Later on. In the. What you might call. The fulcrum of the book.

The beginning of chapter 12. Where God's. Call to Abraham. Comes. And he gives him. That fourfold. Covenant promise. Of a place. For fellowship. With God. The land of promise. Of a people for God.

I'll make of you. A great nation. He said to Abraham. Of God's presence. And his protection. To bless those who bless him. And to curse his enemies. A covenant relationship.

With God. And through all of that. Of course. God's marvelous plan. Of redemption. You will be a blessing. And through you. All the families of the earth. Will be blessed.

See. He's speaking. He's speaking about the worldwide. Kingdom of God. Through his. Chosen seed. Of promise. And everything else. That follows in Genesis. And in the whole Bible. Is the story.

[17 : 23] Of that promise. Being worked out. To its fulfillment. Begins here. But it reaches. Its fulfillment. At last. In the Lord. Jesus Christ. In whom God himself.

Comes as Emmanuel. The ever present one. Who through his death. And resurrection. Will gather a people. From every tribe. And language. And nation. To be in his place. His kingdom.

And under his. Perfect rule forever. So don't forget. That above all. God. Is the subject. Of this book. And God's kingdom. And the proclaiming of it.

Is the object of this book. It's a gospel book. It's a book. With a message. About the God of salvation. And about the way of salvation. If you miss that.

You miss absolutely. Everything. Of fundamental importance. So with that in mind. Let's turn to these. Early chapters of Genesis. The so-called prehistory.

[18 : 17] And let's ask. The most important question. Why? Why is it here? What's the purpose. Of Genesis 1 to 11? Well the so-called.

Prehistory. It deals with these vital questions. Of origins. Of purpose. Of identity. For every single human being. Who am I?

Where have I come from? Where am I going? When I die? You see these are live questions. Aren't they? They're vital questions. And we need these answers.

To make sense of the world. That we live in. We need a world view. Don't we? Everybody has one. Whether you know it or not. And it's either going to be true. And coherent.

Or it'll be false. And it'll be confused. Well here is a spirit inspired. Reconstruction of creation. And of the primeval world. That gives us exactly these answers.

[19 : 16] With all the authority. Of God himself. And that's why it's one of the most. Remarkable and influential pieces. Of literature. Of written. It crosses all the boundaries.

Doesn't it? Boundaries of language. Of culture. Of age. Of intelligence. And it gives us a message. That's absolutely crystal clear. To every person.

And it's this. This world that we live in. Is not. A chance happening. It is not meaningless. It is not just. Careering.

Into an unknown future. No. This world. Is a definite. Purposeful creation. Of a loving. And a gracious God. It's ordered.

It's beautiful. It's good. It's wonderful. But of course. Also. It's been spoiled. Hasn't it? It's been vitiated. By human sin.

[20 : 13] Now that immediately. Turns on its head. So much. Modern thinking. From our modern sociology. And psychology. It tells us that people.

Are just a product. Of their environment. If we improve the environment. People will become better. And better. Until they're absolutely perfect. Nonsense. Says the Bible. The truth is.

As Genesis tells us. That humans. Even in the perfect environment. Became rebels. It tells us. That our world. And our environment. Is as it is.

Because of us. And human sin. Not the other way around. In years past. Famously. The editor of the Times newspaper. Invited letters. On this question.

What is wrong with the world. And the writer. D. G.K. Chesterton. Famously wrote in. Dear sir. I am. Yours. G.K. Chesterton.

[21 : 06] That's the truth. That's the truth. You see. And Genesis. Speaks a powerful word. To our contemporary world. A very relevant message. That we need to hear.

And it's got a very powerful. Apologetic function. It makes sense. Of the world. That we see around us. And that's why it has a vital evangelistic function.

It needs to be heard. By our world. And that's why it's quite tragic. That actually often. In the church. The message of Genesis.

The real message. Has been lost. Among Christians. Because. It's been buried. Under all sorts of fruitless debates. About Genesis. And science. And so on. And evolution. And all of these things. And as a result.

We've often emasculated. The really confronting power. Of its real message. Its primary message. And we mustn't let that happen. That means we have to think clearly.

[22 : 02] About several things. We have to approach this text. In the right way. And that seems almost impossible. For some. Christians today. May very well be.

