

Bible Basics Conference 2012: “Genesis 1-12”

Part 2

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[00:00:00] The topic of this second session is the spiritual meaning of Genesis 1, and let's start by re-reading the opening verse of the scriptures, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Now these opening words, in the beginning, are the words that have given their title to the whole book. In the Hebrew, the book is referred to as the beginnings. And it's very important to understand whenever you study any book in the Bible, to be sure you have a grasp of the character of the book. Like in Exodus, you learn about redemption. In Leviticus, you learn about approach to God. In Numbers, you learn about the wilderness journey of the people of God. And in Deuteronomy, you have a summary, a retrospect and outlook.

[00:01:02] Now when we say Genesis is the book of the beginnings, what do we mean? It's often been referred to as the seed plot of the Bible.

Now a large number of principles that you find developed in the rest of the scriptures can be found in the book of Genesis.

If you take the first few, creation, marriage, God's sovereignty, man's responsibility, sin, redemption, approach, what is the world, all of these things you find in Genesis, but I won't talk about them now because I don't want to steal anybody else's thunder. But if you just take some of the ones further down the list, like sonship, how do you learn what is sonship? Well, read the story of Isaac.

What does it mean to be a stranger? Look at the story of the patriarchs. And how about election?

[00:02:02] Well, says Paul in Romans 9, if you want to understand election, make sure you know the story of Jacob and Esau.

What about discipline? Well, if you want to know about discipline, read the story of Jacob. Israel's history foreshadowed in his biography.

The reign of Christ foreshadowed in Joseph reigning over the whole land of Egypt. And resurrection indicated very clearly. And all of these things you find in the book of Genesis. So if you want to have a good start in your Christian career and Bible study, then start with the book of Genesis.

Genesis 1 is a literal account. Let me just be very clear here. [00:03:01] If we speak about a spiritual meaning of Genesis 1, I am not spiritualizing this chapter in the sense of taking away the literal meaning. So when it says in the beginning, God created, then it is God. It is not chance.

When it says created, it actually means created and not evolved.

When it says after its kind, it actually means after its kind and not evolved from one kind into another.

And when it says days, it actually means days.

And when it says Adam, this is not an idea, but it is an actual man, a historical person who lived at the time. Now, don't take my word for it. Look at the New Testament. You find that the Lord himself spoke about Adam as a real living person at the time. [00:04:03] So if Brother Hugh just spoke about the literal meaning, then giving a few thoughts to the spiritual meaning of this chapter is no contradiction at all. And I think you are used to this. You would read the story of Joseph and you would say Joseph actually lived and he experienced things we read about, but also you would have a very clear idea that Joseph is a picture of somebody who came later, the Lord Jesus who is foreshadowed by him.

But perhaps some of you are not yet convinced. Perhaps some of you still think, well, should a chapter like this really have a spiritual meaning?

Well, let me ask you some questions. You will find that days one to three and days four to six run in parallel. Days one and four speak of light, days two and five have to do with water, and days three [00:05:03] and six have to do with earth. Why is that?

You also find that on day three and on day six there is a double work, and only in those days God speaks twice.

Now, if you study the text a little more, you make some more discoveries. You find, for example, that the word good occurs seven times. And your first thought is, well, seven times, that must mean one times good for every day. Well, look again and you find it says good once for days one, four and five.

In day three it says good twice, and in day six it once says good and once it says very good. And in day two it doesn't say good at all.

Why is this?

You also find that the report is selective. [00:06:02] Some things are reported on in detail, some things are not reported at all, and again the question why?

On day one, it does not say that God made the light, nor does it say that God created the light.

Why not?

And final question for this series, to make the point, on day one you have light, but the sun, the moon and the stars you have on day four. Why? All of these things are in the text. All of these things are interesting. And I'm convinced that if we want to make progress in the scriptures, we need to read the Bible with the right question in mind. And the right question in mind is not what do I want to know, but the right question in mind is what did God want to tell me?

And if God gives us a chapter in such a special way with all these peculiarities, surely we [00:07:07] should inquire into the meaning of these.

But let's take the clear statements of the New Testament about the creation account.

And you find very remarkable explanations of what actually occurred in Genesis 1. Take 2 Corinthians 4 verse 6.

It says, because it is God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine.

When was that?

Surely all say this was in Genesis 1. Exactly right.

Who has shone into our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[00:08:04] Clearly what happened on day one when God said let there be light is taken as a picture here of what happens when divine light shines into the heart of man.

Now you could quote many other passages, we don't have time to go into them, but let's just be reminded of 2 Corinthians 5 verse 17. If anyone be in Christ there is a new creation. Again a parallel between the creation in Genesis 1 and what God brings about in a man, in a person who comes to Christ.

In Ephesians 1, he has put all things under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, surely the reality foreshadowed in all things put under Adam's feet with Eve united to her. [00:09:03] 1 Corinthians 12, 13, so also is the Christ. That verse speaks of Christ and the assembly. Now that's exactly what we have in Genesis 1. Let us make man and God created man, male and female created he them.

