

Land

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Preacher: Chris Trousdale

- [0:00] Stand with me as we read together this morning. Genesis chapter 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
- ! The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, let there be light.
- And there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. And God called the light day. And the darkness he called night. And there was evening and there was morning the first day.
- And God said, let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters. And let it separate the waters from the waters. And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse.
- And it was so. And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning the second day. And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear, and it was so.
- [1:05] God called the dry land earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called seas, and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind on the earth.
- And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.
- And there was evening, and there was morning the third day. And God said, Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.
- And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.
- And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning the fourth day. And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.
- [2:17] So God created the great sea creatures, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.
- And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening, and there was morning the fifth day. And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds, livestock, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.

And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds, and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

[3 : 35] And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it was so.

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

And on the seventh day, God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Father, take your word by your spirit, and help us to see wonderful things in it. I ask in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. Last week we began this trek through Genesis chapter 1, which I've told you is going to be a bit of a slow trek.

[4 : 45] It's going to take us four or five weeks just to get through the passage that we've just read. And last week we focused most of our attention simply on verse 1.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And I told you that we learn from that verse, and from other places in the scripture that we looked at, that God made everything that exists out of nothing.

God did not take something that already existed, and shape it and mold it into the universe. Rather, he spoke into existence everything.

Once there was nothing but God, and then there was everything. All, we might say, matter and energy that exists in the universe. Verse then suddenly leapt into existence.

God made everything from nothing. And that's the context in which we have to understand the rest of this chapter.

[5 : 43] God made everything from nothing. Which means that when we read through these six days of creation, and then about God's seventh day of rest, when we read about these things, we are reading about the miraculous.

We are reading about things that have no modern day parallel. We can't demonstrate the things that God does in Genesis chapter 1 in a laboratory.

You can't see it recreated in nature around you. These are miraculous events. They are non-repeatable events, unless, of course, God himself chooses to repeat them.

These are not things we will ever see happening around us. We will not see light existing before sun, moon, and stars. We're not going to see those sorts of things.

We're not going to see someone speak, and things suddenly begin to appear and happen and take form and shape. Genesis chapter 1 is a chapter that is filled with the miraculous.

[6:47] And I say that because sometimes we approach Genesis chapter 1 with the desire to try to shape it and mold it and fit it into some preconceived notion of how the universe came into existence or how humanity came to be.

And the reason that we can't do that is because these events are unparalleled. This is the creation and the establishment of everything that is.

I remember hearing a comedian say several years ago, he was, I don't know if you've ever heard of Stephen Wright. He's a really dry comedian, and he just throws out these one-liners that if you think about them for a while, they're funny, but initially they're usually not.

And I remember one of them that he threw out one time is he just said, you can't have everything. Where would you put it? Where do you put everything? Because everything is the place where you would put it, right? You can't have everything.

Where would you put it? Well, this is everything. This is all that exists, and you can't imagine anything else. This is miraculous. This is unrepeatable. And so as we walk through Genesis chapter 1, we're going to keep that at the forefront of our mind.

[7:54] And we're not going, we're going to fight the temptation to try to sort of shoehorn other things into Genesis chapter 1, or to try to get it to say things that we would like it to say.

We're not going to do that. We're going to simply see what God wants to reveal about himself to us in these pages. That's what we want to know. Anytime we open the Word, we're opening the Word so that we can know what God has to say about himself, and then by extension about those who are created in his image.

So we're going to spend this morning with our focus primarily on verse 2, but we'll look at the rest of the chapter to some degree as well. So I want you to look at what it says in verse 2.

Moses tells us that after the creation of all things, he says that the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water.

So three things he says here. The earth is formless and void, darkness is over the face of the deep, and the deep there is like deep waters, darkness over the face of the deep, and then the Spirit of God hovering over the water.

[9:01] So three things we learn about this initial creation of God. It's yet to be shaped and formed into something that would look familiar to us. That's going to happen throughout these six days of creation.

But now initially, all matter and energy exist. God has created everything. And initially, the description that we get is, earth is formless and void.

There's darkness over the face of the deep. The Spirit of God hovers over the waters. And we're going to see all of those things addressed. You're going to see the issue of the formlessness, the voidness of the earth addressed through most of the days of creation.

