

(Genesis) 1 - the Creation of the World

by S. Lewis Johnson

The sermon explores the importance of Genesis as the foundation of the Bible, the creation of the world, and the significance of the first verse of Genesis.

Duration: 50:07

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2, Psalm 102:25-27, John 1:1-5

Topics: "Creation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the theory of a gap or catastrophe in the creation account in Genesis. They argue against this theory and suggest that Genesis should be read as a straightforward account of creation in six days. The speaker supports their argument by referencing Exodus 20:9-11, where Moses states that God created the heavens and the earth in six days. They also mention the importance of the first verse in Genesis, which speaks of God's creation. The speaker acknowledges that there may be aspects of the Bible that are not fully understood, but emphasizes the simplicity and significance of the creation account in Genesis.

Transcript

The scripture reading for today as we begin our study in the Book of Genesis is Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 and verse 2, and then I want to read two other brief passages from the remainder of the Bible. So if you have your Bibles with you, I hope you will turn with me to Genesis 1, 1 and 2, and I am reading from the New American Standard Bible. We read in verse 1, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

Now I would like you to turn with me to the 102nd Psalm, the 102nd Psalm, and in this Psalm, verses 25 through 27, we have a further word concerning the creation of the heavens and the earth. Psalm 102 and verse 25 through verse 27, Of old thou didst found the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands, even they will perish, but thou dost endure. And all of them will wear out like a garment, like clothing, thou wilt change them, and they will be changed, but thou art the same, and thy years will not come to an end.

For the final passage, will you turn with me to the Gospel of John, chapter 1, and let me read these first five verses, verses 1 through 5, of the prologue to that Gospel. John chapter 1, verse 1 through 5. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things came into being through him, and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being. In him was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

The subject for this morning in the exposition of the book of Genesis is the creation of the world. The question of origins, who we are, from where we have come, for what we are intended, has intrigued modern man. Philosophers discuss the question.

Scientists discuss the question. Theologians are certainly interested in it. It's rather surprising in one way that we are thinking about origins, for if we are discussing other subjects, we normally do not think of origins.

For example, if we are studying nature, we do not study origins, but we rather find the finest flowering of nature that we can and study that. If we are studying technology, we do not go back and examine the artifacts of an Indian cave, nor do we, as a rule, travel to some of the great museums of the world and look upon and meditate upon the things that we see there. But rather, if we are studying technology, we go to the greatest of our institutions of learning, where scientific things are discussed in their most technical ways.

We study the electronic brain, we study DNA, we study microtechnology, or the miracle chips, and such things. With man, however, it's different. We look for the original design.

And when we look at man, we do not look at him as a person who is about to solve all of the problems of society. I think it was one of our leading students of the book of Genesis who has commented upon the fact that when we study man, we do not study him as conquering social misery and moving toward the welfare state, where his medical science is adding decades to human life, where his chemistry is extracting food for millions from the earth, and automation is about to provide us with two Sabbath days in a week, and thus surpass the paltry beginning of creation in which God could spare us only one day off. But rather, we go back to origins.

Now, failure to go back to origins is one of the causes of man's ignorance of himself. The ancient imperative at Delphi, know thyself as a mocking, shattering, unattained mirage. The facts are, it seems that man knows something about almost everything, but the knowledge of himself has not only escaped him, but seems to be farther from him than ever before in our day.

That's why Genesis is so important. Someone has called Genesis the stately portal to the superb structure of Holy Scripture. Those were Arthur T. Pearson's words.

It's the seed plot of the Bible. It's the place in which we have unfolded the beginning of creation, the beginning of man, the beginning of life, the beginning of sin, the beginning of redemption, the beginning of the nation Israel, which is really the clue to most of the Bible, the beginning of the plan of the ages, and it covers it in a most unique way. An outstanding present-day Old Testament scholar has said that no work known to us from the ancient Near East is remotely comparable to the book of Genesis in its scope, much less in other methods with which Genesis deals.

