

# Genesis

## Introduction

We are all interested in our roots. Children will ask, 'Where was I born?' or 'Where did our family come from originally?' Some people in Britain have journeyed many miles to find the village or the very house where their ancestors lived. People in America have travelled back to the British Isles or Europe or Africa to do this. Going back to our beginnings or roots gives us a sense of belonging, a feeling of significance, of having a place in history. We understand ourselves better when we have some understanding of our own history and our own place in the human race.

That is why it is so important to go back to the beginning of everything concerning this world and mankind. That beginning is set out for us in the first book of the Bible, called Genesis. The name means 'Beginnings' - the start of everything.

Here we are walking about on this planet Earth. We see so many people all around us each day. If you can imagine a video camera that has been running all the time, recording the world's history, what a film it would make! But then imagine being able to run the film backwards. Cities would get smaller, styles of dress would alter, transport would get slower, and peoples would move from their present countries back to earlier centres of civilisation. Before long the number of people on earth would be shrinking to a handful, and then just to the one couple from whom the whole human race started.

As the film continues to run backwards you would see the creation of the animals, birds, and marine life; the sun, moon and stars; the trees and the plants. Next you would observe the separation of land and water, an empty and dark world, and then the great miracle of its beginning out of nothing.

I wonder how many times have you heard the question, 'How did the world begin?' I also wonder how many different theories have you heard from equally brilliant men on how they think it happened? The point is this, that with all their sophisticated equipment and complicated equations they do not know exactly what happened. They will tell you, 'We may reasonably suppose', or 'In the light of present knowledge it is reasonable to assume....' And then they give you their supposition or assumption.

If we had that video film I was talking about, we would know what happened. But we do not have it. What we do have, however, is God's word, the Bible. I know it has been ridiculed, attacked, burned and torn up, but it has outlived, outtaught and outshone all its critics and enemies. The way it has been preserved, the nobility of its moral teaching, the fulfilment of its prophecies, the way it changes people's lives for the better - all these things tell us it is no ordinary book. It is God's revelation to us, telling us about this world and how it began. It tells us about ourselves and our relationship to He who has made us. It tells us how we can come into fellowship with Him through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Genesis, the book of beginnings, we start to learn about God - who He is and what He is like. You will often hear people say that first impressions are the most memorable. They are usually accurate impressions too. Well, in Genesis we receive our first impressions of God, for this is where He begins to reveal Himself to us in his written revelation. I emphasise his 'written revelation' because God has also revealed Himself in this astonishing universe, and best of all in the person of his Son, the lord Jesus.

What we need to do these days is to take the book of Genesis seriously. Sadly, there are even some churches which do not do this, and some preachers who do not believe the first eleven chapters.

They will say those opening chapters contain religious truth, but are not scientifically accurate when it talks about how the world began.

Our Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles certainly did believe them as a true account of what happened at the beginning. They referred to such individuals as Adam and Eve and Noah, regarding them as real people who did just what the book of Genesis says they did. Christians can rely on those early chapters of Genesis just as much as the other parts of the Bible.

The mind of man is naturally inquisitive and is bound to wonder where and how everything began. The answers are in the book of Genesis. Interestingly enough, one Christian organisation now gives itself the name Answers in Genesis to show clearly the basis of its beliefs and Gospel witness.

When we begin to look into Genesis a number of fascinating truths emerge. In the first place we learn about how the world began and what is man's place in it. How often down the centuries have people looked at the oceans, the mountains, the heavens above and wondered about man's role in it all. Genesis tells us, but we learn far more beside.

We learn of man's uniqueness and how he is different from the animals. Genesis describes the special creation of man by God his maker, not by evolution. There is a huge gap between the animal kingdom and the human race. You can give blood transfusions quite safely across the varying nationalities, but animal blood cannot be given to a human being. It is of a different chemical structure. Similarly, organs transplanted from animals do not take; they are rejected by the human body. The various racial groups on earth can inter-marry and produce healthy children because we all belong to the human race.

When animals are bred with those of a different kind you produce a cross-breed or hybrid. That animal tends to be sterile or weak, so you cannot produce a further generation.

This is exactly what Genesis teaches, that each kind produces its own kind, not some other breed which is entirely different. The animal kingdom is a quite separate domain, and although we are fond of animals and should take an interest in their welfare, we are not descended from them. Man is the crown of God's creation here on the earth. We have the responsibility of caring for his creation and managing it responsibly.

You may wonder about things that go wrong in our world; the storms, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, eruptions and earthquakes. You look at all the evil and suffering there is and wonder why we cannot have a better world. Genesis tells us about that too. It tells us not only about the God Who is our Creator, but also about how He has taken the initiative in bringing salvation to spiritually lost mankind. Though man has spoiled God's perfect creation, and through his disobedience, has brought the blight of sin on the world and been separated from his Creator, Genesis tells us that God promised a Saviour in order to show mercy to his rebellious children. That promised Saviour is God's own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In the New Testament letter to the Romans chapter 5 we are told that sin entered into the world through one man (Adam), and in this way death came to all, because all sinned. We are also told that, God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

This, then, is how Genesis gives us our first impressions of God. It introduces us to the great, eternal Creator who is beyond our understanding and yet who has come near to us in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know for your self this great and loving God who made all things and made you? Can you call Him your own heavenly father? Seek Him and call out to Him so that He may reveal Himself to you in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is another verse in the letter to the Romans, chapter 10 verse 13, with which I finish this talk: Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Will you call on Him today?

## Genesis How the Earth Began Part 2

### Chapter 2

In our first talk on the Book of Genesis we thought about beginnings and roots. Now we need to think about one of the greatest mysteries that has occupied the minds of brilliant scientists for centuries, namely, How did the earth begin?

As we begin to discover this book of beginnings, it is right that we start just where we are. Beneath our feet is this globe or sphere we call Earth. It measures almost thirteen thousand kilometres across and weighs many millions of tonnes. In spite of its size and weight, it spins on its axis at sixteen hundred kilometres an hour at the equator, giving us hours of sunlight followed by the darkness of night. The earth travels through space on its orbit around the sun at one hundred and seven thousand two hundred kilometres per hour, covering many thousands of kilometres in a year. I suppose you could say that each one of us is a space traveller aboard the spaceship Earth!

The book of Genesis, the first in the Bible, opens up with this majestic yet simple statement: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Within the sweep of that one sentence we have the beginning of time and space as we know them. Before that beginning all that we see around us and above us did not exist. In the New Testament letter to the Hebrews, chapter 11 verse 3 it says: By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what is visible.

In other words, the universe, all physical matter, is not eternal, it had a beginning, and with this the scientists agree. Stores of energy in the world and in our sun are diminishing all the time, because energy given off may change its form, but it never gets replaced. So, how long ago did it all begin? Scientists have many different timescales, but they are not certain about any of them. Genesis simply states In the beginning, and that verse in Hebrews, that I referred to just now, records that mighty act of God in bringing the worlds into being out of nothing.

Can we learn anything about this God who has made everything. Can we understand in some way how He did it? The Bible record is simple and straightforward in its description of creation. After all, even the greatest minds in science only understand the merest fraction of all that is going on in the physical world. Because of the laws he himself discovered, Albert Einstein, one of the greatest scientists of the twentieth century, concluded that a divine, mathematical mind was behind creation. Genesis chapter one does not give us the mechanics of creation. After all, we wouldn't be able to understand all the complexities of the physics, chemistry, biochemistry, biology, botany or zoology even if we had it in front of us. We are simply told that it was God who created everything.

So what do we learn about this mighty God who made all things? In the Bible we have the fullest written picture available to us. In the Bible we also see Jesus Christ, God's Son. He is the perfect revelation of God's character and being. He is also the one who came to give his life for the sins of the world.

It may be that you have never read the Bible, so let's look into the book of Genesis and see what we can discover together. The first thing we learn is that God is a person. He is not a thing, not some indefinable force or influence or cosmic energy. Ten times in Genesis chapter one we read, And God said... He is the God who speaks. He is a personal God who communicates.

In verse 26 we read that God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness. Here we begin to see the teaching of Scripture that although God is one being, He reveals

Himself to us in three distinct yet not separate personalities. With our limited minds this is something that is difficult for us to understand. The Bible speaks of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, the one God seen in different aspects of his being.