But before you even get to that, the issue of darkness is addressed. On day one, when God creates light, He's going to confront the issue of the darkness. And then He's going to confront the issue of there being simply waters everywhere.

Water everywhere. He's going to separate the waters, into waters above and waters below. And then on the third day, His focus is going to move towards the earth, or more literally, the land.

[10:13] Part of the difficulty with understanding Genesis chapter 1 today is that most translations translate the word land as earth, which is a perfectly legitimate translation.

There's nothing wrong with it. It's just that when we hear the word earth, we picture the planet earth, do we not? If I hear the word earth, I picture a globe, or I picture a planet floating around in space.

That's the image that comes to my mind. And I don't think that's the image that Moses intended for his original readers to have in their mind when he says the earth here. When he says the earth, what he means is the land.

And if you read through the rest of Genesis, if you read through the rest of what's known as the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, you will find this theme of land everywhere. It's all over the place.

So the central focus of much of the Old Testament is the promised land, which is the same word that we find here. The land. In Genesis chapter 12, the land is promised to Abraham.

[11:14] Abraham is called to go out to a land that he does not yet know, and God says He's going to give him that land. So that land is central in the Old Testament. So it shouldn't be surprising if you look through this chapter, you will find the word land 18 times in this chapter alone.

Now in one of those instances, it's in verse 1 where it's coupled with heavens. And I said last week that the phrase heavens and earth refers to the whole universe. But all other 17 times, it's simply the word earth or land.

And I think that what we're meant to think of there is the ground on which we stand every day. That's what we're talking about here. So that when he begins by telling us that the land was formless and void, he wants to draw our attention literally to the land.

Notice how much this chapter focuses upon the land. I won't point out every instance, but look at a handful of the instances in which we find this. Once God has dealt with the issue of darkness and waters on days 1 and 2, from day 3 through day 6, the focus is very much upon the land.

So you see in verse 11, God said, let the earth or let the land sprout vegetation. Verse 12, the land brought forth vegetation. Verse 15, let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens.

[12:34] Why? Why put the sun, the moon, and the stars in space, in the sky? Why do that? So that they might give light on the land, on the earth. We'll skip over a few.

Move down to verse 24. God said, let the land bring forth living creatures according to their kind. Verse 26, God says that humans made in His image are going to have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the livestock, and over all the land, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the land.

Verse 29, God says that He's given us every plant that is on the face of all the land. So over and over and over, Moses is pointing us back to the land, the ground.

And I think that that's highly significant for us to understand exactly what's happening on these days of creation. Because He is taking what was once formless and void and surrounded by darkness.

And He's making it into a place that is suitable for mankind to live upon. That's what He's doing. In fact, this phrase in verse 2, the earth or the land was formless and void, is a strange, it's an interesting phrase.

[13:58] And the only other time that we find that exact phrase, formless and void, together is in the book of Jeremiah. So I want you to do something. I want you to hold your place in Genesis chapter 1, and I want you to turn all the way over near the back of your Old Testament to Jeremiah chapter 4, because I think this is going to help us to get a picture of what God was shaping and forming, what He was addressing in these six days of creation.

In Jeremiah chapter 4, God is speaking judgment over the nation of Israel, or more specifically over Judah. They've been disobedient, they've gone after idols, they've done all that He's commanded them not to do, and so He's going to bring judgment upon them.

And we look here in chapter 4, all the way down in verse 22, and God begins here to address His people. He says, My people are foolish. They know me not.

They are stupid children. They have no understanding. They're wise in doing evil, but how to do good, they know not. Notice verse 23.

He says, I looked on the land. What land? Well, in this case, the land of Israel, the promised land. I looked on the land, and behold, it was without form and void.

[15:17] That's the identical phrase that we see in chapter 1, verse 2 of Genesis. I looked on the land, and behold, it was without form and void, and to the heavens, and they had no light.

This sounds familiar. I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and behold, there was no man, and all the birds of the air had fled.

I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the Lord, before His fierce anger. For thus says the Lord, the whole land shall be a desolation, yet I will not make a full end.

So to be formless and void here in Jeremiah is a sign that God has now taken the promised land, the land earlier described as a land flowing with milk and honey, and now He has reduced it to rubble.