Now, I think it would be wise for me to state my presuppositions as I begin a study like this. I believe it's always good to state your presuppositions. I think it's good to think about presuppositions.

I think that everybody ought to be a presuppositional thinker. He ought to analyze everything that he sees or hears from the standpoint of its presuppositions. It will enable him to handle that thing much better.

We start out with the facts of divine revelation. It's easy to ask unanswerable questions about the book of Genesis, incidentally. I have a few myself that I cannot answer, and I occasionally ponder them.

Some of them, through the years, I thought were unanswerable, and I think I've found an answer to them. But some keep recurring and some more come. So it's easy to ask unanswerable questions about Genesis, which does not give us all of the vastness of the knowledge about original things that we would like to have.

But nevertheless, I start with the fact of divine revelation. That is my presupposition. And so I want to acknowledge it.

And I would like for you to think about your own presuppositions if you have a different presupposition. Do you have any presuppositions? Well, of course you do. Do you think that you think neutrally about things? No one ever thinks neutrally about anything.

We always think out of our own experience and out of our own knowledge. And often our presuppositions are unwitting presuppositions. So I want to put this one out on the table before you.

The Bible is the revelation of God. Now also I'd like to say that I assume the precedence of revelation over sound. Now I want you to understand what I'm saying.

I'm not saying that I assume the precedence of my interpretation of the divine revelation over sound. My interpretation is not the same thing as the revelation of God. I make mistakes in the interpretation of the word of God.

I hope I don't make too many. I try not to make too many. But I'm old enough to know that I have made a good many in years past, and probably will make some in the future.

But when it comes down to the statements of divine revelation as over against sound, I stand on the side of the precedence of revelation over sound. It seems to me that a suggestion by Derek Kittner is very helpful in understanding the relationship between exegesis, or interpretation of scripture, and sound. If you want to look at man, you may look at man from different standpoints.

You may look at man as an artist looks at it, and draw a beautiful portrait of a man. That's the artist's conception of man. And it is a contribution to the ultimate reality that one may be studying.

But an anatomist may draw a diagram of man too. And his diagram will be quite different from the portrait that an artist might draw. Both of them, however, may contribute to the ultimate reality, though they are quite different.

Science looks at the revelation of God from one viewpoint, and exegesis looks at it at another. Ultimately, science and the word of God, true science and the word of God, agree in the truth of God. But of course, we have not yet come to a perfect understanding of the divine revelation, nor have the scientists come to a perfect understanding of the reality that they are investigating.

And so until that time comes, we shall have differences of opinion. But I assume the precedence of divine revelation over science. And finally, I believe that the book of Genesis is history, and not myth.

I believe that the book of the Old Testament affirms that, in the statements of the book of Exodus, one of which, to which we shall refer later on, one of these statements says that these six verses are historical, and other passages of scripture affirm the historicity of the other sections of the early chapters of the book of Genesis. So I regard Genesis as history, and not as myth. I am sure that if you are as I am, you have probably often wondered, how is it possible for Moses to have come to an understanding of the things that make up Genesis chapter one? How did he come to understand what God did when he was not there? Perhaps it would help us to think about this in the light of prophecy.

One might also ask, how is it possible for a prophet of the Old Testament to prophesy things that lay in the distant future for him? Well we know it is by the gift of prophecy that he was able to look into the future and prophesy concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. And the New Testament prophets, such as the Apostle John, who has looked into the future and has given us a panorama of the last days. John was able, by virtue of divine enablement through prophetic vision, to see the things that are going to come to pass.

Well it is my opinion that this is likely that which happened to Moses. And if Moses is the author of this particular section, the original author, or if there were some prophet that preceded him, the scriptures don't say that perfectly or absolutely clearly. Let's just say Moses wrote these books.

It's my opinion that he did. It seems to me very very easy to understand what happened if we imagine that Moses, by virtue of prophetic vision, and he was a prophet, but by virtue of prophetic vision was able to have looked into the past. And there came before his eyes that sublime panorama of the original creation of the space, time, mass, universe that we have.