Some people charge Christians with believing in three Gods, but this is not so. The Bible clearly teaches us that The Lord your God is ONE, and this is what we believe and teach. For example, in the second verse of Genesis we read that, The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. In the New Testament, in the first chapter of John's Gospel, we read: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made. These verses go on to say, The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. This is speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ, telling us that the One who made all things became a man and lived among us. So you can see how the one Godhead, God, The Word, who came into the world as the man Christ Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, were involved in creation.

We can further learn something of the wisdom, power and greatness of God when we consider all He has made. In verse three of this opening chapter of Genesis we read that God created light. Without light everything is darkness, nothing can be seen. God created a water vapour canopy above the earth that produced a balanced temperate climate across the world. That is why evidence of sub-tropical vegetation is found in the rocks of Antarctica. It is that vapour canopy that seems to have broken up and deluged the earth at the time of the universal flood in Noah's time and brought about a change in climate.

Genesis chapter one goes on to speak about the creation of the plants and trees, and who cannot but be amazed at the wonderful variety of species and colours that abound in our world? In verses fourteen to eighteen God sets the heavenly bodies in place. As we look up to the heavens the stars still fascinate us, just as they have for centuries. Radio telescopes and the Hubble space telescope are revealing more and more staggering information about the breathtaking distances involved and the immensity of it all.

Have you ever considered how wonderful is the positioning of the sun in relation to our world? Giving just the right amount of heat for warmth, growth and health, if it were slightly nearer everything would be scorched; further away and we would be frozen! That perfect distance is a miracle in itself and evidence of a creator's mind. Likewise the moon, with its beauty in the night sky. Its regular changes influencing our tides and our calendars should cause us to marvel at its exact location in space.

I'll be looking further into God's work of creation in our next Discovery programme. However it may be that even now you find it difficult to imagine the power that created such a wonderful universe. We have finite and limited minds that cannot understand an eternal, all powerful God who by his word alone brought every created thing into being. We must not limit God by our own understanding of things for He is unlimited in his power and wisdom. Sadly, many today are trying to explain creation by denying the great Creator. Paul has this to say about this in Romans chapter one verses eighteen to twenty:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what be made known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

This great and mighty God can be known personally. He has promised to reveal Himself to all who will turn from their sins and place their faith in his Son, Jesus Christ. If you will do this you will experience the love and forgiveness of God who made all things and who made you.



## Genesis How the Earth Began Part 2

### Chapter 3

In our last programme we discovered a number of things about the beginning of this world of ours. We were looking at the first chapter of Genesis - the book of beginnings. We considered the surpassing power and wisdom of God Who is the creator of the heavens and the Earth. Now we are going to look further into God's creating work on the surface of the Earth.

In verses twenty to twenty-two of Genesis chapter one, we read about the creation of all the creatures of the sea and of the birds of the air. Here is the beginning of everything from the tiniest, darting shrimp to the mighty, leaping whale; from the tiny, jewel-like humming bird to the eagle soaring among the mountain peaks. I don't know about you, but I am amazed by the immense variety there is in nature. In our day films and television and books bring us the pictures of underwater explorers and we can only marvel at the shapes and sizes and colours of the creatures that abound in the seas. What beauty is seen in the effortless wheeling of birds through the rising currents of warm air. We marvel at the migratory flights of birds from continent to continent. And this first chapter of Genesis teaches us that all this infinite variety of life has come from the mighty hand of our creator God.

In Genesis one verses twenty-four and twenty-five we read about the creation of the animals. All the cattle, all the creatures of the plain, the desert, the bush and the mountain slopes. Here is the origin of everything from the ant to the elephant. Everything according to their kinds, livestock, creatures that move along the ground and wild animals, all were created by the living God. Each creature was able to reproduce after its own kind, that is, within its own species or family. You can inter-breed those that are related, but you cannot cross a sheep with a dog, or a zebra with a camel or you will end up with a damaged variety or none at all.

Each creature is of its own kind and cannot change into another kind. God's word is absolutely dependable on this point and it exposes the hollowness of the claims made by evolutionary philosophy.

Up to now we have been thinking about the creation of the world and the various life-forms with which we are familiar. I have not yet looked at the creation of mankind. I will be doing that in our next programme. But now I want to make a clear distinction between all the other creatures we have considered and man himself. The Bible makes it very plain that he is in a class apart from anything else that lives and breathes. Mankind looks out on everything around and above him and he wonders, he thinks and considers. No other creature is doing that despite every wonderful instance we have of instinct and intelligence in the animal kingdom.

What then does man see and consider as he looks out on the world and the infinite reaches of the heavens? He sees a world that is part of a solar system where various planets revolve around the sun, our nearest star. It is 93 million miles away with an estimated temperature of 36 million degrees centigrade. The sun loses about four million tons of its mass every second.

The solar system in which we live is just one of many others that make up the vast, whirling collection of stars called galaxies that form The Milky Way. Across the infinite reaches of the universe are thousands upon thousands of other galaxies, all expanding further and further into space.

When you begin to think carefully about all these things, doesn't it make you feel small and insignificant upon this planet of ours? Are we truly the only intelligent life-form

anywhere in the universe that God has made? Is Earth the only inhabited planet? Scientists seem determined to prove otherwise. We have no clear evidence with which to answer this question, but the Bible makes it clear that this world and mankind do have a unique place in the purposes of God.

Genesis does not tell us how God created everything, but we do read that God said, and it happened. Scientific experts try to unravel the mystery of when things began and they have proposed many theories, but we must keep in mind that science can only deal with hard facts. Scientists can only observe processes at work in the universe and draw their conclusions which may or may not be accurate and which are always subject to change.

Who was there when God created everything? No scientist saw how it was done. In the Bible we read of God putting such a question to the man Job. He did this to make Job realise his own insignificance before his Maker. In chapter 38 and verse 4 of the Old Testament book that bears his name we read:

Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have understanding.

The whole of that chapter is full of searching questions to which only God Himself has the answer.

As Christians we accept by faith that God brought all things out of nothing. We read in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 3: By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

There are so many breathtaking, complex processes at work in nature, such fine attention to detail and intricacy of design, that they cry out for a wonderful, intelligent and wise Creator to be responsible for it all.

The important question that we should be asking is not how did God create or when did He create, interesting though the answers might be, but rather we should be asking why? What is the reason behind all this marvellous creation? How can we begin to know the mind of Him who is above everything?

In Isaiah chapter 55 verse 8 God says: My thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways.

We can only discover some tiny insight from what the Bible reveals to us. In The Revelation chapter 4 verse 11 we have this hymn of praise to God: You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power because you created all things and by your will they existed and were created.

In other words, it was pleasing to God to do it. It was his will and purpose that everything in the universes should come into existence. From all this I trust that you will see that we know nothing of God's creative will and purpose apart from what He has been pleased to reveal to us in his Word, the Bible.

It may be that you are thinking, 'Well, not even the first man Adam was there when all this happened. How do we know any of these things?' That is true, but are we to suppose that when God spoke with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden He said nothing to them of their own beginning and that of the world? They are sure to have asked 'Where did we come from?' Just as a child does. It is part of our human nature to question and seek answers to life's mysteries. The answers they received would be carefully passed down the generations until Moses, guided by God's Spirit, set them down in the book of Beginnings - Genesis.

As we have begun to discover something of this mighty Creator, my prayer is that you will be drawn to Him. In Jesus Christ, His Son, this great Creator has become the

Saviour of all who will turn to Him in true repentance for their sins. If you are already a child of God through faith in Christ, then may these thoughts on His immense, creating power be an encouragement and strength to you. At the close of Isaiah chapter 40 we read that - The Creator of the ends of the earth gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

## Joshua The Beginning of Mankind

### Chapter 4

In these programmes we have been discovering the beginning of everything as it is recorded in the Bible book of Genesis. This time we come to the beginning of man on the earth that God created.

When asked about this you will hear many people say, "Oh, that's easy. I know the answer to that. Simple life-forms from primitive cells starting off in slime gradually became more developed in water. They later became fish, then amphibians, then reptiles, then monkeys, then apes and finally men.

People do not seem to consider just how an early spark of life could begin. Nor do they stumble over the infinitely complex structure of even the simplest cell, and yet they persist in holding and promoting this view of how all life began. Incidentally, this is quite an ancient belief, going way back in time. It was not just Charles Darwin's book *The Origin of Species* in 1859 that started it all off. In spite of the lack of scientific evidence, this philosophy is still taught in places of learning around the world. It is found in text books, colourful charts, television programmes and museums. In every case evolution is boldly asserted as if it were an indisputable scientific fact.