He has reduced it to an uninhabitable, desolate desert. That's what God has done to His people Israel in response to their sins. Their land in which He placed them, which He gave them by His grace, He has now taken away, and those left to remain in it will struggle because He has made it desolate and a wasteland.

[16:31] And that's the image that we are to have sort of in our minds in Genesis chapter 1 that the land or the earth is not inhabitable. It's not suitable for mankind or animals or any other living thing.

It's not yet suitable for them. This is not some sort of primordial chaotic soup like you find described in many ancient mythologies.

That's not at all what's happening here. God has initially created everything, but it's not yet formed and fashioned for His purposes. That's the point. In order for the land to serve God's purposes, first He sheds the light, then He separates the waters above, maybe creating atmosphere.

Who knows? There's been a lot of speculation, but He separates the waters above from the waters below. You've got seas, and then finally He separates the dry land from the seas so that by the time you get to day three, there actually is land upon which you can stand.

You can't even stand on it in verse 2. It's not only desolate, but it's covered by water. Apparently, it's useless. It's pointless. Yet now by day three, the land has been brought forth by God, and so complete and whole is it by then that He's able to create vegetation.

[17:46] Plants begin to grow on the land at God's command. So now the world, the land, is beginning to look like something man can live upon. This is miraculous. This is amazing.

God does all these things in the span of three days. He takes this desolate wasteland, this watery mass, and now He's shaping it and forming it such that three days later, it's capable of supporting plant life now already.

This is the miraculous. No doubt. No doubt. Day four, He sets the sun and the moon and the stars in the sky for the purpose of giving time markers, marking the days.

Why? For the land, for the plants that are to grow, for the animals that are to be there. And finally on day six, He places the animals upon the land, and it's fully prepared for them.

In six days, the land is ready now to support all kinds of animals, beasts, He says, livestock, creeping little small animals that creep upon the ground.

[18:50] It's ready and capable of supporting all of those sorts of things. This is amazing and miraculous. We need not downplay this or try to explain it away.

In the space of a handful of days, God has now made the world ready. Ready for His final act of creation.

Man fashioned in His image. That's the story of the land and of the earth in Genesis chapter 1. But I want to ask a couple of questions that I think can direct our thoughts in the right way as we read about these miraculous things.

The first question I want to ask is, where is all of this heading, God? You've done this in an interesting, strange way, and people have struggled with this because it seems strange that God would do things this way.

Why would He create light before He creates the sun, moon, and stars? Why would He do that? Why would He originally create in the world some sort of watery mass? Why would He do that? Why so much focus upon the earth?

[19:59] Why so much focus upon the land? Why would He do it in that way? Where is it all heading, in other words? Where is it going? Where is it going? And then the other question I want us to ask this morning is, what's the significance of it?

What's the point of doing it this way? What does it teach you and I about ourselves and about the world in which we live? In other words, why does it matter? Why should it matter to you and I that God did things this way?

Why not just begin with Genesis chapter 1, verse 1, and then jump ahead in the story? Just get us to Adam and Eve and tell us what happens with Adam and Eve. Or jump ahead to Abraham and tell us what happens with Abraham in the history of Israel.

Why do you need to give us all of these details, which are quite frankly not all of the details that sometimes we would like to have, but they're details nonetheless. Why would you give us all of these details in Genesis chapter 1?

What good is that for me? How does that help us to live our lives? How does that shape the way that we think and feel about the world and other people in the world around us?

[21:03] So where is it all headed? And then what does it all mean for us? Where is it all headed? Well, I said before that this is about land. And land is a significant theme throughout the Old Testament.

And even to a certain extent when you get into the New Testament, although it's changed a little bit there, it shifts a little bit there. But land is significant throughout the Old Testament. Turn over just a few pages in your Bible to Genesis chapter 6.

Genesis chapter 6. Which is the beginning of the story of the flood, which occupies chapters 6 through 9. But at the beginning of this story, we're still seeing a focus upon land here.

We'll just jump in at verse 5. Chapter 6, verse 5. It says, Verse 11.

What's significant about all this business about the land and the story of Noah?

[22:43] What it tells us is that that the destiny of humankind is tied to the land and the destiny of the land. So that when God decides to destroy man from the face of the earth, because man's the problem, sin is spreading because of man.