Then there was the evolution of light. He saw the uplifting of the atmosphere, the parting of the waters, the placing of the sun and the moon in the skies and the stars. He saw the filling of the land and the sea and the sky with life, while at the same time he listened, no doubt with awestruck ears, to the voice of Elohim as this beautiful panorama of pictures came before his eyes, the words of Genesis chapter 1 and chapter 2. Something like this, it seems, helps us to explain what happened.

And it is likely, it seems to me, that it was something like that. But then we must remember that we do not fully understand everything in the Bible and the Bible does not tell us exactly how Moses attained this information. We turn now to the first verse of the book of Genesis and we read in the very first verse, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

This verse clearly speaks of the creation of God. It has been said by some that this is the most important verse in the Bible. Well we know it is an important verse.

If Genesis may be divided into two parts, the first eleven chapters giving us a general history of the early world and the remaining chapters twelve through fifty giving us the story of the seed of Abraham, with which the whole of the Bible is primarily concerned, then it is clear that these eleven chapters of the opening of the book of Genesis form a kind of foundation for the whole of the Bible. Certainly of the book of Genesis and if Genesis is the foundation of the Bible, the foundation of the Bible. And when we look at these eleven chapters of the book of Genesis, it is certainly true that the first chapter is the foundation of the eleven.

And if the first chapter is the foundation of the eleven, which in turn is the foundation of Genesis, which in turn is the foundation of the Bible, the first verse is surely the foundation of the first chapter. And if that's true, it's the foundation verse of the Bible. And if it's the foundation verse of the Bible, it certainly is one of

the most important in all of the word of God.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. It's so simple that I hesitate to even mention some of the problems that have arisen among scholars over the translation of these opening verses. Verse one, verse two, and verse three.

And I'm going to just ask you, if you will, to read the Believer's Bible Bulletin, in which I put a few more details than I will say right now. On the surface I say this is one of the simplest texts in the Bible, but its translation has been disputed for centuries, really. For example, in the New English Bible we read, in the beginning of creation, when God made the heaven and the earth, the earth was without form and void.

The New Jewish Version reads, when God began to create the heaven and the earth, dash, the heaven being unformed and void. These are two different interpretations of this opening verse. You can see particularly in this second rendering, the opening verse of Genesis is not an independent clause, but a dependent clause.

When God began to create the heaven and the earth. Well we don't have time, and of course if you don't understand Hebrew, and probably the majority of you don't understand Hebrew, then it would be useless to discuss this in any detail, and only confusing to you at this point. Let me just say this, the simple style of the opening chapter of the book of Genesis would lead any reader, even of the English text, to suspect a rather complicated sentence at the beginning of the section.

So that if you will use your good common sense, you would immediately have a question about a complicated rendering of the first few verses, when everything else is rather simple. Incidentally I've always felt you didn't really have to know Greek and Hebrew to be a good Bible student. In fact, if you will use the intelligence God has given you and study under the direction of the Holy Spirit, don't tell seminary students this, but you will probably know more about the scriptures than they, if you really follow through.

Because sometimes the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew can be a handicap in the understanding of the word, because you're always looking at the trees and never see the forest. The simple style should give you a clue that probably this opening verse is simple too. The ancient versions, the translations of the book of Genesis in Hebrew into other languages, also support this rendering.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, showing us that the ancient interpreters agreed with this simple style. Furthermore, the punctuation, the traditional punctuation of the first verse of the book of Genesis by the Masoretes also supports this simple rendering, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The accentuation is disjunctive after in the beginning, and consequently the verse most likely should be rendered simply, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

But now someone might say, if that's the way it should be rendered, is this a title for the whole of the book? In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, or perhaps a title for this opening chapter. And that the details really begin with the second verse, the earth was formless and void. Now I do not think that that is possible.

I do not think that that is a title. Otherwise we do not have the existence of matter ever explained. If that's a title, then when did matter come into existence? And further it would seem to disagree with other statements made later on in the bible.