That you're here this morning. And your great question. Is going to be. Is he a creationist. Or is he for science? If that's your question. I need to say to you. That is to pose.

A false dichotomy. A fruitless dichotomy. A damaging one. I'm saying that. Not. For a moment. As a capitulation. To modern science.

Let me appeal. On that point. To John Calvin. You can hardly call him. Modern liberal. John Calvin. With the great reformer. Writing in the 16th century.

Clearly held. That all truth. Is God's truth. We live. In a universe. That speaks with one voice. And speaking about scientists. And others. John Calvin. Says this.

[22 : 56] We should let that. Admirable light of truth. Shining in them. Teach us. That the mind of man. Though fallen and perverted. From its wholeness. Is nevertheless. Clothed and ornamented.

With God's excellent gifts. If we regard the spirit of God. As the soul fountain of truth. We will neither reject the truth itself. Nor despise it.

Wherever. However. It shall appear. Unless. We wish to dishonor. The spirit of God. He says. Shall we say. That the philosophers. Were blind.

In their fine observations. And artful description. Of nature. Shall we say. They're insane. Who develop medicine. Devoting their labor. To our benefit. What shall we say.

Of the mathematical sciences. Shall we consider them. The ravings of madmen. No. He says. We marvel. At them. See. He's saying. To reject science.

[23 : 49] Truth. Is to reject God. No. He says. We're to admire science. Good science. That is. Real science. True science. Not science.

That's been corrupted. By all sorts of wrong presuppositions. That's turned science. Into ideology. That's scientism. The worship of science. That's quite a different thing. But you see.

We must come to Genesis. And we must ask. The right kind of questions. What kind of language is this? What kind of literature is it? Above all. What is its purpose? Now that's how John Calvin.

Approached it. In the 16th century. In his day. There were controversies. Because. The planet Saturn. Had just been discovered. And that put people. Into a bit of a tizz. But he is very clearly.

Saying that this writing. Is not. Anti-scientific. But it is. Non-scientific. The discussion. Was that people. We're getting into a pickle.

[24 : 46] Over whether the moon. Is really the second biggest light. Is verse. Is it verse 16 here says. Or is in fact. Because Saturn. Is bigger than the moon.

Does that mean. Genesis is wrong. Well Calvin says. That's just a stupid question. He says this. Moses wrote. In a popular style. Things which.

Without instruction. All ordinary persons. Endued with common sense. Are able to understand. Astronomers. He says. Are doing something. Quite different. Now that's not to be condemned.

He says. Astronomy. Is not only pleasant. But also very useful. To be known. Cannot be denied. That this art. Unfolds. The admirable wisdom. Of God. They say.

Moses is not. Condemning science. Because he writes. In the way he does. Non-scientifically. Rather. Calvin says. Because he was. Ordained a teacher. As well of the. Unlearned and rude.

[25 : 42] That is of ordinary people. As well as of the learned. Educated people. He could not. Otherwise. Fulfill his office. Than by descending. Into this.

Method. Of. Instruction. In other words. Moses is not engaged. In teaching science. He's engaged. In teaching. About God. And he's not teaching.

A bunch of experts. He's teaching. Everyone. And we have to recognize that. Because if we ask. The wrong kinds of questions. If we ask. Inappropriate questions.

Of the text. We'll just get confusion. And wrong answers. Is the Bible wrong. Because it says. The moon is the second light. To the sun. Well no.

Of course it's not. That's an inappropriate question. Genesis 1. Isn't talking about Saturn. And if we ask. These wrong questions. Instead of.

[26 : 36] Exalting God's word. We'll actually. Silence God's word. Now we don't have time. To deal with. At detail. But let me make. Two brief comments. On two issues. That worry people.

First. Genesis relation. To science. And then it's relation. To history. Is Genesis. A scientific. Account. Or not. That is to ask.

Is it primarily. About nature. Or not. Well of course. It says some things. About science. But science. Clearly. Is not its primary concern. Certainly.

Genesis. Is opposed. To scientific. Reductionism. To saying that. The world is all. Just through chance. That there's no reason. Involved. There's no creator. There's therefore. No purpose. There's therefore.

No order in the world. There's therefore. No morality. Of course. It's opposed to that. You can't have creation. And scientism. Because. Scientism. Is the worship. Of the denial.

