

A God Shaped World View

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[0 : 00] Well, folks, great to see you this morning. Why don't we just join our hearts together and let's pray as we come to this passage. Paul would write in Romans 12, the call to these Christians who live in Rome, the call to be transformed by the renewing of their minds.

And Holy Spirit, we ask that you would come and help us as we seek to do that this morning. What we see not, we ask that you would show us. Lord, where we understand not, we ask that you would help us.

And what we are not, we ask that you would make us. All for the glory of our three-in-one brilliant God. In his name we pray. Amen. Well, let me just invite you to have that passage in Genesis 1 in front of you.

It's so important that we have God's words in front of us so that you have nothing else. You can see that what I'm saying, hopefully, and this will be my prayer all week, is what this passage is saying. As you're turning to Genesis 1, let me tell you about a pantomime I was watching with my two little girls, not this Christmas, last Christmas.

The pantomime was on CBeebies and the pantomime was called Thumbelina. So everyone needs to hold out their thumbs. This is Thumbelina. Thumbelina, the thumb-sized girl.

[1 : 17] And this whole pantomime was the story of Thumbelina traveling around her little world, bumping into different characters.

And she would ask different characters questions about life and about them and about her because she wanted to understand where she had come from. Because she lived her life in her little world. As she flew around, she realized that there was nobody quite like her. So she's asking questions like, how did I get here? Right? Where did I come from?

Who is like me? How did I get like this? Where am I going? What should I be doing? Because she figures that if she can get the answers to those kind of questions, then she'll be able to derive from those things some kind of purpose for her life as she continues to exist.

And I'm watching this thinking, I don't know if you're an avid CBeebies watcher. Okay, this is my stage of life. Watching this thinking, who knew that CBeebies could be so postmodern?

[2 : 17] Because the questions that Thumbelina was asking are kind of the questions that we ask about life, don't we, at times? We ask ourselves those kind of questions.

Who are we? How did we get here? What are we doing? Except here's the thing for us. We realize that life isn't a CBeebies show. We realize that we don't live in Disneyland. So we kind of step out the CBeebies bubble, and we watch the real world being presented to us as we see it and as we see it on, say, the 6 o'clock news.

And we hear about how human beings around the world are doing some of the most wonderful and sacrificial things. And yet, in the same broadcast, we hear about human beings who are committing some of the most horrific atrocities imaginable.

Right? Or we're watching David Attenborough. We're watching him document some of nature's most incredible things. As our world ticks, as it does its thing. We're blown away.

And yet, at the same time, we turn on the news. And when that program begins to tell us about the world, we hear about the natural disasters which are going on. And we hear about the forest fires in Australia.

[3 : 31] And we wonder, what is going on? What's this all about? Now, let me ask you, as you sit here today and as you think about all of that, how do you process that?

Right? How do you understand that in your mind? As you interact with the world in which we live, however you make sense of that, is what is known as your worldview.

Right? How you understand the world. Your answer to those questions. How did I get here? Where am I going? Why did these things happen? What is it ultimately about? That is your worldview. Right? How you understand the world. And it affects how you live your life in the world because you understand this is why I'm here. This is where I've come from. This is why I exist. And you live your life matching up with what you believe that to be.

And there are tons of worldviews out there. Right? People often come to you. They say this to me. I wish I had your faith. Right? I wish I had your faith. To which my question is, you've got faith.

[4 : 33] If we're defining faith as trust based on evidence, what you believe to be true, every single human being has faith, trusting in something. Your question is, you have faith in something different to what I have faith in.

Right? We're all basing our lives on something. Tons of worldviews exist around the table. And the thing is, what we're going to look at over the next few weeks is that into this worldview arena, God speaks in the book of Genesis.

You see, we're not the first question asking these kind of questions. You've got to do justice to this text that the first readers of Genesis are most likely the generation of God's people who find themselves having come out of Egypt, heading for the promised land, journeying in the desert.

What they realize is that they realize they're living in a big world. Right? They look up. They're intelligent human beings. They look up. They can see. And they can realize that it's not all about them. And they're surrounded by people from different nations who are living lives completely differently to how they are living and who are worshiping and living for different things.

And the purpose of this book of Genesis that Moses wrote is to help his generation grasp a God-shaped worldview. Grasp a God-shaped worldview.

[5 : 49] Because here's how this works out for me. Right? I think in my life that I am the sun. And everything revolves around me. Right? I am the center of my universe.

That's what I think. And yet here is a book that just smashes into that. And says, you are not the sun. You are not the sun. And it causes us to lift our eyes off of ourselves and throw them into the air and say, actually, this world is about the God who made it.