So I'm going to understand this to mean, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. That translation can be defended, and has been defended by outstanding contemporary scholars of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. There's another question that arises, and that is the so-called gap or cataclysmic theory.

This very popular theory among evangelicals originated with Thomas Chalmers, who was a Scottish theologian. Thomas Chalmers was an outstanding man, a very fine student of the word of God, a well-known preacher in Edinburgh, a man who was a somewhat mildly liberal man for some of his life, then had a spiritual transformation in which he became one of the leading men in Scotland in the earlier part of the 19th century. Thomas Chalmers posited what ultimately became the gap or catastrophe theory of an interval between Genesis 1.1 and 1.2. It is the interpretation of those who follow this theory that the first verse of Genesis is the initial creation of the heavens and the earth, that verse 2 is a description of the chaos that came as a result of a cataclysmic judgment that was poured out upon this creation by God, perhaps as a result of judgment following Satan's rebellion and the rebellion of the hosts with him, and that the third verse and following represents not the creation of the universe, but rather the renovation of the universe that had been the result of this cataclysm.

Now there are some good arguments that one may offer for this theory. I must confess, I held this theory myself for a long time because I was taught this theory by the man who led me to the Lord, Dr. Donald Gray Barnham. Some of the supports for this theory are, in the first place, that in the second verse where we read, and the earth was formless and void, that since the Hebrew word *haya* may be translated both by was or became, that the second verse should read, and the earth became formless and void, a reference to what happened as a result of the catastrophe.

There is another argument for this theory, which is, I think, a good argument. The words formless and void found in verse 2. How could those words describe the creation? It is said by those who accept the gap theory that these words are unsuitable for creation. Would God create something that was formless and void? Dilman, a great Hebrew scholar, said a created chaos is a non-entity.

You wouldn't have a created chaos from a God, such as the God of Scripture. Further, in the book of Isaiah, it specifically says in the 45th chapter, in the 18th verse, concerning the creation, that he created it not formless. So, does not that seem to suggest that he created it perfect, and it was as a result of judgment that it became formless? Now, men who say that do not often look at the remainder of verse 18 of Isaiah chapter 45.

It says he created it not formless, he created it to be inhabited. In other words, the statement in Isaiah has to do with the purpose of the creation, and not with the state following the creation primarily. He did not create it to be formless, he created it to be inhabited.

But formlessness was a stage along the way to inhabitation. One other argument. These are not bad arguments.

In fact, I must say that I have to live with those of my friends who believe in the gap theory, and I don't want to try to make fun of you, I used to hold this theory myself. This morning, I must tell you this, last night, I spoke to my wife about this. Now, she is a believer in the chaos theory.

That's why I say we must live with these people that hold this theory. So, I explained to her the basis of my interpretation, and she looked rather unbelievably at me. And this morning, she was here at the 830

service, listened to me again, and she went into the tape room because it was a little warmer, and one of the men who was in the tape room who was with us said, came to me and said, she got up afterwards and said, he still hasn't persuaded me.

And this man said, I see that things in your house are similar to those in mine. Well, I want to tell you a little something about my wife, since she's not here. She is Scotch-Irish in background, and you know the Scotch-Irish prayer, oh Lord, help me to be always right, for thou knowest that I am hard to turn.

So, I saw her afterwards, and I said, I heard that remark that you made about the interpretation this morning, and she said, I still am not persuaded. Now, one final argument, it is said that darkness, which characterized the earth at that time, is always a figure of sin and judgment. And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep.

And since darkness is generally a figure of judgment and sin, then how can we say that God created the earth in this state? Well now, that's not a bad argument either. Except it's not a totally convincing argument. Because we do have references in the Bible in which darkness is referred to, in which there is evidently no figure of sin and judgment implied.

There is a text in Psalm 104, verses 19 through 24, in which that is true. Furthermore, in this very account, we read, and it was evening, and it was morning, and it was evening, and it was morning. And the evening includes the darkness.

