

Today we start at the beginning of Genesis, and the foundations of God creating the Universe.

The creation account is absolutely critical to us as Christians because it reveals to us God's character, it tells us what God is like. Today we're going to grapple with two big themes. 'God creates.' This is where we're going to spend most of our time this morning and then we're going to look at the idea that 'God blesses.' Throughout we'll ask 'what does this reveal to us about our God?'

Why don't we pray and ask God to guide us in His word?

Let's pray.

1) God Creates. {Slide 2} We call this passage the creation account, or the creation narrative but creation isn't the subject of the passage. God is the real subject of the passage. In 35 verses of this text God's name is used 35 times.

God absolutely dominates these pages He is the one who is spotlighted throughout.

In the wonder and awe of the creation account or as we try and reconcile this account with the theory of evolution, It's really easy for us to take our eyes off God as the centre.

The author of Genesis, traditionally believed to be Moses, doesn't take His eyes off God for a moment.

We are shown how God speaks and things happen. God forms the earth and He fills it. God creates and blesses. Through it all Moses keeps lifting our eyes higher, to God himself.

When we claim that God creates we hit the great challenge of our time the 'how?' question. **{Slide 3}**

How did God create everything? Genesis presents us with a literal six days and so modern science tells us none of this could be true.

If we come to this text asking the question 'which is true six days of creation or evolution?' then we're asking the wrong question of the book of Genesis. It doesn't answer that question. It's not a scientific textbook it is poetry. It's a glorious representation of the beauty and majesty of God displayed in the act of creation.

This passage deals with questions that science can't answer. Questions about our purpose or how we can have value as human beings. It doesn't deal with the science or evolution question, it deals with the bigger question 'why are we here at all?'

{Slide 4} In verses 1 and 2 we read that 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth now the earth was formless and empty darkness was over the surface of the deep and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters.'

Here we run smack headlong into ultimate reality; God reveals himself to us as creator. **{Slide 5}** In the beginning 'God', the great subject of this passage; created. He made all that is. Nothing exists that was not made by Him. Our world is not an accident, it's not the result of a random cosmic explosion or collision. It is not the only planet that we've discovered capable of sustaining life by chance, it was created by God intentionally and this world was created to be a platform for relationship.

In the act of creation God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are present and active and we see here that God is near, He is not distant and aloof.

Sometimes people picture God like a cosmic watchmaker who puts all of the cogs and gears in place and winds up the clock and then walks away. Look at v.2, God is near and close He is hovering like a mother hovers near her children. God is close by, He is near at hand.

God's first act of creation is spoken out; **{Slide 6}** Verse 3 God speaks and by His powerful word light is created.

There's a separation here of light and darkness that is taking place. Eternal darkness is no more. A light has come.

It sounds like John chapter 1! A light coming into the world, before matter, before a globe is spinning on its axis, God is making a way for the darkness to be overcome by the light.

For us living this side of the fall there is an indicator here, a pointer to the Lord Jesus.

He is the one who will overcome the darkness. He is the one with the power to defeat death.

He is the one who will free people from bondage and oppression by His one perfect sacrifice for the sin of the world. He is the one who bears God's wrath at sin and makes a way for us to enter into this close relationship with God again and the way that this book is structured even before the event of the fall, even before humanity's rebellion against God, there is hope that is indicated. John chapter 1 verse 5 'the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.'

On day one; God separates the light from the darkness.

{Slide 7} As God creates He's not taking and shaping the stuff of the universe, pre-existent matter, but He speaks everything into being.

Does God do it in six days literally? He is certainly powerful enough! He is the God who speaks all things into being.

Does God do it over millennia with tiny incremental changes and shifts narrowing down and down to an infinitesimal likelihood of this creation ever coming to pass by itself? He is certainly powerful enough to do it that way too.

He speaks all things into being.

Six days or millions of years?

Evolution versus Science?