[27 : 32] Of God. That's not science. That's ideology. That's false religion. That's the religion. Of people like. Richard Dawkins. Or. Yuval Noah Harari.

Yuval Noah Harari. His latest book. Homo Deus. Is saying. Man. Is becoming God. Because God. Doesn't exist. So. Genesis. Is very opposed.

To that. But it is. Very. Very. Different. And also. From a scientific. Type of account. The language. Is clearly. Non-scientific. John Calvin. Is right. Moses. Wrote. In a popular style.

Not just. By the way. That it's. Pre-scientific. It's not. That it's. Ignorant of science. As I've said. Moses. Was. Probably. Better educated. In science. Than most of us. In this room. All kinds.

Of science. Of Egypt. Some of which. Which still. Baffles. Modern day. Scientists. It's a great. Modern arrogance. Isn't it. In our. In our world. To dismiss. All ancient knowledge. As though it was useless.

[28 : 29] Just because we can't understand it. In fact. In the west. We tend to dismiss. All non-western knowledge. As if it's nonsense. The height of arrogance. But the non-scientific language.

Used here. Is deliberate. Think about it. How else. Could something be written. That could possibly. Speak. Right across the centuries. Right across the cultures. From the most advanced.

To the most primitive. Well. Genesis has done that. And it still does that. Today. But it's purpose. As far as understanding.

The world is concerned. It's purpose is not. To teach about. Secondary causes. The what's. And the how's. It's prime purpose. Is to teach about. The primary.

Ultimate cause. Why? It's not descriptive. In that sense. As sciences. Science. Observes.

[29 : 25] And describes. At least. That's what real science. Does a lot of. As I said. A lot of what is called science. It doesn't do that. It's not. Appealing to evidence. Just appeals to the infallible.

Expert. Who's beyond. Contradiction. And that's. Ideologically driven. You put your. Presuppositions. Into computer models. You'll get out. The answers. That your presuppositions.

Demand. And you call it. The science. And if anybody. Or anything. Conflicts with that. You silence them loudly. You cancel any dissent. And you say. The science says this.

Dogmatically. Got to obey that. And bow down to it. That's not science. But real science. Is about observing. It's about describing. It's about discovering. But Genesis.

Is not here. To do that. It's not here. To teach science. It is to teach. Salvation. So it's not descriptive. In that sense. It is just.

[30 : 20] It is prescriptive. It is dogmatic. It is properly dogmatic. Because it is revelatory. It is revealing. Unique truth. From God. To us.

And so Genesis says. This is. The purpose. Of everything. And this is why. You should think. In certain ways. And this is why. You must behave.

In certain ways. Because above all. The subject is not. This natural world. But it is. The transcendent God.

Who is above all things. And if God is real. Think about this. If God is not. Just a creation. Of the human mind. Then by definition. God is above and beyond.

All science. And all of this world. He is not subject. To the empirical validation. And the tests of scientists. If we are going to know about God.

[31 : 14] Who is above. All of these things. He must reveal himself to us. And that is what Genesis 1 and 2. Is all about. It is a revelation. About God.

Secondly then. What about Genesis and history? Is it. A historical account? It is not. Primarily about humanity. It is primarily about God. But.

It most definitely purports. To be. Recounting. Real history. Not just myth. Now of course. It is unlike. Any other.

Human history. It is unique. By its very nature. Obviously. Human beings. Are not there. Before their creation. To write about these things. They are none of the usual sources. And opinions. And so on.

But the historicity. Of the events. That it portrays. Is undoubted. And that is assumed. By the rest of the Bible. But we must not confuse.

[32 : 14] At the same time. Historical. With literalistic. Because there are many different ways. To teach history. Some are prosaic. And some are much less so.

That doesn't make them invalid. Here is an example. If you compare. Exodus chapter 14. And Exodus chapter 15. Each of those chapters. Are giving an account. Of the parting. Of the Red Sea. In Exodus 14.

We are told. That God parted. The Red Sea. By sending. A strong east wind. But in chapter 15. We are told. It was parted. By the blast. Of God's nostrils. Now which of those.

Is true? Well. It is a silly question. Isn't it? Because Moses says. Both of those things. Just as in Matthew. Chapter 1 and 2. You read about.