And then at the end of the chapter, having done his creating work, we read, and God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good. So in this very chapter, he pronounces that the evening and the morning, which were the result of his creating power, are good. It seems to me that the primary argument, however, against the gap or catastrophic theory, is Exodus chapter 20, verse 9 through verse 11.

And I'd like for you to turn there and listen as I read these verses. Exodus chapter 20, verse 9 through verse 11. Here Moses says, six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God in it.

You shall not do any work, you or your sons or your daughters, your male or your female servant, or your cattle, or your sojourner who stays with you. Now pay particular attention to the 11th verse and reflect upon it. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the Sabbath day.

Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Now notice, Moses interprets those opening verses of Genesis as six days of creation. He does not say that he created the heavens and the earth on one day and then six days later renovated, or in six further days renovated the earth.

He says in six days he made the heavens and the earth and everything else. That would seem to me convincingly to say that what we have in Genesis is an account of the creation in six days and we are not justified in reading into Genesis 1, 1 and 1 to the theory of a cataclysm between verses 1 and 2. Really the reason for this, I think, is that evangelicals have been hoping that by a theory like this they could manage to harmonize the things that geologists say about earth and its history, and also the history of man, with the facts of the biblical revelation. And so they tend to say, well you can put all of that between Genesis 1, 1 and 1, 2 and you have no problem.

But really you do have a problem in the first place because geologists don't accept the gap or cataclysmic theory. They are generally evolutionary uniformitarians and so therefore you cannot have any ultimate harmonization with them. In addition you have theological problems because by accepting the geological age system the bible scholar is thereby accepting the fossil record which identifies these ages.

Fossils are dead things. They speak clearly of a world in which suffering and disease and death, often violent and widespread death, were universal realities. They speak of a world much like our own, a world containing sharks and jellyfish, dragonflies, cockroaches, turtles, crocodiles, bats, beavers, as someone has put it, further dinosaurs and other animals now extinct.

But Peter says the world that then was perished, if that world existed prior to this pre-Adamic cataclysm, then it existed before the sin of Satan which brought on the cataclysm. That is, suffering and death existed for perhaps a billion years before the sin of Satan and the subsequent sin of Adam. How can you explain such death? Do you not see that you have theological problems with that theory too? So I'm persuaded in spite of the fact that I confess, I used to be persuaded by that theory, that we are rather to read Genesis as a straightforward account of the creation in six days.

Let me say this about the points made by Moses. Incidentally, let us live together. And that's a word addressed not only to you but to my wife.

Now the points made by Moses are these. Very simply, he says in the beginning. Now he doesn't really date that.

It is in the dateless past God created the heavens and the earth. Incidentally, he doesn't say anything about what God was doing before that time. Later on in the Bible we do have some intimations of what the Lord was doing.

It's well known that Augustine, when he was asked what God was doing before he created the universe, said he was creating hell for people who ask questions like that. And Luther, who had read Augustine pretty well, said he was cutting switches to flog inquisitive questioners. But Moses just simply says in the beginning, the dateless past.

He doesn't tell us any more information than that. All discussions about the age of man, about the age of the universe, at this point are debatable. Now he says in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

He uses a term for God which stresses his almighty power. And it is possible, since it is a plural word, that we do have here a foreshadowing of the plurality of the Godhead and ultimately in the full revelation of Scripture of the Trinitarian God that the Bible speaks about. Luther believed that.

Other interpreters in ancient times and in modern times have believed that too. And there is not, there is, it is not without justification from the context. For we read in verse 2, and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the water, suggesting here two persons in the Godhead right in the beginning.

In this very chapter we will read in the Bible, let us make man in our own image. Plurality. So it is possible that we do have some reference to plurality and the Godhead there, but the primary point Moses is making is that it is this God of almighty power who has created the heavens and the earth.

And when he describes the universe, he describes it as the heaven and the earth. The word created is a very interesting Hebrew word. It is the word bara.

Now this word can refer to creation in which material things are used. Incidentally, I am not at all sure that we can say that that is true of this creation even of man, because in the creation of man in the second chapter, while God took the dust of the earth, he breathed into him the breath of life, and so it was a creation out of nothing of the Spirit of man. And thus the word bara is suitable for that, with that limitation upon its meaning.