Genesis helps us to look above these dichotomies and helps us to see a greater truth that God creates by His powerful word and this is the pattern that we see echoed right throughout the account. It is stunning imagery. It is beautiful poetry. **{Slide 8}**

ii. The Pattern of creation.

In verses 3 and 4, verses 6 and 7, verse 9, verse 14, and 16 verses 20, and 21 and again in verse 24 we see this pattern **{Slide 9}** "God said and it was so.' By His word alone God creates He speaks and what He speaks into being is so.

Isn't that mind-blowing? That just by the word of His mouth, light and the sea and land and trees and flowers and stars and the moon and the sun and animals and fish and birds and mankind is created!

God forms and fills the whole created order just by His word. **{Slide 10}**

We're told that as God looks on and sees what He made. He saw that it was 'good' or 'very good' seven times. God's creation is perfect, it is beautiful, it is majestic.

This is a unique viewpoint. When we look at this account of creation and we hold it against the Ancient Near Eastern creation stories they couldn't be more different.

Yahweh this God, our God, creates order and beauty and He is close to the people that He creates.

In the Ancient Near East the seas are chaos, the world is uncertain. It is a place of instability, and the gods like marduk or baal represented by suns and moons and animals and sea creatures, the stuff made by God, they have no order whatsoever.

They fight and they wrestle and they struggle and all of life is chaos and turmoil and dread. The foundation of that world is not order and perfection, it is fear and chaos. and so to appease these pagan gods and goddesses to find some kind of temporary peace or goodness the cost is high.

Peace, even momentary peace, like a good harvest, or a successful childbirth, just to have a moment's relief from this disorder comes the sacrifice of children and rituals of prostitution. Things which harm us not help us flourish.

Some of these ideas flow on to Greece and Rome and her own cult pagan religions. In Greece matter itself was considered evil and corrupt, so one must rise above the things of this world to throw off our enjoyment of the material to try and escape it and break free.

but not for the people of God. Our Creator makes everything in an ordered fashion and it is good.

God forms everything and then He fills it.

{Slide 11} On day one God speaks and separates the light and the dark, which is then filled on day four with the moon and the sun and the stars.

{Slide 12} On day two God speaks and makes the sky and the seas separate, which He then fills on day five with birds and the oceans are teeming with fish.

{Slide 13} On day three God speaks and separates the land from the sea, and He fills that land on day six with vegetation for food and animals and people.

{Slide 14} Sometimes as Christians through the ages we've fallen into thinking that enjoying what we've been given is somehow wrong. We've let our thinking be infiltrated by Greek thinking. Dear friends the created order isn't bad. God has formed this place, He has ordered it, and designed it for human flourishing. He's designed it to be a place where He can relate to us.

He makes people unlike anything else in all of creation. He makes us, **{Slide 15}** verses 26 and 27 'in His image.' People are different to the rest of creation.

We are not primal like the beasts and the birds. We are created in God's image as representations of what God is like.

God uniquely creates people to represent Him to be like Him. We are moral beings, we are ethical, we are creative, we are spiritual in nature, and so human life reflects God's spiritual nature. What a truth for us to let sink in. **{Slide 16}**

Just like this creation account was a polemic or an argument against the religion and the myths of the Ancient Near Eastern ideas that humans were random or play

things of the gods and that these gods reigned with chaos, this same account in Genesis is a polemic against the myths of our own age.

Like the myth of nihilism which says that life has no meaning whatsoever, or the myth of materialism; the belief that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications.

This life isn't hopeless this world isn't all there is there is more and we know that don't we? Don't we feel that in ourselves when we are low when things are hard and we struggle and we think to ourselves 'there has got to be more to life than this!'

That is a part of the spark of the image of God inside us reminding us to lift our eyes to our creator.

Dear friend you are not a random accident.

My parents didn't plan to have me, they were young and unmarried and they conceived a child. They had no intention of having a child.