The birth of Jesus Christ. In very plain. Plain prose. But if you read. Revelation chapter 12. You will read about. Exactly the same events. But in cosmic. Visionary terms. Which of them is true? Well.

[33 : 10] The same of Christ's ascension. At the end of Matthew's gospel. Read Daniel chapter 7. Read Revelation chapters 4 and 5. You are reading about. The same thing. But in very different language. See.

There is no such thing. Anyway. As bare historical fact. All telling of history. Bears the interpretation. Of the historian. He is writing in a certain way.

To make certain points. And to make that thing plain. To his particular audience. Whether it is a popular one. Or a very technical one. And it is just so.

With the Bible writers. And in fact. One of the things they often do. Write throughout the Bible. Is place things. Out of chronological order. In order to draw attention.

To their main point. And to their meaning. And that is what we see here. In Genesis chapter 1 and 2. Any. Honest. Unbiased reading. I think. Of Genesis 1 and 2.

[34 : 03] Shows us. That the writer. Freely. Dischronologizes. That is. He varies the order. Because chronology. Is not his biggest concern. It is most obvious.

Because at the end of chapter 1. In Genesis. God makes. Mankind last of all. Whereas in Genesis chapter 2. He tells us about man's creation first. Before the animals.

Day 1 in chapter 1. Has an evening and a morning. And yet the sun and the moon. Which we are told. Are created. In order to define day and night. That doesn't happen until day 4. And in Genesis 1.

We have the creation. Narrated over six days. But in Genesis 2 verse 4. We are told. There is the day. One day. In which God makes everything. Now you see.

You can respond to these things. In two different ways. You can say. With some liberal scholars. Well. Obviously. It's just a hodgepodge. Of confused different accounts. All put together. They all conflict with one another. It just shows it's all myth.

[35 : 07] Well. That doesn't really credit the author. With very much intelligence. Does it? And no one can really take that view seriously. When you see. The artistry. And the consummate skill. And the language.

And the structure that's used. And most scholars now clearly recognize that. I recommend. Bruce Waltke's commentary. Which is superb. On the literary artistry of Genesis.

Or on the other hand. You can do what many Christians have often done. And said. Well. We simply have to try and harmonize all these things. In order to prove that the author was. Above all other things. Primarily concerned.

With the exact chronological order of creation. And people have. Generated all kinds of ingenious ways. Of postulating how you can do that. How you can have light.

Without the sun. For example. Or how you can fit the accounts together. To make it have one chronology. But. There are all sorts of problems. With every one of these approaches.

[36 : 03] And to my mind. At least most of these. Solutions are really very unconvincing. Seems to me. Much. Much. More natural. To assume. That the writer knew exactly what he was doing.

And that he saw no problem. And he. Would assume his readers would have no problem. And would understand. That it's his considerations. About the message of God. That dictate his order.

Not. Just chronology. Just as with so many other parts of the Bible. Just as in the Gospels. For example. Matthew, Mark and Luke. Have one chronology. John's is completely different.

But that's not because he's ignorant. It's because he's writing in a different way. With a different purpose. In Genesis 1. The creation of man in God's image.

Is emphasized. By being at the climax. The end of the whole story. That's so obvious. But in Genesis chapter 2. The focus is on the exercise.

[36 : 59] Of God's image. And man's central place. In creation is emphasized there. Because he comes first. It's all about. Human beings. In relation to God.

So yes. This is history. It's real. But it's not secular history. It's what Robert Godfrey. Of Westminster Seminary.

Calls covenant history. Let me quote from his very helpful little book. God's pattern for creation. He says this. We can't understand Genesis 1. Unless we see it covenantally.

It's not an encyclopedia. But it's a covenantal record. Always focused on God. And his relationship to his people. Indeed one way to see the whole book of Genesis.

Is as a historical introduction to God's covenant made with his people at Sinai. I think that's a very helpful comment. Because it reminds us of one of the things that we must always be aware of when we approach the Bible.

[38 : 00] And that is. The Bible was not written directly to us in the 21st century. Genesis wasn't. Neither was Matthew's gospel or Romans or Kings or anything else.

It's all written for us. But that's not the same thing at all. So to understand the message we have to understand and ask the questions. Who wrote it? Who did he write it to? Why?

What purpose? That's how we understand what it means for us today. Now we'll come back to some of these details next time. But I want to get on to the most important question of all before we finish today.

