

## **Seven Days of Wonders Part 2 of 4 : Days 1 to 3**

*[Please note : English Standard Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Today's talk is the second in a series of four, with the overall title "Seven days of wonders." These talks cover the first 34 verses of the Bible, from Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 to Genesis chapter 2 verse 3. Let's now read that passage in full. I'm reading from the English Standard Version.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

And God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the

night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, 'Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.' So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.' And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

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

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation."

## **Introduction**

In his famous book *Who moved the stone?*<sup>1</sup>, Frank Morison writes about the night-time trial of the Lord Jesus before the High Priest, and about the false witnesses who testified against Him. Morison looks at the gospels purely as historical documents, not as the inspired word of God, but one of his key conclusions is where he shows that, however the false witnesses may have distorted what the Lord had actually said in a ringing statement one day in the Temple courts, there can be no doubt that the words "in three days" formed part of it<sup>2</sup>.

And it is remarkable how many times the expression "three days" occurs in the scriptures. According to a quick search I made in the English Standard Version Bible, the expression "five

days” occurs just 3 times in the whole Bible, “four days” occurs just 4 times, “two days” occurs 12 times, but “three days” occurs 63 times.

I rather get the idea that, in the scriptures, “three days” suggests, perhaps, an adequate time to wait for something, long enough for something to happen, we might say. And the six days in which God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, divide very distinctly into two successive periods of three days, each of which was most certainly long enough for something to happen, long enough for a very great deal to happen.

Why do I say that the six days divide into two threes? Well, the main reason is something we will come to, God willing, in the next talk, but perhaps in part it is suggested by the statement “God saw that it was good.” It’s like a punctuation mark that occurs in each successive day, except for Day 2. But in Days 3 and 6, at the end of each of these three-day periods, the ‘punctuation mark’ occurs twice, and in Day 6 the second of these becomes: “it was very good.”

Today our subject is the first three days, that is, verses 2 to 13 of Genesis chapter 1. We will look at these three days first as the historical record that they are. But then we will look at the part they play in what I am convinced these opening verses of the Bible also are, which is God’s introduction to the whole of His revelation.

The entire 34 verses are like the preface to a great treatise in which God systematically and logically lays down the great foundational truths and principles which He wants us to understand. In these verses He is introducing us to what the whole Bible is going to be about.

### **Days 1 to 3 as history**

Let’s look at these verses first, then, as a faithful historical record of the first three days of God’s creatorial work.

The history of the earth in God’s account of it is very different from that history as it is imagined in the mind of man. Despite the enormous concern there is today about climate change, the prevailing worldview of the past is that everything just goes on, from millennium to millennium, with hardly anything changing. There are no sudden cataclysmic events. This belief is described by Peter in chapter 3 verse 4 of his second letter, where he talks about those who mock the idea that the Lord Jesus is going to return. These people, Peter tells us, say:

“Ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

Peter refutes this by talking about the Flood, something he says they’ve forgotten about. Today the Flood is not just forgotten. It is denied altogether. But it is clear from Genesis chapter 1 that God performed His great work of creation not gradually, but in discrete, and enormous, steps. Each day He did something entirely new.

The second really important thing to notice about this account is that every day begins “And God said.” Hebrews 11 verse 3 says:

“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God.”

This verse means exactly what it says. What Genesis 1 clearly teaches us is that by the very act of speaking, God performed what He intended. He spoke and it was done<sup>3</sup>. In the light of that, consider that the Lord Jesus is called “the Word” in John chapter 1. This is certainly a difficult concept. It’s not something we can visualise, but I think we are meant to

understand that, each time God spoke, it was the Lord Jesus who was, if we might use this expression, the divine Executive, the one actively carrying out the creative work. And so John chapter 1 verse 3 says:

“All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

## **Verse 2**

I devoted all of the previous talk to verse 1, so I can hardly pass over verse 2 without comment. It would be quite nice to be able to pass it over without comment, which is what preachers do when they aren't sure what to say about something, because it contains three statements, all of which are puzzling. It says that the earth was without form and void. It says that darkness was over the face of the deep, and it says that the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

I just have to confess that I can't explain what exactly these statements mean. They leave us with an impression though, don't they? There is darkness, but not yet any light. There are waters, but not yet any dry land. And the Spirit of God is in action, hovering over the face of the waters. There is, as it were, a high sense of expectancy in the air. Great things are afoot. It seems God is setting the scene for what is to follow.

## **The details of each day**

In these first three days, then, we might say that God creates the framework which He is later going to build upon, or that He provides the raw materials which He is then going to put to good use.