Whether we are unplanned or adopted or rejected, whether we are male or female, whether we are disabled or very able, whether we are ill or healthy, whether we are young or old, or wanted or undervalued, we are made in the very image of God by His powerful word. We are of equal worth and value. We are made in His image. You could be a road worker or a student or retired, dear friend we have the same value as our Queen.

We are made in the image of God. He made us to be like Him. To enjoy a perfect relationship with Him. That strengthens the weak and it humbles the strong. In God's eyes all mankind is royalty. All people are presidents and kings.

When we see God revealed here as our creator we can neither look down on ourselves or look down on others. we are all alike made in His image by His powerful word and God doesn't stop there by just making.

- He does more; and we're going to explore that after this song.

2) God Blesses {Slide 17} We've seen that God created absolutely everything out of nothing by His powerful word but there is more! He blesses us. Out of His great love for us God blesses.

God blesses all of the things that He makes with this platform for relationship. Humans aren't like the people made by marduk created as an afterthought to be servants to the gods. We are not toys or playthings; we are blessed.

We are made for relating to the hovering God, the near God, the God who blesses His creation with the things we see here.

With food to sustain us v. 29. He gives us, every good and delicious thing that we need to survive in a life without death.

There is no consumption of flesh at this point. There is no death whatsoever on the face of the earth. God's creation existed in perfect harmony.

God doesn't just bless us by giving us the things we need to survive, although He does do that. He doesn't just bless us with the beauty of all of this world, although He does do that. He doesn't just bless us with His image, although He does do that.

He blesses us by giving us a purpose **{Slide 18}**, and a role, a function as bearers of His likeness.

In verses 22 and 28 **{slide 19}** we see the same text repeated almost word for word.

In verse 22 God's talking to the fish and the birds - multiply, fill the earth!

In verse 28 He speaks to people.

We are to steward God's good creation to share in the outworking of God's creative purposes we are to care for and to fill this world.

We are designed for a life of work with God for His glory and there's even more;

{slide 20} In chapter 2 verse 1 **{Slide 21}** God blesses us by giving the Sabbath day.

He gives us a limitation. He shows us how to rest, how to pause, and be refreshed but more He blesses a Sabbath and calls us to observe it, so that we can be reminded that we are not God, we are limited. **{Slide 22}**

We are not able to create by our word, we are not all powerful and all sustaining. We are made in God's image but we are not God.

What a blessing that is to be reminded of that.

We can rest from striving. When we see this clearly we can embrace our limitations we can dedicate time to beautiful and good and wholesome things which refresh and re-energise us, we can worship our creator on the Sabbath. We can rely on Jesus who is sufficient.

In setting this pattern of rest God blesses the Sabbath.

He sets it aside and makes it holy and in doing so He gives us as humanity an amazing blessing. It's a tough reminder isn't it?

In this 24 7 fast-paced world where time is money and anything can be bought, it hurts for us to recognise that we are not self-sufficient or self-sustaining but it is a good reality for us to be reminded of that. God blesses us in our limitation, for need of rest.

{Slide 23} What treasures we've seen this morning given to us from God in the book of Genesis.

God has shown us who He is.

He's the powerful creator of this world who makes and sustains all things through His powerful word.

He's the God who forms and fills the world.

He's the God who creates order and perfection not chaos and turmoil.

He's shown us just how close He is to us; relational, hovering, nearby relating to us as His image bearers not just like slaves or servants.

He's shown us His great love in the acts of blessing.

Blessing by creating this world, this universe, this platform for us to relate to Him.

He's blessed us by giving us a role where we can share in His likeness by filling the world and subduing it in good and wholesome ways.

He blesses us by modelling rest and reminding us that the weight of the universe does not rest on our shoulders!

Dear friends why don't we pray and thank this God, our God, for His goodness to us revealed in these pages.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father we thank you so much that you are our God and that you are the creator of all things. Lord help us to recognise the many blessings that you've given us and help us to be thankful for them. Lord we long to be people who are shaped by your goodness we ask now Lord that you would help us to recognise who you truly are and to give you praise and worship we ask these things in Jesus name amen