The world is corrupt because of mankind. Man is the problem. There are other problems present in the text, but man is the primary issue here. Man is wicked all the time. Totally depraved.

And God doesn't simply say, I'm going to destroy man. He says, I'm going to destroy the face of the earth. I'm going to wipe man off the face of the earth. There's this very tight connection between the land and mankind.

Very tight. And so far, through these opening chapters of Genesis, through the first 11 chapters of Genesis, almost every time that we come across the word earth or the word land, it means all the land in the world.

It means the whole world, all dry land in the world. But that begins to shift. That begins to change a few chapters later when you arrive on the scene with Abraham, father of the Jewish people.

[23:54] Because God, as I mentioned earlier, comes to Abraham and he calls Abraham to go off to a land that he doesn't know. Genesis chapter 12, verse 1. The Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and from your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

And I will make of you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

So there's a narrowing down. There's a focusing now. So Genesis 1 through 11, it's all the land in the world. Now all of a sudden, Genesis chapter 12, we're still talking about the land.

But now, all of a sudden, the focus narrows to a really specific piece of land in the Middle East. We call Palestine or Israel right there.

It's right there. It's a little specific piece of land. But there's a significance to it. And there's a significance to Abraham's being called to go to that land because it tells us that in Abraham, all the families, literally all the families of the land will be blessed.

[25:06] What land are we talking about there? Is it just the land of Israel? No, because through Abraham, most of the families living in Israel, because of his descendants, most of them were wiped off the map in that area.

What's the point here? That through this man Abraham and through his descendants, all the people in all the land will be blessed.

All the people in all the land will be blessed. All the world. So now what we have happening in Genesis chapter 12, God is saying that what happens in this small piece of land affects what happens in the rest of the land that I've created throughout the world.

And what happens to the descendants of this one man in this land affects the descendants, the families that inhabit the rest of the land in the world. So still we're seeing this tie between land and mankind.

There's still this connection. But now we're seeing that it's begun to narrow down. You want to receive God's blessing? You want to be among those people who, living upon the land, receive the blessing of God?

[26:17] Now it must come to you through a man named Abraham living in a land called Israel. Now, interesting, strange turn of events. And we could track with this all the way through the Old Testament, but it would take us a really long time and we're not going to do that this morning.

So we're going to fast forward in history all the way to the New Testament. So I want you to move up. We're fast forwarding about 2,000 years through history and coming all the way to the book of Romans. So I still want you to hold your place in Genesis, but I want you to come all the way to the book of Romans with me.

In Romans chapter 4, Abraham is being talked about by the Apostle Paul. And Abraham speaks of the promise. Well, what promise? The promise in Genesis chapter 12 that through Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed.

That promise, verse 13, the promise to Abraham and to his offspring is termed this way. The promise that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

So the promise in Genesis chapter 12 that God's going to send Abraham to a land and bless everybody through him is about a lot more than a little tiny sliver piece of land in the Middle East.

[27 : 35] It's about a lot more than that. And so often, we become so focused on what happens in this little piece of land that we forget that the page has turned in history.

We're now living 2,000 years after the promise made to Abraham and the writers of the New Testament, the Apostle Paul himself tells us that that promise there about a little piece of land was about something a lot bigger.

It was about the whole world. It's about all the land. It's about the whole thing. You want to know what the world exists for? You want to know why God made all of these things?

Well, a part of the reason is so that God might give an inheritance and a blessing through Abraham to the world. But the idea of the land or we might say the idea of a place where God's people receive God's blessing even though it's a bigger thing than the land of Israel or the land of Palestine.

It's bigger than that. The idea of a place never fully disappears. One other passage I'm going to make you look at here talking about this. Well, two more, I'm sorry. In the book of Hebrews.

[28 : 50] In Hebrews chapter 11, Abraham is on the scene again, again reflecting upon Abraham and his life. And we are told that by faith, verse 8, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place, Palestine, Canaan, told to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.

And he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith, he went to live in the land of promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

Here's why he went. Why did he go to that land? Why did he go to that place? Because he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

Abraham went to the land of Israel because he was hoping for a place better than the land of Israel. Down in verse 13, these all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return, but as it is, they desire a better country, a heavenly one.

[30 : 13] Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. Now the land is a better homeland. Now the land is a city that God has promised to his people.