But it is clear from this context that no material is mentioned, and furthermore, bara is always in the Bible used of a divine activity. It is never used of a human activity. We never hear in the Bible man created.

Now we might read read man made. You could even read man formed something, and you do read that of God. But this word is used only of divine activity.

That's why I have a little thing about the adjective creative. I don't like to hear people use it. That's stealing one of the attributes of God.

To say someone is creative, it's almost saying he's divine. Creative is an adjective that belongs only to God. Now here then it would seem from the context and the use of that term that what Moses is saying is that we have here a true creatio ex nihilo, that is a true creation from nothing.

And I regard it as meaning simply that. When he says he created the heavens and the earth then, he refers to the space, the heavens, and to earth as matter in a basic space, mass, time universe. Isn't it interesting that we have a threefold kind of universe, almost a trinity, almost a reflection of the trinity in the space, mass, time of universe that we have.

If we were to sum up and kind of paraphrase Genesis chapter 1 verse 1, we could say the transcendent omnipotent Godhead, Elohim, called into existence the space, mass, time of universe. And that universe is a kind of trinity, not a perfect illustration of the trinity, but a kind of trinity. It is not part space, part time, part mass, but it is all space, all time, all matter, and so we have a true triunity in the universe that God created.

Most amazing thing. The resultant conditions that are described in the second verse, in the circumstantial clause or clauses, describe the state of the earth. It is a terrestrial globe, and it is an undistinguished mass.

It is to be progressively shaped by God. Frank Sea and I were discussing this, and he suggested it was like a potter who took some clay, and taking the clay, then formed the clay into that which he wished. We read in the beginning, God created this space, mass, time universe.

The materials of it, they were elements, they were unformed, uninhabited. And then God, working with that which he has created in the six days, has given us what we have in the creation. He progressively shapes it, day after day.

Now the presence of the darkness suggests that it was unenergized. It was perfect, as perfect material from which the creation would come, but it was not yet complete. That's the meaning of it, was unformed and uninhabited.

And the spirit of God was moving over the face of the deep. And so we have the divine activity, energizing, ready to energize and form out of that unformed or formless and uninhabited mass, the great creation that followed. Incidentally, the word that is translated here in verse two, the spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters, is used in Deuteronomy 32, of an eagle that hovers over its nest in protection.

And so the spirit of God is ready to energize this mass and give it all of the qualities that it has, such as gravity, for example, in part of his work of giving life to that which God has brought into existence. The spirit of God is the source of life, and that's the force, I think, of the spirit of God moving over the surface of the water. Let me conclude by noting just a few things that it seems to me follow from these opening two verses.

First of all, from a pre-existent God comes all history. All of the other interpretations of the beginnings of things that are found in Chaldean reports, in Babylonian accounts, in Egyptian, Phoenician, Indian, and even in the accounts of men like Ovid, all of these things are simply echoes of the biblical account that was given to Moses by divine revelation. There is no question, it seems to me, but this account is designed by God to refute all of the theories and false philosophies of men.

In fact, someone has said, if Genesis 1-1 is true, then all of the Bible is imminently credible. For example, it refutes atheism. It says, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

It is a refutation of pantheism, because it states that God is not only imminent, but he is transcendent over all of his creation. It refutes polytheism, for while there is plurality in the Godhead, it is one God who has created all things. It is a refutation of materialism, for it suggests that matter is not eternal, that we cannot expect random particles to so arrange themselves that they form an intelligent, sensible, harmonious universe.

It is a refutation of dualism, because God, when he created, is alone as the creator. It refutes humanism, because God, not man, is the ultimate reality, and the standard by which all things should be understood, and all things should be read. And it refutes evolution, because it says God created all things.

These verbs in this chapter reveal that the God who creates is a personal God. There is energy of mind, energy of will, and what we have here is an eternal God, or else eternal matter, and we've said that we cannot believe that. We have an eternal God who exercises those things that suggest personality.