But what does Genesis, the book of beginnings, say about all this? In this first book of the Bible we have God's account of how everything began. It is recorded quite simply in Genesis chapters one and two that God created man's body out of the dust of the earth and breathed into that body the breath of life. From man He made woman and then looking on this crowning work of his creation pronounced it all very good. It was perfect in every way.

Did you know that there are sixteen elements that make up our bodies? These elements include potassium, sodium, magnesium, iron, and sulphur. You may be surprised to learn that we are about two thirds water in these bodies of ours. So how do you put all these substances together and get a human being? Genesis speaks of man being specially created, not evolved from lower life forms. As scientists delve into the wonders of DNA, and as they publish the unique and complex codes that are the blueprint for every living thing, so they discover that each species is utterly unique and of its kind. It is not possible for one species to become another. This is one of the most basic teachings of the Bible that is overlooked, dismissed or despised by many today.

So let us look more closely at what Genesis chapters one and two teach us about the creation of man. First, I want to make it clear that these two chapters are not contradictory accounts of the same event as some scholars have said. Genesis is called the first book of Moses. I believe that Moses composed this book under the guidance and inspiration of God. In doing this he compiled the various ancient accounts that had been carefully passed down by God's people from the beginning. Similar accounts of beginnings are found in various parts of the world, but none compares with Genesis for its nobility, simplicity, dignity and reverence. In those other accounts of creation we find strange and grotesque details which are entirely absent from Genesis.

These two opening chapters of the book are looking at the same event, but with a different emphasis. Chapter one is a panoramic view covering the six days of God's creating work, step by step. Chapter two focuses on just one aspect of the creation, the pinnacle and purpose of all that God made - mankind. Chapter two is not written in the same day-by-day style as chapter one and it is serving quite a different purpose.

In Genesis chapter 1 verse 26 we read: Then God Said, ' Let us make man in our image, in our likeness'. This is God in three persons who speaks, the trinity in unity who decided

to make man. It tells us that God, who has perfect fellowship within his eternal being, created us for fellowship and interaction also. That is when we function best. In isolation we do not function so well. We can become self-centred or start to behave strangely. God created us to be in contact with others.

Verse 26 also tells us that we are made in the image of God, after his likeness. There are some who think that this means we exactly resemble God in a scaled down way. The ancient Greeks thought like that, imagining their gods and goddesses to be super humans, a scaled-up version of themselves. The Bible, however, teaches us that God is spirit, not flesh and blood. Being made in his image and likeness, therefore, cannot refer to our physical appearance.

How then are we made in God's image and likeness? It means that we are a reflection of Him in our nature or personality. He is a person, not a thing, and so are we. That gives us worth and significance. But what is it exactly that makes you a person? It is those characteristics of mind, emotions and will, the possession of a spiritual nature that can worship and reflect on spiritual things. It is your conscience or moral sense when you instinctively know whether or not something is right or wrong, fair or unfair. All these features mark you out as a person, not a machine or merely an animal.

But there is something more mysterious and glorious, for we read in Genesis chapter 2 verse 7: The Lord God... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. This is more than God just making him live. That had happened with all the living creatures God had made. Something extra is being said at this point. God here has made man alive in a way that never happened with any other creature.

The significant expression in this verse is, Man became a living being, or living soul. Unlike the other creatures, man was made alive to his Maker, aware of the God who made him and able to relate to Him. Now it is true we often say that man possesses a soul, but we need to remember the Biblical way of thinking. Man is a living soul, possessing both spirit and body.

We also learn in Genesis chapter 2 that the Lord God made the woman, Eve, to help the man and to be his companion. There are differences of gender, but both are made in the image of God, and both are of equal worth in his sight.

Here, then, is the crowning wonder of God's creation - man, created male and female. Made to have a living relationship with the Creator of the universe. You may think that you are very ordinary, counting for nothing among the billions on earth today. The message of the Bible is that you are of infinite worth because you are a living being made in the image of God, and you are precious to Him.

So, in these various ways I have mentioned we were made in God's image and likeness, made to reflect his nature as a person, capable of reasoning and able to have fellowship with Him and with one another. But it is clear that we are not now as God intended us to be when Adam was created. Sin has damaged and spoilt the image of God in every one of us. The Bible teaches us that through the sin, the disobedience, of one man, Adam, death has come upon all mankind for all have sinned. Sin has brought upon us both physical and spiritual death. Spiritual death means that we are cut off from our Maker, no longer able to have fellowship with Him as He intended. But the good news is this: God sent his only begotten Son - the Lord Jesus Christ - into the world, so that we might live through Him. By his death on the cross for the sins of the world, Jesus has made it possible for the image of God to be restored in all who will turn from sin and trust Him as Saviour.

Genesis  
The Beginning of the Day of Rest

Chapter 5

Do you get a day off work each week? Is there one day at least when you have a break from your normal working routine? If this is so, I'm sure you are thankful for it and feel that it does you good. It may be that you are one of those people who manage to have two days off each week and you look forward to what is now commonly called the weekend. This is when you spend more time with the family and use up the hours relaxing or engaging in some sporting activity, or visiting friends or perhaps doing some of those odd jobs around the house. In addition to all that, for the Christian believer Sunday - which is really the first day of the week - is given over to the Lord, with a complete break from everyday work. It will be a day of rest, worship and spiritual refreshment, and a time for fellowship with other Christians.

This custom of a day of rest, a day off work, is generally recognised throughout the world, although the day observed varies depending on local religion and tradition. Where Christianity and the Bible have been the main influence it is Sunday that is observed.

At various times in history this vital principle of a day of rest has been ignored and laws have been passed forcing people to work for much longer periods before having a break. It might have been eight or ten days before time off was given. Do you know that in each instance it was a disaster? Productivity levels fell, the health of workers suffered and the economy of the countries concerned declined. This principle of a day of rest each week was established by God at the world's foundation because God, our Maker, knows what is best for man. It is not wise to interfere with what He has established.

All of this brings us to the question: How did it all begin? When was this principle of a day of rest for mankind established? This is where Genesis, the book of beginnings, can help us. It is there that we read of the very first day of rest. In Genesis chapter 2 verses 2 and 3:

By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing: so on the seventh day He rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done.

This seventh day was to be regarded as different from all the other days for it was the day that God Himself rested from all his work of creation. Creation is clearly described in terms of stages, day by day with a final day of rest. It is to that event that the fourth of the Ten Commandments refers in Exodus chapter 20 verses 8 to 11:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God..... For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

There is much debate about the six days of creation, but we must always make a clear distinction between true, honest science and what may be called scientism which is a philosophy, an outlook that is capable of ignoring, distorting or concealing observed results so as to leave God, the Creator, out of the picture. So, I am not going to enter into a consideration of the timescale of the six days of creation because my main purpose is to explain the principle of a day of rest given by God at the beginning of man's history.

So here we have the teaching of Genesis: God created the world in six days by a power and wisdom beyond all our understanding. On the seventh day He rested from the work of creation. He is not inactive however, for He continues to sustain everything that He

has made. Now He commands a day of rest for mankind. This is to be a day when we can think about our Maker, praise him and be free from our normal toil and duties.

But the question may arise in your mind, How do we get from this the Christian principle of observing Sunday as the day of rest and worship? For the answer we need to look more closely at the word seventh. The Hebrew word for it is shabbat, or in English, sabbath. The word simply means the seventh. It indicates a ratio or fraction: one in seven, or one out of seven. The Old Testament Law required the Children of Israel to keep the last, or seventh, day of the week as a separate day for the Lord. Many Jewish people still keep that practice today.

Why is it, then, that Christians observe the first day of the week as The Lord's Day? For an answer to this we must go to the New Testament of the Bible and to the practice of the early church. It was on the first day of the week, that is early on Sunday morning, that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from death, having yielded up his life on the cross as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. He was crucified on the Friday and his resurrection took place on the third day, the Sunday. It was on another Sunday, seven weeks later that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Church on the Day of Pentecost.

The early believers began to see a pattern in these events. A new era had begun. A new beginning and a new covenant between God and man had been established through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. So they began to meet on the first day of the week which they called The Lord's Day. On that day they came together as the Lord had commanded them, in remembrance of Him and his sacrifice for them. Luke records in Acts chapter 20 verse 7: On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.