Place matters. The destiny of humanity is connected to place or land. It matters. And then at the end, in Revelation chapter 21, this is what we read.

John says, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The new Jerusalem, the city, the holy city, come down from heaven. He asked this question, where is all of this headed? That's the question I asked.

And while we went through all of those scriptures, I'm going to see if I can bring this together for you, okay? Where is all of this headed? There's a focus in Genesis chapter 1 upon a place, upon a land. And there remains a focus throughout the Old Testament on a place and on a land because ultimately, God is aiming to bring His people to a place, the new heavens and new earth or the new Jerusalem.

[31:33] He's aiming to bring them to a place where they receive infinite and eternal blessings forever. That's where it's headed. This is not just about the world that we see around us right now.

This is not just about the land in Genesis chapter 1. The Old Testament is certainly not just about the happenings in the land of Israel. This is about something much bigger than that, much greater than that, that you and I can participate in, that we can hope in, that we can look forward to.

This is about a place that God is making a new heavens and a new earth where all the wrongs that led to the flood, where all the wrongs that play out throughout the Old Testament, where all the evil that we see in the world around us is no more, is erased, is finally dealt with.

And in that place, on that land, in that earth, there is infinite, infinite joy to be had forever.

That's where it's going. That's where it's headed. But here's the catch. You only get there, you only enter that city in one way.

[32:51] In Genesis chapter 12, Moses said that it was through Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed, or through the descendants of Abraham that all the earth would be blessed. And yet, you look in vain throughout the Old Testament for any descendant of Abraham who blesses the world.

You look in vain. David was a decent king. He didn't bless the world. Solomon was wise and expanded the kingdom of Israel further across the land than anybody else.

But he didn't extend the blessings of Abraham any further. No one in the Old Testament does that. until you arrive at the opening of the New Testament.

The record of the genealogy of Son of David, Son of Abraham. On it goes until you arrive at Jesus.

The descendant of Abraham in whom and through whom these great blessings and the whole purpose of creation find their fulfillment.

[34:02] If you ask, where is all of this heading? I'm going to tell you that all of this is heading toward Jesus. All of it. Genesis chapter 1 is not just about how God made stuff.

Genesis chapter 1 is pointing us to Jesus. Why the focus upon the land? Why create human beings in the first place? Why do any of these things?

It's all pointing to Christ. It's all pointing to Him. And the only question of ultimate significance is will you will you live with Him forever in that holy city on the new heavens and the new earth?

Or will you reject Him and live forever under God's condemnation and wrath? There's no other paths. There's no other way. There's no other alternatives.

Everything from Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 Everything in all of history is moving toward this one thing. You live eternal and experience eternal joy in His presence or you endure His just judgment forever.

[35:13] All of that hinges upon whether or not you believe and trust in this one in whom all of history finds its meaning and purpose. all of it.

That's where it's headed. And I wonder if you're headed in the same place. Is your life and your heart and your mind aimed in that direction? That's where it's headed. And what is it on a daily basis what does this mean for the way that you view the world and see things?

Well first of all just understanding the answer to that question changes everything. Just understanding that everything is headed towards all of its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Just understanding that reorients your thinking about everything else.

You can't view the world. You can't view other people. You can't see anything else the way that you used to see it once you understand that He's the center of everything. Your life changes once you see that.

So really I don't have to ask this question because we've given the big answer to it. What does this matter to you? It matters to you because you either have eternal life and joy in His presence or you have eternal condemnation without Him and that makes all the difference in your life.

[36 : 20] It does. But I'll move one step further and say what else? In what other ways does this dwelling upon the concept of the land being shaped and formed and prepared for people what does it matter?

What difference does it make? It matters because because we live in a world that has that has either sought to exalt man to the place of God or sought to demote man to the place of nothing of an ant of no significance whatsoever.

And both of those views are flawed. The universe exists for God. All things are created by Him and for Him the Apostle Paul says. The universe and you and I we exist for God.

So on that level everything in the Bible is radically God centered. It's all focused upon God. God revealed in Christ. Everything centers upon that.

So in one sense in the ways that we think in the ways that we talk we want to be God centered. But there is a sense in which there's some man centeredness to things.

[37 : 44] Be careful here because I don't mean man centeredness as opposed to God centeredness. What I mean here is that the crowning achievement of God's creation is man in God's image. Why all this work of preparing the land?