And if we can understand the God who made this world, then we've got a chance of understanding who we are. And so this book is written to help a generation of God's people understand the world in which they live.

This book means beginnings. This is what the title means. Answering the questions, who am I? Why am I here? What am I doing? I love this quote. C.S. Lewis, right, said this.

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else. So as we come to this book, we need to appreciate that those are the questions that it is trying to answer.

[7 : 00] But primarily the how question, right, how long were the days of creation? It's not trying to answer that. Or the when question, how old is the earth? What about the dinosaurs? Let me just say, if there are the questions in your mind that are only natural questions to ask as we come to this text, and you can come to me afterwards or chat amongst yourselves.

We can recommend people who are way smarter than me who've studied this stuff. They can help you understand, wrestle with those questions. But Genesis is interested in addressing the who and the why questions.

Right, you ready for this? Will we dive into this text? Yeah, for this, come with me to verse one. And let's allow Genesis to tell us firstly about the God who is there. The God who is there.

The God who makes himself known. And come with me to the very first words of the Bible and to the words that maybe you know William Anders read out to the world from Apollo 8 as they orbited the moon on Christmas Eve 1968, which I believe, I think I'm right, I'm ad-libbing here, was the most watched television program up to that point.

In the beginning, God created. The heavens and the earth. Who is this God? I'm just honing in two things that this passage would tell us for the sake of time.

[8 : 19] Who is this God? Firstly, he is eternal. Right, meaning that God has always been. There was never a time when he wasn't.

In fact, he has always existed as a loving community of Father, Son and Spirit. One God, three persons who have, since before time began, been doing nothing other than mutually delighting in one another.

And that's why we can say for sure that this God is love. Because that's what he's been doing and will be doing for all eternity. That's who this God is. Is your mind blown yet? Right? Word for of the Bible, we're at. There's a lot of words to go after this. This is who this God is. Meaning that what he did next wasn't because there was anything lacking in him. He did out of the overflow of his greatness. What did he do? Come with me. This is the second thing that we see that he created. He is powerful. This God is powerful. [9 : 20] Verse two, the earth was without form and void. And you see how this God speaks and things come into being through the power of his words. Now we always say that in our day, don't we?

That you can tell who's in charge as you walk into a situation by watching what happens when people speak. Yeah? You know that's been true in some of your workplaces. Yeah? The boss speaks, things get done. Somebody down here speaks, things don't happen. Yeah? Give you a little example of this. Over Christmas, we went back to my parents. My parents have a little parson terrier dog called Charlie. Right? I said I had to go at this. I went, Charlie, sit. Right? And the dog looks at me as if to say, yeah, not a chance, son. But dad walks in the room. He says, Charlie, sit. Quick as a flash, down Charlie goes. This God has authority. You see, this God speaks and things happen. He effortlessly commands and creates.

[10 : 25] Days one, two, and three, if you like, he forms the world. Right? If you've got it there, day and night, light, land, and waters, land, and plants, he forms it.

Or if you like, he creates his stage. And in days four, five, and six, he fills that stage with actors. Do you see how we get the sun, the moon, and the stars, the birds, and the fish, land, animals, and humans.

And God, what does he think of this? I love this. What does he think? After each day is complete, do you see the repeated refrain? Verse four, and God saw that it was what?

Good. Right? Track with me in the verses. Verse 10, and God saw that it was good. Verse 12, verse 18, verse 21, verse 25, and God saw that it was good.

Right? In other words, God is not like us. He's having a shot at DIY. Like, he creates something. He looks at it. He thinks, it wasn't quite what I intended, but it will do. Right? I've got a mirror in our bedroom at home, just above.

[11 : 33] I've got a fireplace in the room, just above the fire. And my father-in-law, when we put it up, we measured it. We looked at each other. We verified that these measurements were correct. We drilled holes in each side.

We looked at each other. Is it still correct? Yes, it is. And it's a centimeter out. And it looks at me every night, as if to say, you were so close. Do you see how this God, creation happens, it exists, it fits, it works, and it does exactly as he intended it to do.

That's what the word good means. It's good, but it gets even better. Do you see how that phrase comes a seventh time, except it's got extra levels of goodness to it.

What does God declare about his creation? Verse 31. What is it now? It is very good. Why? Why? Well, let's allow Genesis to tell us about the humans who are here.

Okay, look at verse 26. This is incredible stuff. Then God said, let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

[12 : 52] So Genesis tells us that human beings are made God's blueprint, male and female, in the image of this three-in-one loving community that is God.

And he declares it's very good over no other created thing does God say that. we bear as human beings, we bear his image, meaning that in some way we reflect, we resemble him, which explains, if you want to tease that out, that explains our inbuilt desire for community.