Because the purpose of this prehistory focuses above all on the person of Genesis. The most important question of all is who is this all about?

And the answer is it's about the Lord. The God of Israel. The one and only God. The God who made heaven and earth. And that's the most important thing of all.

[38 : 59] But often it's overlooked. Forgotten about. And all the controversy about science and chronology and the days and so on. But we mustn't overlook that apologetic thrust.

That polemic thrust. It is all about the uniqueness of the one true God. That is. It's a deliberate.

It's a provocative confrontation. With every other view of the world. And every other religion and philosophy. Both ancient and modern. To say Genesis is not scientific.

Or literalistic. Is not to try and avoid a clash with other views. It's not to try and make it more palatable to modern man. It's exactly the opposite in fact.

It's recognizing that when it was first written. It was a deliberate and devastatingly offensive assault. On every other thinking in the world around.

[39 : 57] Genesis gives a radically different explanation of the world. To every other belief and mythology of the ancient Near Eastern cultures. There might be similar forms.

Similar structures and language and so on in the stories. But Genesis is crucially different. In the content and in the emphasis. It's just a case of the writer using the contemporary medium that people would understand.

And the language that people would understand. To give a totally counter-cultural message. In other words it's preaching at its very best. And the purpose of it is to tell us.

Who God really is. And who we really are. And what the world is really for. So that we'll know how to think about God rightly. How to relate to God rightly. How to relate to one another in this world.

And without that revelation you see. We cannot know. Without that revelation our world is in a fog of confusion and chaos. It was then in the ancient world that Moses spoke to.

[40 : 59] But it is today. In the modern secular world and the pagan world that we live in. What are the erroneous views. The confused views of the world. That Genesis utterly sweeps aside.

Well first of all. It tells us this world is not defined by mere chance. That's what all the other ancient myths said. The Babylonian.

The Sumerian. And so on. Human beings. And the world was a result of a fallout. From mighty battles of the gods in the sky. And human beings were just a chance byproduct.

They came from the blood of slain warriors and so on. And therefore human beings are just there to be lackeys. To be slaves to the gods. To live in fear and servitude. Well it was hardly surprising.

Was it? That in those cultures life was very cheap. It was just there to be exploited by the most powerful. But actually there's very little difference between that view and today.

[41 : 57] Because so many people think. Not that the world came as a chance fallout from gods fighting in the skies. But from a chance fallout of impersonal forces banging together.

Atoms banging together and forming a primeval soup out of which the universe came. And that too ends up with a very cheapened view of human life. That's why that kind of view sees abortion.

And increasingly infanticide. And euthanasia as good and right. And to be exploited and to be used. That's Darwin's view. The survival of the fittest and the superior.

We don't often hear the full title of his book do we? The origin of the species by means of natural selection. Or the preservation of the favored races in the struggle for life.

The truth is that these ideas gave birth to the early eugenics movement. Which in turn gave birth to the birth control and to the abortionist movement. Especially in the United States.

[43 : 01] Which was pushed particularly to keep down the birth rate of the unfavored races. But no you see in total contrast.

To that idea that the world is just due to chance. Again and again and again. Genesis hammers home to us. That it is not. It is all by the command of a sovereign God.

And God said. And God said. And God said. God spoke creation into being. He willed it to be. He purposed it. All of life.

And that means this world has meaning. Life has meaning. It's here for a reason. It means your life has reason. It has meaning and purpose.

And it has value. Not just to you. Not just to others. But it has value to God. Whatever your color is. Whatever your culture is. Whatever your capabilities are. The disillusionment and despair and nihilism.

[44 : 03] Is such a feature of our secularized western world today. One no wonder. If the world is defined by mere chance. And it's quite logical to be nihilistic.

But it's not. By the word of the Lord. The heavens were made. Says the psalmist. By the breath of his mouth. All their hosts. He spoke.

And it came to be. And therefore it has meaning. It has purpose. And above all. It has hope. This world is not defined by mere chance.

Nor says Genesis. Is this world defined by sex. Creation is not. In itself. Intimately bind up. With sexual unions.

And bestial practices of the gods. That's what these pagan myths said. Which is why prostitution. And fertility rights. And so on. Were so central. To so much of that pagan worship.