The practice of meeting on the first day of the week is also evidenced by Paul's words to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians chapter 16 verse 2: On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income... Writing many years later the apostle John records in Revelation chapter 1 verse 20: I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

The principle of observing one day in every seven as a day holy, or separate, for the Lord was thus kept by the apostles and the early Christians and continues to this day. Although the day is called Sun-day because in earlier times people worshipped the bright light above them, Christians do something far better. On that day they honour the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved them and gave himself for them. They honour the Eternal Father and the Holy Spirit, the creator of all things.

What will you be doing on the next Lord's Day? Will it be a day spent for yourself or will you be praising and serving the Lord your Creator and Saviour Who Himself rested on the seventh day?

Joshua  
The Beginning of Marriage and the Family - Part 1

Chapter 6

In this series of Discovery programmes we have been looking at the beginning of things as described for us in the first book of the Bible - Genesis. This time we are going to discover The beginning of marriage and the family.

In every part of the world the custom of marriage is observed and ceremonies are held when vows are made and commitments entered into. Often vast sums of money are spent, with many guests treated to lavish hospitality. In some places only a very simple ceremony takes place with the exchange of a few gifts and perhaps some money. In each case the day is important, the promises made are significant, and the couple are the centre of attention. Sadly, it is also true that in many parts of the world marriage and its accompanying vows of fidelity and commitment are no longer seen as necessary. Couples live together without formal marriage and so often separate when things don't work out.

However, in many places weddings are still taking place and reckoned to be important. But how did it all begin? What is the basis for this ceremony that Christians and many others believe is so central to family life and to society as a whole? Once again, Genesis is of immense help to us. It tells us of God's purpose and how He wishes only the best for us if we will only keep to his divine plan. Do you wish for happiness in your marriage? Do you look for a healthy, supportive relationship? We will discover that Genesis will guide us in these important areas. In this and the next programme we will be looking at three things that are all vital to this subject of marriage and the family. They are: gender, sexuality and marriage itself.

The first issue is gender. By this I mean the separate sexes, male and female, into which the human race is divided. That is how God has made us. That is how He has constituted the human race and in fact all living things.

In Genesis chapter 1 verse 27 we read: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female, He created them. Later on, in verse 31, we read: God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.

In the perfection of His creating work God made man and woman to live in harmony for what He did was very good. I emphasise this because in the matter of gender, or the division of the sexes, we often find hostility, jealousy, competitiveness, resentment, arrogance and even cruelty and misuse. God was pleased with the male and female structure of the human race that He had made, but many people today resent it and abuse or exploit others because of it.

Across the world we have situations where women are exploited and treated almost as slaves for the convenience and comfort of men. At the other extreme we have women who despise men, who decry marriage, and yet demand the right to have a child without a loving father and husband being involved, or to help in the rearing of the child. In some places baby girls are treated with unspeakable cruelty because boys are considered to be more valuable.

In God's eyes both male and female are precious and of equal value. Until mankind disobeyed his Creator and sin spoiled the human heart, there was a harmony, a balance, a perfection in the gender difference that God Himself had created. Sin not only broke the relationship between mankind and his Maker, it also spoiled the relationship between the sexes.

One of the wonderful things about the Christian good news is that through our Lord Jesus Christ true believers are re-made as brothers and sisters in Him. A new and loving

relationship is created. In Paul's Letter to the Galatians chapter 3 and verse 28 we read that differences of race or social standing or gender do not matter when it comes to being a Christian. In our spiritual lives we are all one in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul was not saying that these differences do not exist for obviously a Jew is still a Jew and a Gentile a Gentile. In his day a slave remained a slave, not possessing the freedom enjoyed by others. There was still the difference between the sexes - male and female. Paul was reminding his readers that as children of God these differences did not in any way affect their relationship with the Lord.

In the First Letter of Peter chapter 3 and verse 7, each husband is reminded that honour is to be given to his wife because she is a joint-heir with him of the gracious gift of life. In other words she shares equally with him in the grace or mercy of God and all the blessings of spiritual life. So often it is the case that a husband would be very much weaker spiritually without the strong, godly influence of his wife. So men, in no sense think of yourselves as spiritually superior just because you are a man!

When we look into the four Gospels we find that the Lord Jesus Himself showed nothing but kindness, support, sympathy and respect for women. The apostle Paul often expressed his gratitude for the hard work and loyalty of the women with whom he came into contact.

This whole question of gender needs to be related to what we discover in the Bible concerning God's creation of woman. You will find this set out in a simple way in Genesis chapter 2 verses 18 to 23.

The first principle to establish is that woman was created because man was incomplete without her. It was not God's purpose for man to exist without companionship. This is why we read in verse 18 that God said, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.

The second principle we discover is that woman was made from man. We see this in verses 21 to 23. This means that the woman shares Adam's human nature completely. She is of a different gender for this is necessary for the continuation of the human race. She may not usually have the physical strength of man, yet in powers of mind, will and spiritual awareness she may equal or excel him. In emotions she may be different, having a greater degree of sensitivity and often feelings are important in her life and the decisions she makes.

We read in Genesis chapter 2 verse 23 that Adam recognised in the woman his own nature. He said of her, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman' for she was taken out of man. Adam did not see in the woman anything that was alien or inferior to himself. She was a part of him, taken from his side. The gender differences should not make for alienation between the sexes as we so often see in our modern world. It should not lead to the attitudes of superiority or inferiority that have characterised many societies down the ages.

It is the sin of disregarding the God-given order of things that has driven this wedge between man and woman and has also led to unnatural sexual relationships, men with men and women with women. Such relationships are condemned by God.

In the beginning the Great Creator made mankind male and female so that together in families they might live for his glory in purity, love and joy. It is only as we obey that principle that we find true fulfilment and avoid all the social evils that follow on from disregarding God's perfect will.

Joshua  
The Beginning of Marriage and the Family - Part 2

Chapter 7

Last time we discovered from the opening chapters of Genesis that God created humankind and that He made them male and female. We saw that because of human sinfulness gender difference often becomes gender division. God did not intend such breakdowns in relationship, but designed us to live happily and harmoniously, male and female sharing in life together in a constructive and compassionate manner.

On this programme I want to look more carefully into the matter of human sexuality and how it ties in with God's design for marriage. To do this we will look at Genesis chapter 1 verses 27 and 28. We discovered last time that God created mankind as male and female and that when He surveyed all that He had created, He pronounced it to be very good. All that God made was perfect, including the man and the woman. Each possessing differing sexual characteristics and capabilities according to God's design and purpose was well pleasing to Him. We need to establish this beyond all dispute as this is what God's own word teaches us.

We need to establish that principle very clearly because of what we see around us in the world today. In matters of human sexuality virtually no reference is made to God's pronouncement on these matters. The way men and women behave in their sexual relations with one another in the world at large is completely at variance with the divine purpose and plan. The only reference points seem to be selfishness, pleasure, money or cruelty and exploitation. Look at what is going on around you; read the newspapers; see what is filling television and cinema screens and magazines, and I think you will agree that human sexuality is being widely abused and misused.

Human sexuality, then, was designed and created by God and received his blessing. It is a gift given to us through which, in the bond of the marriage relationship, we can find true joy and fulfilment. In Genesis chapter 1 verse 28 we read that, God blessed the man and the woman and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.' In other words God was saying to them, You have been given the capacity to reproduce and this is my will for you. This has my blessing so that the earth will be populated by children born to you.

Now remember, at this point I am only dealing with the fact of human sexuality and the increase of mankind through the union of man and woman. The setting for it, the God-ordained relationship of marriage, I will come to later. What is being established here in the opening verses of the Bible is that God made us with the mental, physical and psychological capacity for the fulfilling of his purpose that the human race should grow from his original creation and so populate the Earth.

I emphasise all this from these words in Genesis chapter 1 because the sexual nature of man has been affected by his fall into sin. He no longer glorifies God with his sexuality. He simply pleases himself. He does not consider consequences. Little or no regard is given to those who are hurt or harmed by lustful behaviour. Selfish pleasure is the only motive and there is resentment against the restraints found in God's Word.

Now, God's design for sexual activity is for something that is in itself pure and fulfilling. It was meant for a human race that lived in a loving relationship with Him and walked with Him and pleased Him in everything. It is corrupt human nature that has debased the whole subject, given it a bad press as we might say. At the beginning it was not like this, being spoken of freely by God to Adam and Eve without any sense of shame or embarrassment.