Genesis 2, but referred to as man, so also the Christ.

And Exodus 20 verse 11 was already referred to speaking about the rest, referring first of all to the actual rest of God on day seven in the beginning of Genesis 2, but using it as an emblem of rest generally.

Now that may suffice to convince us, I trust, that we are on firm ground to seek out the spiritual principles in Genesis 1, which takes us to the matter of light.

[00:10:12] Let there be light, Genesis 1 verse 3.

God said let there be light and there was light. God saw that the light was good and divided between the light and the darkness.

We have seen already that light and darkness are used frequently in God's word as figures of the spiritual state of a person.

Before we knew the Lord Jesus, we were in darkness, and what I find very impressive and telling is that it says in Ephesians 5, not only were we in darkness, but Paul says you were one's darkness.

[00:11:03] You were darkness. This was our spiritual state.

What about the state of a believer? Colossians 1, 13, we have been delivered from the power of darkness. One Thessalonians 5, we are no longer of the darkness of the night.

One Peter 2, he has led us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And 2 Corinthians 4 verse 6, we refer to already, the light has shone into our hearts. Now light is a great blessing.

Light shows things as they are.

Now if the sun rises in Switzerland, what becomes visible is wonderful mountain chains, wonderful landscapes, and the light will bring all this into view. [00:12:03] If the light, or if the sun rises over a waste disposal site, the light will also make manifest what is there, and it's a load of rubbish.

Light shows things as they are, and by the way, the second aspect is why light was unpopular and why men preferred the darkness to the light.

Now when the light of God, I'm talking literally now in Genesis 1, when the light shone, what did it show?

It showed waste and emptiness.

That's exactly what happened when we were reached by divine light. It exposed the waste and empty condition of our hearts and lives.

There was nothing there that could actually please God. But there was hope.

[00:13:01] It says that the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Now those two elements, the spirit and the water, are elements that you encounter in the New Testament, that which brings about new birth. And let us be very clear on this.

All of us who have been born again, we could only be born again because of the activity of the spirit of God. And the spirit of God has taken a verse from the scriptures and has applied it to you and to my heart, and this is how new birth was brought about.

Now in verse 7 it says, and God made the expanse, or firmament, and divided between the waters that are under the expanse and the waters that are above the expanse, and it was so. So here you

find that God again makes a division. And the division is between the waters above and the waters below. [00:14:02] And this ties in exactly with the subject we've just had before us of new birth. You know when the light shines into our lives we realise what the flesh is like. And this is that which is from below.

And this is not a nice discovery. I know that for many who have come to the Lord it's been a great disappointment when they suddenly, after the first happiness, they realise something has gone wrong again. Where does this come from? I've turned to the Lord. I wanted to follow him and now this has happened. It's a bitter discovery and if you want to read about it, read Romans 7. You find a man there who has a new nature, who has been renewed, who wants to do what is good in all his strength but he realises I can't and I go wrong again and again. And he discovers that although he has the inclination, that which is from above, the [00:15:03] nature, he also still has the flesh.

And I think that's why the old nature is called the flesh in the Bible because you can't leave your flesh behind.

Take the flesh with us as long as we're here. But the flesh is not allowed to act. Now there is obviously a certain tension here between that which is above and that which is below.

And this may well be why in this case we do not read and it was good.

But happily there is another day and in our spiritual history it is very important that when you have experienced day one, the light, day two, new birth and the discovery of the two distinct natures, that you come to day three.

Now what happens on day three? God says let dry land appear.

[00:16:02] Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together in one place and let the dry land appear.

Now first of all this is day three. The third day you all know speaks of resurrection. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, Hosea 6, on the third day thou shalt revive us and we shall live before thee. 1 Corinthians 15, according to my gospel Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures was buried and raised the third day.

Now on this third day what happens is that the waters and it was explained that waters are adverse elements. Perhaps you say I like water but if you were plunged into the middle of the ocean somewhere sooner or later you would come to agree that water is an adverse environment for man. Now you will find this actually in chapter six later on in the flood. [00:17:02] You find this in Psalms where Christ prophetically speaks about these waters. The waters have come unto my soul and the waters have overflowed me. But then what happens is dry land emerges.

Dry land means firm ground, somewhere where you can rest and repose.

And prophetically you hear Christ say in resurrection in Psalm 40 verse 2, thou hast placed my feet upon a rock.

On day three we are on resurrection ground. Now what does this mean for the spiritual development

of the believer? It means that you are no longer trying to improve or to get rid of your old nature and that you come to rest in the work of Christ. You come to realize that Christ is actually risen. He has been raised for our justification.

[00:18:01] And then it is that you have firm ground under your feet. Now perhaps this is why on day three there is a double work. Because the second thing that happens on day three, you find in verse 11, let the earth cause grass to spring up, her producing seed, fruit trees yielding fruit.

On day three you get fruitfulness.

It is when this strife has ended, when you rest on firm ground, when you see that Christ has accomplished the work, then there can be fruit in our lives for the Lord Jesus. You won't find this in Romans 7.