Does it know that we're made in the image of the God who is a three-in-one loving community? It explains our desire for other human beings to have that relationship with them. Explains our longing for love, we're made in the image of this God.

I'll just follow the ripples of application here. Let me just kind of tease this out a little bit. What does this say about human beings? Firstly, it pronounces the dignity over them.

Right? One, and this is so important that we see this, one that is inherent to every single human life without exception, simply because they exist.

[14:05] Right? It's why we can pray, isn't it, for, we're praying for that newborn baby earlier, but those days, every single day of that child's life known by the God who created her in his image.

Every human being valued, known, precious, and of worth. Is this not a beautiful description and understanding of human beings?

It's why the American Declaration of Independence starts with these words, we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, right, all people are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights.

And it's why people like William Wilberforce in the past took the stand they did against racism and slavery because they had this understanding of what it means to be a human being. It's why we should care, if you just follow this again, it's why we should care about child poverty.

It's why we should care about domestic abuse. It's why we should care about discrimination. And it's why as Christians, with this understanding of human beings, it should cause us to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

[15:16] Right? It's why we care about beginning of life issues. And it's why we care about end of life issues. because all life matters to God.

You see, I live in here, it's a desk that said, I think, therefore I am. And this understanding of what it means to be a human being says that cannot be true. Because the definition of what it means to be a person cannot be that you think.

Right? I'm trained as a lawyer, I'm trained to ask questions because my question is, what does it mean? What do you mean by think? How do you understand that? And what are you saying about those people who cannot think by your definition? Do you understand that the Christian worldview says?

Not, I think, therefore I am. The Christian worldview says, I exist, therefore I am precious in God's sight. So we've come to see the love, the very goodness in God's design.

Right? And you understand what Paul was saying in Romans chapter 12. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. The way that you understand life.

[16:28] I recognize that we've waded in just even there to maybe painful waters for some of us. Friends, let me just encourage you to run to Jesus. The one who forgives all of our sins.

The one who knows us. The one who, as we were singing about earlier, we can run to and cast our cares and our burdens upon our Savior. And run to him who knows and who forgives.

This pronounces over humanity a dignity. And it pronounces over humanity a responsibility. Right? God created man. Do you see it? And gave them the job of ruling as his vice regents over his creation. Right?

He is king. We are subject. We are ruling over this. What a responsibility. And we're charged, you see, given the privilege of cultivating that for his glory.

[17:26] And it's why, again, just follow the ripples of application. It's why we should care about this planet. And we should be looking after it because it displays God's glory.

And do you see how God looks on what he has made and he declares that it is very good. and we have come to love and to understand God's very goodness in his creation.

And what we've got to see, God rules over this as king. And what we've also got to see is that this text has been so beautifully put together. Right? And let me just, this blew my mind this week, okay?

Let's share this with you. I'm sharing it with you. Let's do it. Right? This has been so beautifully put together and done in such a way is to draw our attention to the number seven. Right? Stay with me. The number in the Bible that represents speaks of perfection.

Okay? So, in Genesis 1, there are, the number seven or multiples of seven come up all the time. All the time. Just, just casting us to the seventh day.

[18:33] Right? So, the original Hebrew opening sentence, how many words do you think? Seven words. Right? The phrase, God saw that it was good seven times.

Heavens comes 21 times, right? Seven times three. Elohim, God, comes 35 times. So, this passage is screaming at us seven, seven, seven, seven, seven. Perfect, perfect, perfect, perfect, perfect, which should tell us automatically that the mess that we see today must have come from somewhere else because it didn't exist when God created it.

But now, see that this chapter has been put together in such a way that the reader is drawn to look at the mountaintop moment of day seven.

Okay, and we get it. Come with me. Verse two of chapter two. By the seventh day, God had finished the work that he had been doing. So, on the seventh day, he rested from all his work. So, what happens?

On the seventh day, God finishes. What do we learn about this God? This God is a finisher. Okay, he finishes things. How often do we start out with good intentions about doing jobs and we never see it through, right?

[19 : 43] I love this. What is it in Carleton Hill that we see? We look at it every day. We see the monument. What is it known as? It's known as Edinburgh Shame because somebody started it and he didn't finish it.

This God finishes things. This God speaks and he finishes. This God always gets done what he says he will get done. So important for people in the desert wondering, can our God do what he said he would do and get us to the promised land?

This God finishes. And what else did God do? He rested. Which doesn't mean that he was goosed, right? That he was out of resources, that he was spent, that he ran out of puff, that he had nothing left in the tank.