[45 : 04] No. This world is not procreated. Through grotesque. Acts of gods and goddesses. It's created from nothing. By the true. And living.

And loving God. And sex is a gift of God. Yes. For human beings. It's to be used rightfully. And joyfully. But not idolatrously. Sex is not our identity. There's nothing divine.

About sex. It's not to be worshipped. Not to be thought of as spiritual. That. Is pagan idolatry. That's why biblical religion. Was so against all of that. But this world is still defined by sex.

Isn't it? For so many people today. Sex is worshipped. In our society. And in many societies. It's spiritualized. Isn't it? Many eastern religions. Tantric sex.

That leads you to a higher spiritual plane. It's amazing how secular westerners. Become so religious. But it involves sex. And in the west today. Sex and gender.

[46 : 02] Is exalted so highly. Isn't it? To be our very identity. But what a lot of sadness. In our world. Is caused by this worship of sex. The pornography industry.

With its vast profits. And perversions. Like a prostitution. Sex slavery. Pedophilia. All of these things. Think of the emerging tragedies.

Of the story of the Tavistock Clinic. And others like it. Whether we're in ancient Babylon. Or Egypt. Or Canaan. Or in the 21st century world.

So many people think. That life. And identity. Is defined by sex. There's so much obsession today. With sexual practices. Sexual preference.

Sexual identity. We think that's progress. But in fact. It is a descent. Into the kind of primitive. Paganism. Of the cultures. That Genesis tackled.

[46 : 58] Head on. And says no. This is not what life is about. This is not what being human being. Being a human being means. The world is not defined.

By mere chance. It's not defined by sex. And nor says Genesis. Is the world just defined by luck. Human misery and estrangement.

And so on. Is not just misfortune. Due to bad luck. Or bad magic. Or curses. That need to be alleviated. By charms. And shamans. And offerings to the deities.

And so on. No. The world is as it is. Because of sin and rebellion. Against the moral order. And against God himself. But you see.

There are plenty of people. There are all over the world today. Who live in bondage. To superstitions. Of one kind or another. Think of the animism. Of ancient. Well modern.

[47 : 51] Even. East Asian cultures. People who live in. In fear and dread. Of bad luck. And of curses. Of ancestor disfavor. And so on. Think of many African cultures.

Where cursings. And spells. And so on. Put people in fear. And living in bondage. To witch doctors. And it's not that different. In our own secular culture.

So many people. Live in slavery. To horoscopes. To lucky charms. To all kinds of superstitious rituals. See.

All of these. Your well-being. Your future. Your fortune. Depend nothing. On your behavior. But all. To do with. With luck.

And with fortune. Genesis says no. It's not bad luck. That's the problem. It's sin. But you see.

[48 : 47] That also means. That the ways of true. Religion. Are not a mystery. They're not mumbo-jumbo. It's clear. It's unequivocal. Because God has revealed the way.

And the way. Is a way of response. And obedience to him. The one true God. That is the way of life. See. That is the real. That's the central message.

Of the creation account. The world's not. Defined by mere sensuality. Not by superstition. Not by secularism. Or mere scientism. But it is defined.

By the sovereign God. Who has created all things. Including us. And for. A glorious purpose. And there's so many details. In the text itself.

We'll come to next time. That show us. That it's a broadside. Against all other religions. And spiritualities. That's why. The sun and the moon. Are just called. The big light. And the little light. Because they're not gods.

[49 : 41] Like they were. And all these other ones. In pagan religions. Many animals. Many natural forces. Had dark powers. Of magic. And so on. But no. It's with a word. That God banishes.

The darkness. And the deep. These powers. The great sea creatures. Mentioned in verse 21. Are interesting. Because. In the ancient world. These great creatures. Were thought to be monsters.

The terrible forces of chaos. That threatened even the gods. They were scared of the great sea creatures. But no. God just. Created them. Himself. In fact. The word that is used there.

In verse 21. Is used. Only ever of God himself. It's used three times. In Genesis 1. God created everything. At the beginning. God created humanity. At the end. And here. God created even.

The great sea creatures. Even the scary monsters. This is the main point. Of the whole of this. Creation account.

[50 : 37] One of the very best. Comments. I've ever read. Is from the Jewish. Novelist. The late Herman Woke. From a book that he wrote. About his faith. And in a section called.