In Romans 7 you are still in this struggle, but in Romans 8 when you find you are in Christ. No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, then the Holy Spirit can work. [00:19:02] And then there can be actual fruit for God, which you find in the latter part of the epistle starting chapter 12.

Day four, let there be lights.

God made the two great lights and the stars. God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth and to rule during the day and during the night.

In the first three days you find that the spaces are created or made.

You find that there is day and night. You find there is water and earth.

You find there is that which is above and that which is below. In the second lot of three days you find that which moves within these spaces. [00:20:03] So on day four, it is certainly parallel to day one, let there be light, but here it is lights.

It is the emphasis on the light bearers.

What are the lights for? It says to give light and to rule, and this is the thought of testimony.

What happens in the spiritual development on day four? On day four you first of all recognize the true testimony which is Christ, the supreme testimony of the Son, the supreme rule and light.

But then you also discover that just as much as the sun isn't here on the earth, but it's up there, just as much the moon and the stars are not on this earth, but they are up there. They belong into the same sphere. And the believer actually realizes, I belong to Christ up there. [00:21:03] He is in heaven and I'm seated with him in heaven.

And if that happens and we become aware of our Christian position, we will start being a light for others, small lights, like the moon.

It varies in brightness and intensity and sadly our testimony does, stars, easily ignored. But if somebody wants to look, he can get orientation.

As Paul says to the Philippians, that you shine in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation as heavenly lights.

It's a wonderful thing in the life of a believer when day four is reached. Now what happens next? Day five, verse 20, and God said, let the water swarm with swarms of living souls. [00:22:06] As day two, on day five, we are again back to the sphere of the water. But there is a difference now. You now find suddenly that in the water, in this adverse environment, there is fruitfulness. It is no wonder if there is testimony for Christ, day four, that there will be opposition, there will be adversity, there will be daily life difficulties. But what God wants is fruitfulness in that adversity, fruitfulness in difficult circumstances. And so it happens on day five that the waters swarm with fish, with living beings. Now the other thing that happens on day five is that there are the birds. And that's another thing that happens in your development, spiritual development as a believer. If there is adversity, there are also the wings to carry you up and to be in the nearness [00:23:07] of God and to have communion with him.

On day six, again, a double work, first the living souls, the land animals are created in great variety and diversity, no doubt to exalt the one who is going to have dominion over all of them.

And this happens in the second part of day six where God says, let us make man in our image and after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the whole earth. And God created man, male and female created he them.

Generally speaking, on day six, second part, we learn two things. One is we're united to Christ and the other is Christ is to have dominion over all. [00:24:10] And I suppose this is the greatest stage of spiritual maturity. When you come to say, my life is not about what I want, my life is about what Christ wants.

And my life is not about me being seen, my life is about the Lord Jesus being seen. He is the one who has to reign supreme on this scene.

Paul expressed this very nicely when he wrote to the Galatians and said, my children, of whom I again travel in birth until Christ shall be formed, have been formed in you. That's the end objective of the spiritual development of the believer, Christ formed in you.

And on this day, God says, and behold, it was very good. [00:25:03] This is followed by day seven, we heard about the rest.

It is not so much here the rest for the conscience, I think that is day three, when you come to enjoy peace with God, it is not so much the practical rest of having taken up his yoke, which is more day six, when Christ is supreme, but here you come to eternal rest. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

And the old things were no more and the sea was no more. No more waves, no more change, no more agitation, but perfect and eternal rest. So that really, these seven days give a very nice panorama of the spiritual development and may the Lord give that we all make progress in these steps. I trust the light has shone into our hearts and we have discovered that we have a new [00:26:04] and an old nature.

And I urge you, don't rest until you have firm ground under your feet and you have come to day three.

And that would be the good basis to bear testimony, to be lights in this world, to bear fruit even when things are difficult, day five, and to come to the point where Christ is supreme overall and we learn that we are united to him and God wants to give us his full rest. Now this is not to take anything away from the literal meaning, which I said a few words about the spiritual development of the believer, but this is far from being all. You can also read those seven days as speaking of Christ. Of course, he is the son of God, he is the son of man, and he is the son of God in resurrection. [00:27:01] That's days one, two, and three.

He is the one who is the supreme testimony on day four. He is the one who went into the greatest waters and what fruit resulted from Christ being in the waters of judgment, as it says, one day he will be satisfied from the fruit of the travail of his soul.

He is the one, of course, day six, who reigns supreme overall and he is the one only in whom God can give that rest.

Now you could also apply it to the dispensations, I'm not going to do this now. Some have applied it to the seven biographies in the book of Genesis or to the seven feasts of Jehovah. Now I need to leave this to you because we are otherwise running out of time. My point is, it is a very rich chapter.

There is much there for us to enjoy. There is real abundance and I'd like to close with this verse, I have joy in thy word as [00:28:06] one that findeth great spoil, Psalm 119 verse 162.

If we have time to sing a few verses, I'd suggest perfect eternal rest.

I think it's 498.