Love how creative we get when we're trying to express to people that we're done. But God's not like us. He is omnipotent, right? Omni-potent.

Omni-all-potent-powerful. This God is all-powerful. So what does that mean? It means that God, like a master artist, finished his masterpiece and he stood back and he looked at it and he loved it.

[21 : 02] He loved it and he basks in his goodness as creator. And what a picture we have here of the world that God made as creator and creation exist in glorious and perfect harmony.

And where there exists nothing that would ever impede that rest because it's very good. It's 77777. It's perfect. And yet you're probably thinking to yourself, I'd imagine what the people first reading this were thinking to themselves that this isn't the world that we live in. And you're right and we'll see this in the weeks to come as we try and explore these opening chapters of Genesis and understand what it's telling us about the world.

The story goes on. Adam and Eve as God creatures, they rebel against the very goodness of their creator. The creatures rebel against the creator.

They reject his kingly rule. And every single human being ever since has followed suit in that rebellion and rejection. We don't want our creator. We don't want anything to do with him.

[22 : 16] And that's the very essence of sin. And what that means, and you can follow the logic of that is that we have incurred our creator's anger of our sin and we have forfeited our right to enter God's rest.

And that should have been the end of the story. If it were not for the fact that God is this kind of God, that he is gracious and he is good and he's determined to make a way for his people to enter and enjoy and know that rest.

And in the fullness of time, God would send forth his son into this world to do what? To save, to seek and to save and to make a way for his people to enter that rest.

Right? As Jesus dies on the cross bearing the judgment of this holy God, the one that creatures like you and I deserve on himself and winning them for himself so that we can be declared righteous in him.

What did we say about this God? He promises and he does and he finishes things. And what was the last phrase of Jesus as he hung on the cross? Tetelestai.

[23 : 34] It is finished. This God is a finisher. And Jesus rises again. He defeats death meaning that death will not have the lost word over his people.

He will. Do you see how he deals with my sin and he defeats death? The two enemies that had barred me and you from entering God's rest. And so we hear him declaring Matthew 11 to a world full of broken burdens, struggling, confused and rebellious human beings.

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. rest. Jesus came to make a way for you and I to know the rest of our creator.

Right? That shalom, that rightness with him. Rest that we can know now and the rest that we will one day gloriously know in God's new heavenly city.

The one that we read about in Revelation 21 where everything again is perfect. So Jesus says come to me. Maybe for some of us today, maybe for the first time you need to go to him.

[24 : 50] You need to run to him for the forgiveness of your sins. You need to run to him for wholeness and newness of life and to run to him who knows and who came to seek and to save.

And just as we finish, let me take it back to Thumbelina, watching this program. She's on this journey of self-discovery and she's meeting different characters.

One of the characters she bumps into is called Mrs. Blue Swallow. And Mrs. Blue Swallow didn't just speak to Thumbelina, this was a pantomime, she sang to Thumbelina. So I had to go on iPlayer and scroll the thing and rewind and write down the words of what she said so I could bring them to you.

So I appreciate this. This is what she said. She said, go where you will, free as a bird, just follow your heart to find your way in the world.

Just close your eyes and dream of places perhaps your home is on the way. Right? Two thoughts as I heard that. Firstly, what a lovely song. Okay, and as the camera panned around you could see that there was not a dry eye in the house.

[25 : 57] Second thought, what terrible advice. the call of God in Genesis to a world trying to understand itself, full of people trying to understand themselves, is not to look in, not to look in, but to fall on your knees and look up to the God who loves us and to the God who made us and to the God who sent his son to save us.

Friends, run to Jesus. Run to him. Maybe just in the silence now as we close, let me just invite you to offer your prayers to this God who hears and knows.

And then I'll close in prayer and we'll stand to sing our final song. But friends, don't rush this moment. I trust that God's word has gone forth. God's spirit has been putting his finger on people's lives and hearts.

And I encourage you just to go with that. So let's just have a few moments of silence and then I'll pray. The psalmist would write, as I consider the works of your hands, the things that you have made, who am I that you are mindful of me?

And so gracious and loving heavenly Father, we ask Lord that as we finish this morning, that you would help us by your spirit to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

[27 : 35] That as we look at this book together over the next weeks, that you would help us to love you more and to delight in you more.

As we see ourselves, as we see the beauty and yet the brokenness, and as we see our world that is also beauty and full of brokenness, that you would help us to run to you. Father, thank you that you love us.

We don't need to doubt that, we don't need to question that, we just need to look at the cross and know that you love us. So Father, thank you for today. We just commit it to you, Lord, in Jesus' precious name.

Amen.