Let it be clearly understood that God our Creator does not ignore the debasing of human sexuality for commercial and personal exploitation. He does not ignore the cruel and vicious attacks on women and girls that are so commonplace. Neither does He ignore the promiscuity and unfaithfulness that is so widespread in our day. The awful consequences of this are seen in the ravages of widespread sexually transmitted diseases and the number of children born outside a stable and legitimate relationship, many to very young girls. The whole scene shakes its fist in the face of God and everything He meant human sexual relations to be. His judgement will fall and is already falling on those who do such things.

Can I say to you, if you are caught in this evil web of a godless, selfish sexuality, there is a way to forgiveness and cleansing. There is a way to freedom and true wholeness. That way is the way of genuine and sincere repentance towards God for your sins. It is the way of faith in Christ who died for your sins on the cross. Only God who made you can deliver you from your fallen human nature and give you the power to overcome. He alone can cleanse your conscience as you turn to Him for forgiveness and turn away from your old practices.

We are going to discover now that the gift of our sexuality is to be exercised only within the bonds of marriage. Even allowing for the wide variety of customs in our world, there is still a basic understanding that marriage is the coming together of a man and a woman in a serious, life-long commitment to each other. However, in many places this is a principle that is being abandoned, or regarded at best as a nice ceremony with little lasting significance. This is why we need to return to the first principles as found in Genesis chapter 2.

In verse 24 we read these words: For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. This would be the fulfilment of God's command that they should be fruitful and increase in number.

This verse also makes it clear that the physical union of a man and a woman is to be the expression of their life-long union: They will become one flesh. This is a God-given principle that we ignore at our peril. We live in a world where this concept is being abandoned, but there is a very heavy social and personal cost. Becoming one flesh is just seen as part of brief relationships and casual friendships with no regard to God's pattern of being joined together for life. It has lost its deep significance, resulting in a very unstable society where people drift in and out of marriage or short-term relationships without considering any real, binding commitment to one another. A result of all this is the breakdown of family life and its devastating effect on countless numbers of children and the increase in so-called one parent families.

If you are contemplating marriage then seek to enter upon it in the way that God intended, as a life-long commitment. If you are a Christian then seek God's will for the right partner who is also a committed believer so that you can walk together in his ways. The establishment of Christian homes, built on stable, loving relationships, where God is honoured and obeyed, will make an impact for good on our world.

The New Testament uses marriage as a beautiful picture of the union of Christ and his Church. A union based on true love - his love for his people and our love for Him. Such a picture surely emphasises the sanctity of the marriage bond and why we should look on it, and our human sexuality, as something good and pure that comes from God Himself.

Joshua  
The Entrance of Sin into the World

Chapter 8

Can you imagine a world with no hospitals, no old people's homes, no graveyards or funeral processions; a world with no prisons, no rioting, no policemen, and a world with no locks on doors, in fact no keys needed anywhere? Can you picture a society where there is no murder, no rape, no robbery or violence; where there is no drug-dealing, no drunkenness, no lying or cheating. In fact no corruption of any kind. Can you try to imagine such a world? It's hard isn't it? You would say, A world like that would be on another planet. It certainly is not like that where I live! You are right. Such a world is far removed from the one we know. And yet a world like that was just what God intended. His original purpose was for a place without evil of any kind where people loved Him and obeyed Him and loved one another. It would be heaven on earth.

When God created the world and the first human beings, everything was perfect. So what was the dreadful thing that happened to this world and to the people in it that caused the evil and corruption that we see around us and inside us? The answer is found in the opening chapters of the first book of the Bible - Genesis, the Book of Beginnings. We discover in Genesis chapter 3 that it was the disobedience of man that brought about his fall. It was the entrance of sin into God's perfect world and into the nature of mankind, where it had not previously existed, that brought about the situation in which we find ourselves today.

Let us be clear on this: sin is not some small slip-up, some silly mistake or some regrettable error. It is far more serious than that. It is nothing less than human nature defying God, the Creator of the universe. It is shaking our fists in the face of God and deciding that we know what is right. Sin is man wanting to be in control of everything and not tolerating any interference from God. Sin is saying in effect, I come first with no room for God or for others.

When God created the first man and women they were innocent, without a trace of sin in them. He placed them in the Garden of Eden and they had an unspoilt fellowship with their Maker. The continuance of that fellowship would depend on their giving loving obedience to Him as we discover in Genesis chapter 2.

God had provided a beautiful environment for Adam and Eve. He did not abandon them to a wilderness or desert and we read in verse 9 that, The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground - trees that were pleasant to the eyes and good for food. God catered for their visual pleasure, just as you and I find pleasure in looking at flowers and beautiful trees with their colourful leaves and blossoms and their varieties of fruit. God also catered for Adam's sense of taste or appetite for the trees were good for food. In verse 10 we see that a river flowed out of the garden to water it, and it would also provide refreshment for the man and his wife. To complete Adam's happiness, we learn from verse 15 that he was put in the garden to care for it. God gave him satisfying work to do as a gardener looking after everything growing in Eden.

Beyond all this, verse 9 also tells us that God provided something more wonderful than we can imagine. We are told that in the middle of the garden was the tree of life. Chapter 3 and verse 24 tells us that taking of the fruit of this tree would enable the man and woman to live for ever. So much was being given freely and generously to Adam by God. How could there be any complaint against his Maker?

To test his willing submission to God, for Adam was given the freedom to choose, God placed on him one simple requirement. Also in the middle of the garden was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There was nothing harsh or oppressive about his requirement as we discover from the account in Genesis chapter 2 verses 16 and 17:

And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat of any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die'.

God was putting Adam on probation. He was requiring of him submission to his will, that is obedience. Was that single requirement unreasonable or harsh? After all, Adam had the complete freedom of the garden, with everything in it for his enjoyment. All that God required was obedience concerning the one fruit, just one out of hundreds. The willingness of Adam and Eve to obey God was soon put to the test and tragically they seemed to have considered God's requirement to be unreasonable.

The tree that tested their obedience was called by God The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As created Adam had no knowledge of evil, he had known only what it was to be good. However, when he disobeyed God's command and ate of the fruit of the tree, at once both Adam and the woman knew what evil was and their consciences were awakened. God had clearly warned Adam that if he ate of the fruit, on that day he would surely die, or as the Hebrew language expresses it, dying he would die. This is a slightly unusual expression indicating that death, both spiritual and physical would result. From that moment of disobedience Adam's spiritual link with God died. He became spiritually dead to God, just as when you unplug an electrical appliance it is disconnected from the source of power. At that moment Adam and Eve began to die physically. No longer would they live forever as God had intended. Their bodies would gradually age and eventually die.

So we have discovered that man was created originally by God as a righteous being, to live eternally in absolute harmony with his Creator whom he knew and had fellowship with in the garden day by day.

But Romans chapter 5 verse 12, in the New Testament, tells us that, Sin entered into the world by one man (Adam) and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned... Neither death nor sin was in the world before Adam disobeyed God. It was plainly not God's intention for us to experience sickness, disease, ageing and finally death. It was certainly not God's purpose that we would live in a world ruined by selfishness and disregard for his moral laws.

This, then, is how sin entered the world. It came in through Adam failing a simple and reasonable test of his willingness to freely obey God. Despite the kindness and mercy of God in providing everything that would make for a happy and fulfilled existence, Adam chose to go his own way and in so doing brought the greatest injury and sorrow to all mankind. This is why we have a world like ours today.

We have all inherited the disobedient nature of Adam and in consequence we are all sinners. To change the world, people need to be changed from within. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is changing people and is reversing the consequences of sin. In Romans chapter 6 verse 23 we read: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 5 verse 8 tells us: But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. On the cross of Calvary Jesus Christ was punished for our sins to deliver us from death and reconcile us to our Creator God.

You do not have to continue in your own selfish and rebellious ways and one day face the righteous judgement of God. If you call on the Lord, confessing that you are a sinner in need of his salvation, then He will hear you. God sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to save sinners, and to make them into a people who love God and seek to honour and obey Him. The Christian believer can say with the apostle Peter: But in keeping with God's promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. (2 Peter 3: 13)

Joshua  
The Beginning of Temptation

Chapter 9

We are continuing our discovery of the beginning of things as recorded in the first book of the Bible - Genesis. This time I am going to consider The Beginning of Temptation.

Whoever you may think your worst enemy to be, we learn from Genesis chapter 3 that our greatest enemy is a very real being called Satan, or the devil. The Bible tells us that he is a fallen angel who rebelled against God, and who because of his pride was long ago cast out of God's presence. It is in this chapter that we read of the beginning of temptation, and it is Satan who is involved. We read of a serpent who tempted Eve to disobey God by eating of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve then involved Adam and so by that one act of disobedience sin entered the human heart.