The real point of Genesis. He says this. The first chapter of Genesis. Cut through. The murk. Of ancient mythology. With a shaft of light. Light that the whole world.

Lives by now. So that we can scarcely. Picture its effects. When it first shone forth. The universe. Was proclaimed. A natural order. Created and unfolded. By one force.

There were no man like gods. Nor were the animals gods. Nor were the gods animals. There was no sun god. Or moon god. Or love god. Or sea god. Or war god. The world and mankind.

Were not the product. Of titanic incest. And sodomy. Among the monsters. In the skies. Sun. Moon. Wind. Seas. Mountains. Stars. Stones. Trees. Plants. Beasts. Were all part of nature.

[51 : 33] Without any magic of their own. Mumbo jumbo. Was a mistake. The gods and priests. Which demanded burnt children. Or hearts cut out from living men.

Or ghastly obscenities. Or endless draining gifts. Were useless. Silly. Doomed. Libels on the universe. The childhood nightmares of mankind. Were over. It was day.

The Genesis account of creation. Cut the cancer of idolatry. Out of human discourse. It took a long time to prevail. But at last. Even the charming Greek and Roman gods.

Withered under the stroke. Genesis. Is the dividing line. Between contemporary intelligence. And primitive muddle. In the realms. Of the first and last things.

And as such. I do not see how it will ever be. Superseded. See. If you missed that. You missed everything important. About this book.

[52 : 28] This book tackles head on. Every other view. Of the world. Not just. Modern. Atheistic determinism. But every other false religion. And superstition. And confusion.

That's in us. Around us. In today's world. Into the darkness. Of paganism. Whether it's religious. Or irreligious. With all the myths. Whether they're scientific.

Or whether they're superstitious. Genesis proclaims loudly. Let there be light. It proclaims the truth. Of the one. And only God.

The God of creation. And it tells us. We must bow down. Before him. And that's why. You see. It's a message of urgency. And a message of power. For us today.

For those who know this God. And for those who don't know him yet. For believers. It's a word of wonderful comfort. This is our God. He made all things. That's why the psalmist.

[53 : 21] So often cries out. With that word of comfort. Our help. Is in the name of the Lord. The maker. Of heaven and earth. What in this world. Can be outside his control. Nothing.

What a great comfort. That is to us. But it's also a real challenge. Isn't it? Because this God. Is the only God. God. He'll bring.

No rivals. I am the Lord. There is no other. Besides me. There is no God. So he will stand for no rivalry. From other pagan gods. Other false religions.

But also. He'll stand no rivalry. In our human hearts. Woe to him. Who strives. With him.

Who formed him. Says Isaiah. See friends. If Genesis 1. Tells us anything at all. It tells us this. With great clarity. I am the Lord.

[54 : 15] Your God. I created. All things. And I'm your redeemer. And you must have no other gods. Before me.

This is a chapter that calls us to bow down and worship the one true God. The God who is now made fully and truly and universally known to the whole world. In the person of God the Son. God incarnate.

In Jesus Christ. Because as the Apostle Paul says. By him. Jesus. All things were created in heaven and on earth.

Visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authority. All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things.

And in him. All things hold together. That is the great message of this first chapter of scripture. And so it poses the question.

[55 : 15] Have you done that? Have you bowed the knee to the one true creator of heaven and earth? In the person of Jesus Christ his Son. Have you done that? Are you still doing that?

With all your heart and your soul. And your mind and your strength. Whatever your view. Of the details of Genesis chapter 1. Don't miss that. Don't miss that real message.

Which is the message to all of us today. From him. From the God of creation. Well let's pray. Let all the earth fear the Lord.

Let all. That is in the world. Stand in awe of him. Because he spoke. And it came to be. He commanded. And it stood firm.

We thank you Lord. That you are God. And you are the maker. And the ruler of all things. And so we need fear no other.

[56 : 16] And how we bless you. That you came right into. The world that you've made. So that we might truly know you. In the person of your Son. So that we might find in him. And through him.

The salvation you have promised. Life everlasting. In your presence. So help us Lord. We pray to love you. To serve you. Indeed to rejoice in you.

All our days. That we might live to the praise. Of his glorious grace. And we ask it in his name. The name of Jesus.

Amen.