It's not for the cows. It's for people. God prepares the land for people. He makes the land perfectly suitable for people. He goes a step beyond that in chapter 2.

Not only is all the land on the earth suitable for mankind but now he makes a garden in the midst of the land with abundant fruit trees and everything that Adam and Eve will need and their descendants will need to sustain them and nourish them.

God prepares a perfect place for them. There is a real sense in which we must think in a way that is God centeredly man centered.

And what I mean is that man exists as the pinnacle of God's creation and all of the rest of creation points to man's importance but man is only important and significant because of all that God has made.

[38 : 54] We are the only thing made in the image of God. So even when our focus upon man at the center of creation we see it pointing up out to God even there.

but we would be wrong if we failed to recognize how crucial and important human beings are in all of this.

We sometimes are told that the biblical world view with such a high view of this world such a high view of man made in God's image that that's arrogant.

That that's ignoring the fact that God has made a vast universe and physically speaking at least it appears as if the earth or our solar system or even our galaxy are not at the center of it all physically.

And so we're told that it's arrogant to think that we are the center and the measure of things. It's arrogant to think that human beings possess that kind of importance. Because we're told if there are all these other billions of galaxies surely there are other intelligent beings out there and they're just as important if not more important than we are.

[40:10] We hear these strange things. It's a strange time in which science fiction has so bled over into what we call science it's difficult to tell the difference when you're reading books these days.

Arrogant to place ourselves at the center. And yet God has done just that. crowning achievement of his creation is not the stars.

It's not the spinning galaxies. It's not any of those things. Those all exist. The Bible tells us the heavens are declaring the glory of God.

For whose benefit? The Apostle Paul tells us that since the creation of the world has invisible attributes, namely his divine power, eternal nature, have been clearly seen in what has been made.

The heavens declare the glory of God so that the only creatures in the universe capable of perceiving and enjoying that glory might see and hear their song.

[41:17] We're important. We're significant. And any time that we begin to downplay the significance of other people created in our image around us, we begin to downplay God's purposes for the universe and their significance in our lives.

Any time that you begin to think that any life, at the beginning of life or at the end of life, is less important than something in the middle, you're running contrary to the entire flow of the beginning of the Bible that places mankind above all these other things.

or any time you hold on to hatred and bitterness towards another human being, you are disdaining someone else created in the image of God.

Getting Genesis chapter 1 right, understanding what God intends to communicate about Himself has a great impact upon our daily lives.

It changes the way that we see other people. people. It changes the way that we make decisions in regard to other people. Do we see them as less than ourselves? Do we see them as less than other things around us?

[42:36] Do we treat them as if they don't matter? Do we treat them as if they're dispensable? Not if we believe Genesis chapter 1. all of creation is singing a song for the benefit of your neighbor so that he or she might see and rejoice in the glory of God.

Now stay mad at them because they messed up your lawn. See? all of creation sings a song for the benefit of that despised co-worker.

Now hate them when they annoy you at their desk next to yours. It changes the way that you see the world. But most significantly and most importantly, understanding Genesis chapter 1 points you to Jesus.

Jesus. And I want to do the same thing. I want to say to you that you exist for the glory and praise and honor of Jesus.

And he's gone to prepare a place. And that place will come down someday. You will either live in it forever or you will not. And I urge you, trust in him so that you can experience what he made all of this for.

[43:58] Let's pray. I know, Father, that sometimes we come to this chapter to ask questions of it that it was not written to answer.

And so my prayer is that as we approach it over the next few weeks, we will come not asking our own questions, but looking for questions that it raises for us and finding the answers in it.

we can't even begin to imagine your great power by which you did all of these things.

But we're thankful that he who has the power to do all things has loved us and made us and redeemed us from our sins.

And most of all, Father, I ask that for those who are here this morning who have not trusted in Christ, maybe they have heard a lot about him, maybe they know the basics, but they've just, he's just served in a sort of periphery, off to the side, on the edge roll of their lives, and that now they see faith in Christ is the center and fills everything in their lives.

[45 : 24] And I pray that you would give them the grace to trust in Jesus in that way. I also ask you to take the offering that we're going to take up in a moment and use it for your glory and for the good of your people.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.