Now it may seem strange to you that Genesis describes the first temptation as coming through a serpent, but the last book of the Bible, The Revelation, speaks in chapter 12 verse 9 of that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. The serpent is described as crafty in Genesis 3 verse 1. This means that it was cunning, sly and tricky, the very characteristics of Satan himself. In some way Satan used the serpent and spoke through it to gain access into the mind of Eve first of all.

Now we need to remember that Satan, as a rebel against God, was in opposition to everything to do with God, including His creation. He was determined to come between man and his Maker, dragging Adam into rebellion and into the punishment for which Satan and his followers are destined. It is a great mystery why God chose to allow such things to happen. It is beyond our limited human understanding. We must not question the infinite wisdom of God in all this, but we can be sure that his ultimate purpose is for good.

We need to remind ourselves that before the events recorded in Genesis chapter 3 took place, our first parents were completely innocent. They were created by God as perfect beings not knowing anything evil. They were created with a totally free will. They could choose to obey or not to obey God's command that they must not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Such was their state when Satan approached the woman with the first temptation to face mankind. Their innocence and freedom was lost when both the woman and the man chose to disobey God, and so they fell into sin.

It was to Eve that our great enemy directed his subtle words. Listen to what he said as recorded in verse 1: Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'? With this question he was sowing doubt and confusion in the mind of the woman. He was twisting God's words to make Him appear an unreasonable Creator. By her reply Eve showed that she fully understood God's instruction and warning regarding the trees in the garden. She said: We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die'. Still Satan persisted in raising questions in her mind, this time by causing her to doubt that she and Adam would die if they disobeyed God. He further suggested that all God was doing was frightening them off. He said: For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. Satan's suggestion was that God was withholding from them something He enjoyed, but wanted to keep back from them.

All this was a misrepresentation of the truth. It was because God loved the ones He had created, and wanted to keep them from harm, that He warned them not to touch that one tree. Just as a loving parent warns a child about the dangers of going near fire or a fast-flowing river, so God warned his children of the consequence of their disobedience. But they were free to choose.

So, here we have the devil encouraging Eve to test God's word, to find out what it is like to take a risk, to step over the line. God's word was twisted and doubted and the temptation proved too much for the woman. In verses 6 to 8 of Genesis chapter 3 we read of the very first act of disobedience, the first transgression that resulted from the first temptation. Eve looked at the forbidden fruit and saw that it was good for food, and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom.

She did not just stop to look, for verse 6 goes on to say, she took some and ate it. The pattern is the same in us all today: listening, looking, thinking and then doing. That is how we so easily fall into sin, time and again. When we listen to the voice of the tempter and doubt God's word and his love for us, then we are on the slippery slope to disobedience just as Eve was. Sadly, she also involved Adam in her sin for she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. So both the man and the woman disobeyed the command of their Creator and would soon experience the consequences.

With that one act of disobedience their consciences were awakened and they knew that they had done wrong. With their sin came a sense of guilt, shame and uneasiness. When the Lord God came looking for them in the garden, for the first time they were afraid and they hid themselves from Him. Of course they could not hide from God any more than you or I can.

He knew exactly where they were and what they had done.

When people are faced with their sin and wrongdoing they often try to hide it. Sometimes they will do this by laughing it off, or by angry denials. Others will try to quieten the voice of their conscience by turning to pleasure, or to alcohol or to drugs. It doesn't work, for our sin still has to be faced and dealt with, and a righteous, holy God has to be faced one day.

In verses 9 and 10, when God asks Adam where he is, the guilty one gives a reply typical of man in his fallen condition and estrangement from his Maker, I was afraid. I hid myself. When challenged by God over his disobedience, Adam blames the woman whom God had given him.

How readily we blame others for our own sinful acts, seeking to make excuses. But, like Adam, we must take responsibility for our own actions and face the consequences. No longer would they have access to the tree of life and their daily work would become hard instead of being easy and pleasant. Unbroken fellowship with God and immortality had both been lost.

At the end of Genesis chapter 3 we read these words: The Lord God made clothes of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. The skins of animals speak of a sacrifice that had to be made in order to provide for the two guilty sinners. Here is the first glimpse of the gospel truth that without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sins. Another hint is given in verse 15 where we are told that the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, but that the serpent would strike the coming one's heel. This was God's promise that one individual, born of a woman, would destroy the evil works of our great enemy, the devil.

That one is none other than God's own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ who, in the words of 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 18, died for sins once for all, the righteous one for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. The Son of God has indeed come into this world as the second Adam. He was tempted in all ways, just as we are, yet He committed no sin. He lived in perfect obedience and then willingly gave his life on the cross to atone for our sins. You need not struggle and agonise in your fear and guilt, for Christ has paid your penalty. Turn from your sinfulness and trust Him as your Saviour today.

Genesis  
The First Gospel Promise

Chapter 10

Last time we discovered what Genesis, the book of beginnings, has to say about the very first temptation to sin. We saw that Satan, the great enemy of our souls, in some mysterious way used the serpent to tempt the first woman to disobey God. She involved Adam in her disobedience and so through the man sin came into the world and death as a consequence became the lot of all mankind. That death was both physical and spiritual. Spiritual because the communion with his Maker that he had enjoyed from the beginning was broken. Man's sin had come between him and God and separated him from the source of life.

This time I am going to direct your attention to a little-known verse in Genesis. I do so because it is the first of many prophecies in the Old Testament of the Bible which point towards our Lord Jesus Christ long before He appeared, born as a baby in Bethlehem. You will find this prophecy in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15. God is speaking to the serpent, and so to Satan who used that creature: And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. God was saying that a prolonged warfare would exist between the devil's offspring and the offspring of the woman, but that a time would come when Satan would be fatally wounded, albeit at the cost of injury to the descendant of the woman. The whole sweep of Scripture points us to the fact that this seed of the woman was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

This prediction and promise was mercifully given immediately after the abysmal failure and rebellion of our first parents, Adam and Eve. God's promise was this: From the human race, someone born of a woman would arise who had would have the character and power to overthrow Satan, to defeat him utterly, and so liberate sinful man from his grasp. In revealing this remedy at the very dawn of man's sinfulness we see that it is God who takes the initiative for our salvation. It is only God Himself who can provide the remedy for man's sin.

In spite of this, the descendants of Adam and Eve keep on thinking that they can do something themselves to make things right again. All over the world men and women work hard at trying to improve themselves. They follow some code or religion that they hope will please God and give them happiness beyond this life. But it is all in vain, for only God's way to forgiveness and salvation, prepared from the beginning, will do.

It is plain that God revealed the remedy to the hopeless couple. He was the one who would restore what they had lost by their disobedience. As you read Genesis chapter 3 you will see that, although punishment for their sin is declared by God, his wonderful promise of hope is given first. He shows them mercy before their banishment from the Garden of Eden. There was to be a way back into God's presence. It would be a way of God's ordaining and God's provision.

God's method of deliverance from sin and Satan was being revealed in the expression the seed (or offspring) of the woman. It pointed ahead to the one who would come as a human being to bring salvation. But why not say the seed of the man, or Adam? There is an important reason for this. It was by the disobedience of the man, Adam, that sin entered into human nature and is inherited by us all, men and women. In God's wonderful purpose, the promised Saviour was to be one of us, but without a fallen, sinful nature. So the Lord Jesus Christ was born of a woman, the virgin Mary, but He was conceived in her by God The Holy Spirit. He had no earthly father so was not the inheritor of sin from Adam, the head of the race. This was essential so that He could offer up a perfect life in sacrifice for our sins.

In Luke's Gospel chapter 2 we read that the child to be born to Mary would be called The Holy One, the Son of God. This birth of the one who would be both God and man, divine and human, was also prophesied in Isaiah chapter 7 verse 14: Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Immanuel means, God with us.

This earliest Gospel promise in Genesis speaks not only of the Saviour coming into the world as a human baby, but it also says something about his sufferings. God said to Satan, concerning the seed of the woman, You will strike, or bruise, his heel. In other words, in his humanity the Deliverer would experience terrible injury. There were many attacks made by Satan on our Lord Jesus during his earthly life. He was tempted in all ways, just as we are. He was betrayed and denied and rejected. He was given a mock trial, insulted and beaten before finally being taken outside of Jerusalem and crucified like a common criminal.