We also have here a statement of the fact that there is only one God. He's the creator of everything, and furthermore, he dominates this account. Over thirty times the name of God is mentioned.

Monergism is stressed over and over again, and it also suggests that this sovereign created God, creating God, is one who is and who acts. We are craftsmen, but he is the creator. Never forget that.

There is a distinction between him and the creation that is firm and inviolable. And when you look at the creation, you notice the universe is one, and yet it is not simple. In age it is one, it is one vast system, but it is not a simple system.

It is complex, consisting of the mundane sphere and then the shining heavens with all of their starry hosts and the angelic beings. It is vast. The nearest fixed star is so remote that three years are required for its light to reach the earth.

Some light has been traveling for millions of years and has not yet reached the earth. Did you know that some galaxies are moving away from the earth, so far as I feel today, at the speed of 100 million miles an hour? And the farther away they get, the faster they go. And yet this universe is not infinite.

It's fast and it's not infinite. How great must be the infinite God? It is old, but it's not eternal. It is something that shall pass away, and yet he remains the same.

It is existent, it stands out as an entity in space. It is out from eternity in the sphere of time. It stands out from God as distinct from him, but it is not self-existent.

It stands by virtue of its own inherent energy, but it is neither self-produced or self-sustained. It rather stands in obedience to the creative fiat of Elohim. We have here a plural God, but not a monolithic unity.

The remainder of the Bible will indicate that. We have an imminent God, one who is ultimately the origin of us, too. And he hovers over his universe with great concern for the things that are happening there.

What you get in Genesis chapter 2, when you read the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters, is the picture not of Olympian detachment, but of a great mother bird anxious for her young. It is a beautiful picture of the concern of God in the creation which has come from his hands. And finally, we know from the remainder of the word of God that the God of this creation in Genesis 1 is the God of grace also.

And he must be known as creator before he can be clearly known as God of grace. Creation is the first of many steps that ultimately issue in the bringing of many sons unto glory. Before the foundation of the world there existed a great love, and out of that great love, not for anything that is in us, let me hasten to stress that, not of anything that is in us.

It is sad to hear some people who have been trained in theology saying he must have seen some difference between me and someone else and chose me for that. That is in principle a denial of the grace of God. It is not what he saw in us that caused him to love us.

He loved us sovereignly. He loved us because of what he would do for us. Never for one moment think that he loved you because of something in you.

But there was that great love, and out of that great love there has issued election, and calling, and justification, and all of the other great truths that have led to our relationship with God and the salvation that we possess today. So out of this creating God we have the first step in the completion of his divine program of the ages by which his people shall be gathered to himself, possessed of a knowledge of himself, and glorying in him as the eternal triune God who has created them and redeemed them. Here begin the embodiments of all those great thoughts that lead to the costly work of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Oh the depth of the wisdom, oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out. Is it great to have a God like this, to worship, who has loved us and loosed us from our sins in his own precious blood.

You know the saints really have a great deal to thank God for. If you're here this morning and you do not know this great God of creation and redemption, we invite you to consider what the scriptures say about yourself. You are lost, you are undone, you have sinned against God and fall under his judgment.

You are headed for a Christless eternity. You need the experience of repentance and faith and the enjoyment of the forgiveness of sins that come through the work of God in Christ. May God help you to realize your status before him and flee to the cross where forgiveness is offered to those who come in trust, brought by the Holy Spirit of God.

So I speak to you this morning. What a beautiful day to begin the first day of the week, bowing at the foot of the cross, acknowledging the supremacy of the triune God, the need of salvation and justification through him, and the acceptance of the Lord Jesus who has loved us and loosed us, the saints, from our sins. May God help you to come to him.

Shall we stand for the benediction? Father, we are amazed at the greatness of our great God. How great thou art, how great thou art. Lord, if there are some here who have never come to know him, whom to know is life eternal, turn them from themselves to him and the blood of the cross and the forgiveness of sins.

May grace, mercy, and peace go with us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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