All of this was the work of the serpent, or Satan, attacking the seed of the woman, our Lord Jesus, the promised Saviour. But all these attempts by the devil, using wicked men, to destroy God's Son were of no avail. We read this concerning the Lord Jesus in Acts chapter 2 verses 23 and 24: This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to a cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

This prophecy in Genesis chapter 3 not only speaks of the Saviour's incarnation and sufferings, but also of his triumph. Although the serpent would crush his heel, we read that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. That blow was far more deadly for at the cross the power of Satan was broken for ever. This is why, in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 14 we read concerning the Saviour: Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

However, I need to remind you that when a snake receives a mortal blow to the head it continues to thrash around in its death agonies and is capable of inflicting a dangerous bite. That is how it is with Satan as he continues to bruise or strike at the heel of the seed of the woman. In the broader sense this includes all who belong to Christ for his sufferings are continued in his people, even today. If you are being persecuted for your faith as a Christian believer, remember it is part of the desperate thrashings of a dying serpent whose end approaches.

Perhaps you are someone who is only too conscious of Satan's evil power in your own life. If so, then turn from your sin and trust in Christ as your only Saviour and Lord. He is The seed of the woman. He is the One who came among us as a child, sharing our humanity so that He could offer up his perfect life on the cross for our sins. He is a merciful Saviour to whom you can go with complete confidence for He has said. He that comes to me, I will in no wise turn away. Come to Him today.

## Joshua The Beginning of Violence

### Chapter 11

We have been looking at the opening chapters of the Old Testament book of Genesis. This time we come to Genesis chapter 4 where we see The Beginning of Violence.

Can you imagine a news headline that said: No murders in the past month, or No war in the world for the past year? That would certainly grab your attention! Sadly, headlines like that are not very likely in this sinful world of ours. The wickedness of the human heart finds expression in all manner of violence and cruelty.

But why are we like this? Why do we have angry, vicious thoughts, even if we don't go on to hurt others or commit murder? And where and when did it all begin? Modern science with its theory of evolution seeks to convince us that we are just animals who are evolving with strife and competitive urges within us. We are told that it is all part of the process of nature and the way higher life forms develop. Higher life forms! At times mankind seems to be more savage than the beasts; and with his intelligence devises the most awful cruelties to inflict on his fellows. It is probably true that man is the only creature on earth who can kill for pleasure.

The book of Genesis in the Bible gives a quite different explanation. The Bible is God's Word and it does not say that we are evolving from lower life forms with some primitive, violent characteristics remaining in our make-up. Rather, it teaches that mankind has fallen from a state of noble innocence and is not living as God intended from the beginning. Something has entered human nature that has ruined it and is the cause of all the violence that we see around us.

We have already discovered in this series that our first parents, Adam and Eve, lost their state of innocence because of their pride and rebellion against God's command. We have also discovered that through the disobedience of Adam his sinful nature has been passed on to us all. Soon this nature showed itself in a terrifying way in their first child. In Genesis chapter 4 we read that Eve gave birth to a son, Cain, and after that to another boy, called Abel. It is in the relationship between these two brothers that we see the emergence of hatred and eventually murder.

It happened like this: Cain became a farmer while his brother Abel became a shepherd. It is evident from the account in Genesis that both of these young men has been taught how they should worship God. So we read in chapter 4 verses 3 to 7, In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you...'

Cain had approached God in the wrong way and his heart was not right. God told him that if he came in the right way he would be accepted, just as Abel had been accepted. We read that Cain became very angry. He sulked and harboured resentment towards his younger brother. This is so often how hatred begins. It starts with some bitterness or jealousy, some unkind or angry thought that eventually rages out of control like a forest fire. So it was with Cain as he rejected God's gracious word to him that if he came in the right way, and in the right spirit, he and his offering would be accepted.

We read on, in verse 8: Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Now this was

an outrage against heaven itself. Human life is deeply significant, for we are all made in the image of God. The gift of life comes ultimately from God Himself and it is to be held as sacred and not taken carelessly.

Now we need to be clear that, although murder is condemned by God, there are guidelines in the Bible concerning what is murder and what is manslaughter, that is the accidental killing of another. There are guidelines on the requirement of justice taking its course against those who commit murder and on the unavoidable prosecution of war that besets this troubled world.

There are various lessons and warnings to be discovered from this account of the beginning of violence in Genesis chapter 4. So, I want to look more closely at this man Cain who is the first example of one who first hated and then murdered his own brother.

The first lesson has to do with Cain and his situation. It is a fearful thing to realise that Cain was the first child of the human race. What an example he might have been for good. What a joy he might have brought to his parents, but it was not to be. Sadly, his parentage determined his nature, as it does with all our children. They inherit from us not only characteristics and looks, but also a fallen, sinful nature, just as Cain did from Adam. The potential for all kinds of evil and wrongdoing, for violence and even murder is in all of us.

In Proverbs chapter 4 verse 23 the following warning is given: Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. The Lord Jesus Christ, in Mark chapter 7 verse 21, warns us that it is: From within, out of men's hearts come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these come from inside and make a man unclean.

Tragically, Cain did not recognise the depths of evil in his own heart. You and I belong to the same fallen, corrupt humanity. The most unlikely people can be violent and even commit murder given the motive and opportunity. That is why God wants to give you a new heart and a right spirit. He wants to deliver you from sin's power and make you clean.

Now let's look at Cain and his sin. There was sin in his heart. He became angry because God would not accept his sacrifice. Anger is often the first step to hatred and then to worse. Guard against it.

Then there was sin on his lips. In verse 8 we learn that he talked with Abel his brother, out in the field. Poor Abel suspected nothing because his older brother talked deceitfully with him, before striking him down. People can talk so smoothly yet hide their murderous intent.

Last of all there was sin in his hands as he dealt the death blow. So, you can see how his sin progressed from his heart to his lips and to his hands; from the thought to the action. And so the first murder on earth was committed and Cain was punished by God, being driven out into exile.

You may be wondering whether there might have been a remedy for Cain before it all got out of hand. Indeed, there was, as there is for all of us. God called on Cain to humble himself and turn from his sin and he would be accepted. So God calls on you today, if you are still in your sin, to humble yourself and admit that you are a sinner in his sight and that you need his forgiveness. The Lord Jesus Christ gave his life on the cross so that you can be forgiven. If you will trust Him as your only Saviour you need never fear any condemnation. You will be forgiven and have no dread of judgement hanging over you. This is the right way, the only way, back to God and to deliverance from the power of your fallen, sinful nature. May God enable you to come that way today.

Joshua  
The Beginning of Nations

Chapter 12

In front of the huge United Nations Building in the city of New York there are around two hundred flags representing the member nations of that organisation. Each nation, even the smallest, has its own flag and its own ambassador and its own set of offices. Within that building there is represented a considerable diversity of language, culture and physical appearance. Where did all these nations come from? Why do we have these differences of language and physical appearance?

We turn again to the Bible book of beginnings - Genesis - for the answer. Written long ago Genesis traces the roots of the human race back to the first man, Adam. Adam was created in the image of God and is the common ancestor of all mankind. The Bible clearly teaches that, although there is this great diversity of appearance and language and culture, the human race is all one. In the New Testament book of the Acts, that great Christian teacher the apostle Paul says this, in chapter 17 verses 26 and 27:

From one man God made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.

All people, whatever their colour or race or culture, owe their very existence to the one true God, the Creator of us all. We all share the same characteristics of humanity, though there is an infinite variety of height, weight, skin colour and hair type. In every part of the globe we find evidence of man's creativity in music, art and literature and a host of other skills. Even in so-called primitive societies this is true. We are all different from each other and yet so very similar. We all have that inbuilt capacity to reach out to our Creator if we will, and He is longing for us to do that. There is only one race, the human race, and the love of God reaches out to us all.

Only one race yet many nations of mankind. Let us discover what the book of Genesis can tell us about where these diversities began.

If you were able to listen to the previous talk in this series you will remember that Cain, the first child to be born to Adam and Eve, murdered his brother Abel in a fit of jealous anger. As a punishment for this great sin God drove Cain into exile away from his parents and from the presence of God. He became a wanderer, and we read in Genesis chapter 4 verse 17 that he built a city and named it after his firstborn son.

While that line of people descended from Cain was developing a similar group linked to Adam and Eve was also emerging. Eve had given birth to Seth whom she recognised as God's replacement for her righteous son, Abel. At the end of Genesis chapter 5 we read that this line from Seth followed the Lord, unlike the descendants of Cain who appear to have followed the way of their rebellious father. So at this early stage in man's history we have diverse groups following different paths. We have those who called on the name of the Lord and those who did not.

Genesis chapter 5 gives us the family tree of Adam on to the time of Noah. At the opening of chapter 6 we are told that, The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. Nothing has changed, has it! Because of this evil situation God determined that He would destroy the world by a great flood and make a new beginning. You know the story, I am sure, for the story of a great flood is known to many cultures and is not found only in the Bible. This new start would come through the one righteous, God-fearing, man, Noah, and his family. God would rescue this man and his family by means

of the Ark. Just as in Noah's day, God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn to Him in repentance for their sins and find salvation through the Saviour He has provided, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible account tells us that just eight persons, four married couples, survived the flood and it is from the three sons of Noah, called Shem, Ham and Japheth, that the main branches of the human family originate. Genesis chapter 9 verse 19 says: From them came the people who were scattered over the earth. From chapter 10 we can trace the different branches of these families for a certain length of time and then from ancient histories in different parts of the world covering many thousands of years.

From Shem we trace the Semitic peoples of the Middle East and North Africa, the Jewish people and the Arabs. Ham is the ancestor of those who moved south into the African continent and south-eastwards towards Asia and the Pacific regions. The descendants of Japheth moved out in various directions and to the coasts and are considered to be the ancestors of the Caucasian peoples.

So there you have it. Whatever your nationality or the colour of your skin, we all had the same beginning, a fresh start after the judgement of the Flood. In the various races of mankind we see wonderful variety, as in all of God's creation, and yet it is our common humanity that unites us as one, all made equal in the image of our Creator.

Have you ever had to learn another language? If you have you will know how frustrating it can be at times trying to communicate properly. At the beginning of Genesis chapter 11 we are told that the sons of Noah and their families and their descendants spoke in a common language, but something happened to divide the people further into different groups.

It all arose out of an act of rebellion against God's express command to Noah that the people spread out and fill the earth. Here in chapter 11 we find men planning to do the opposite. They want to settle down in one place and build a city and a huge tower reaching up to heaven. They evidently hoped that this focal point of power and false worship would guard them against being scattered. So, in verses 5 to 9 we read:

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.' So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel - because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world.

Obviously, down the thousands of years since then, people have migrated all over the world and their languages and dialects have altered and developed with them. In the United Nations that we spoke about at the beginning of this talk there is an army of translators making sure that the proceeding are understood by everyone present.

As we conclude this study my question to you is this: Whatever your nationality or race or language have you responded to the message of salvation through God's Son, Jesus Christ? The God who rescued Noah from sin's judgement long ago loves you and wants to rescue you from your sin and its eternal consequence.

He wants to give you a new beginning and bring you into his family with brothers and sisters of every nationality who love the Lord Jesus. Jesus said to his disciples that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name among all nations. I urge you, whatever nationality you are: Turn from your sinful ways and trust in Christ Jesus today that you may be saved from the judgement to come.

Joshua  
The Beginning of the Gospel

Chapter 13

What would you think if you knew someone was thinking about building a house and was going to start with the roof? What would you say if he told you he was quite happy working his way down to the floor? And what would you further say if he told you that was as far as he would go, with no digging of any foundations? Well, you would come to only one conclusion - the plan was sheer madness.

We are thinking this time about the Beginning of the Gospel. When it comes to the preaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ we have to lay a proper foundation. True preaching of the Gospel rightly urges people to repent of their sins and trust in Christ, but what is the urgency in all that if the hearers have no idea of what sin is and what it has done to us? Why be concerned about God as Judge if there is no general belief in God as our Maker? If we all evolved from primeval slime over millions of years, where is the need for God at all? If there is no God who made us, and made all things, then there can be no absolute laws from God that we have broken.

Furthermore, why fear death and then the judgement if death is just a natural part of the evolutionary process to which we all contribute our little bit? If we survive at all is it just in the influence we have had or in our children whom we pass on as a further stage of evolution? Why should I feel guilty about my sins if it is just in my genes, in my inherited nature and I am programmed that way?

Many people think this way; perhaps you do. These are the ideas that are being constantly fed to us today by the media, but the fact is they do not satisfy us deep down. The true and complete Gospel meets those needs for forgiveness and real purpose and meaning in our lives. There has to be that sense of need and that is why there has to be the laying of the foundations of understanding. We find these foundations in the book of beginnings - Genesis - right at the start of the Bible.

There are four foundational truths of the Good News of salvation that we are going to consider. They are: The Creation, The Fall, The Flood and The Promise. These are the four levels of the Gospel's foundation, found in the opening chapters of Genesis, that are vital to our understanding of its message.

The first level to be laid down in our Gospel building is the fact that God is our Creator. We are not the outcome of the blind, chance forces of an impersonal Nature. The Bible teaches us that God made man, by an act of special creation, from the dust of the ground and by breathing into him the breath of life. Genesis chapter 2 tells us that man became a living being. Mankind was his crowning masterpiece on the face of the earth and the Psalmist reminds us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Revelation chapter 4 verse 11 says: You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.

So the very first principle to lay down as we face up to the claims of the Gospel is that we belong to God by right of creation. We are answerable to Him because it is He who has made us and not we ourselves. But that right is what is proudly resisted and obstinately rejected by man. He wants to be master of his own destiny, just as Adam and Eve did.

This brings us to the next foundational level to be laid down and it is The fall of man. By this I mean that tragic, disastrous fall from innocence and fellowship with their Creator that Adam and Eve had experienced at first. Through their disobedience, thinking they knew better than God, they went their own way and were driven from the paradise where

they had been close to their Maker. As a result of Adam's sin, physical and spiritual death became the lot of all mankind.

Present day science says that death is a part of the evolutionary process. Millions of years of death, it says, in various life forms, is what has brought us to where we are today and has made us what we are.

God's Word, the Bible, says the exact opposite to this. Death is not natural to us; it was not part of God's purpose for mankind. It was imposed on us as a result of Adam's sin and our every instinct is to hate it and fight it as something alien, an enemy that faces everyone of us.

Although physical death is tragedy enough, a far worse consequence of man's fall into sin is spiritual death. At the dawn of creation the first man and woman were spiritually alive to God, able to commune with Him and enjoy his presence. With the entrance of sin into their natures their spirits died and that relationship and communion was broken. Whereas once they found it a natural thing to please God in all they thought, said and did, now it became unnatural. Their whole nature was inclined away from God, not towards Him. This is why we read in the New Testament that the natural state of man is that he is dead in trespasses and sins. Our sins have separated us from our Maker. It is the reason why the Lord Jesus Christ said that we must be born again by God's Spirit and receive a new nature from God Himself.

The next layer of truth to be laid down is the reality of judgement. The world-wide flood of Noah's day brings this home to us. That flood was a judgement on man's wickedness. Sadly, the story of Noah is often trivialised, but the reality is that this was a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. Accounts of a universal flood can be found in the annals of a number of ancient civilisations and not just in the Bible. Rooted in man's memory, and described in God's Word, it serves to remind us that God cannot ignore the wickedness of mankind and that judgement is surely coming. It fell once, long ago, and will fall again, not by flood this time, but by fire. All who die in their sins will inevitably face the righteous judgement of God.

The final element of the Gospel foundation is The Promise. We find this in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 in the words of God to Satan. It is here that we have the first indication that a Saviour would come to destroy the tempter and bring deliverance: I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel. In other words, someone born of a woman, born into the human race, would come as God's provided deliverer.

We discovered last time Seth and his descendants were those who called on the name of the Lord, they were believers. Noah was one of these and it was from the line of his son Shem that Abraham came, the father of the Israelite nation. It was to Abraham that God gave the promise that a great nation would come from him, and out of that nation would come that one person who would be a blessing to the whole world. That promise, first hinted at in Genesis and repeated to Abraham and his descendants, was fulfilled many centuries later in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These, then, are the foundation stones that lead us to an understanding of the Christian Gospel. God is our Creator and we are answerable to Him. We are all sinners by nature and practise and as such face judgement. But God, in his great love for those He made, promised a Saviour and that one is none other than his own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whatever your situation you need to believe in Him for peace with God, for Genesis reveals that everyone of us is a descendant of Adam. That is where it all started to go wrong, but in God's mercy that is where it started to be put right. My prayer for you is that through this series from Genesis you will remember your Creator, come to see your need of Christ as your Saviour and come to God in repentance and faith, calling on Him for salvation.