The world puts its faith in the ideas, the so-called science, of man, and sets aside the revelation of God. When we look at these verses as a historical record, we need to beware that we don't do the same thing, and interpret God's account in the light of things we think we know.

We shouldn't, for example, get upset by the creation of light, on Day 1, before the creation of the sun and the other heavenly bodies, on Day 4. I'm not disputing that, in the world as it is now, the light we experience all originates in the sun, apart from the tiny amount that comes from the stars, but it didn't have to be like that to begin with. In other words, we need to come to Genesis 1 with a blank sheet of paper.

It's God Who is teaching the lesson. We need to let Him use His lesson plan.

First, then, God creates light, secondly, this curiously named thing, the expanse, and then finally the dry land. And all through these three days, a key idea is that of separating one thing from another.

On Day 1 God separates the light from the darkness, on Day 2 He separates the waters into two parts, with the Heaven in between, and on Day 3 He gathers the waters together into one place, so that dry land appears.

This purposeful separation is the exact opposite of what happens by chance. Left to themselves, things don't sort themselves out like this. They get more and more jumbled and chaotic. But these verses teach us that understanding and purpose were involved in every step of the process.

And at every step of this process, the picture of the earth which these scriptures conjure up in our minds seems to resemble our present day understanding of the earth a little more. By the time we get to day three, we have an earth with oceans and land masses, just as it is today. Perhaps also,

the “waters above the expanse” formed a vast vapour canopy, providing a universal warm climate, up to the time of the flood when “the windows of the heavens”<sup>4</sup> were opened.

### **Day 1 Out of darkness into His marvellous light**

Now let’s look at these verses not as a historical record, but as the next steps in a systematic unfolding of the underlying themes which God is going to go on and build upon in the rest of His revelation.

What I’m going to suggest, you may think is fanciful, but I do believe that the first three days of the Creation are nothing less than a parable of the greatest story ever told, that of the gospel of the grace of God.<sup>5</sup>

Day 1 is all about light. It’s about light shining in the darkness and dispelling it. Once the light is shining, all becomes clear, and the distinction between light and darkness becomes discernible.

The gospel comes into our experience as light bursting into the darkness of our souls. This is clearly stated in 2 Corinthians 4 verses 4 to 6, and the parallel with the creation is explicitly stated there. Verse 6 says:

“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness”, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The experience of this is wonderfully expressed in a verse from one of Charles Wesley’s best known hymns:

*“Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night,  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth and followed Thee”*

Day 1, then, I suggest, speaks of how the gospel reaches us and of how God, in the words of 1 Peter 2 verse 9, has called us “out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

### **Day 2 Christ died for our sins**

Day 2 brings us to the actual substance of the gospel message. This is set out in 1 Corinthians 15 verses 3 and 4, where Paul says:

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

There are two great historical facts there which are said to be “in accordance with the scriptures.” They are (1) that Christ died for our sins and (2) that He was raised on the third day.

These two events are the central events in all history. Without them there would be no gospel, and without them we would be lost. And when Paul says that these two events were “in accordance with the scriptures” he means of course that the Old Testament points forward to these events, in pictures or hints which we call types, and in direct prophecies.

But how far back in the Old Testament does the phrase “according to the scriptures” go? Well, I maintain that it reaches right back to Genesis chapter 1, that God’s creative actions in Days 2 and 3 are symbolic of the death of Christ (Day 2) and His rising from the dead (Day 3).

In Day 2, God calls into existence the Expanse, and it divides the waters. Waters, floods, deep waters are constantly used in scripture to symbolise death. In baptism, we go, symbolically, into the waters of death with Christ. The crossing of the Red Sea, in which the waters were specifically divided, is one of the great Old Testament types of the death of the Christ.

And God inserts the Expanse in the midst of the waters, and calls it Heaven. And at the cross, we might say, Heaven came down, certainly the One who was the Lord of it came down, and entered into the midst of the waters for our sakes.

And what of this rather strange word “expanse”? It literally means a stretching out. Its origin is in the idea of stretching out a piece of metal into a thin plate by hammering it. I believe this speaks of the sufferings of Christ on our account. The blows of divine justice rained down upon Him during those three hours of darkness as He hung upon the cross for each one of us.

### **Day 3 And on the third day He rose again**

Others must judge whether it is fanciful to see these connections, but it is perhaps easier to see the parallel between the third day in Genesis 1 and that greatest of all third days, when the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father<sup>6</sup>.

On Day 3 of the creation week, God brought the dry land up out of the waters. It is land which has been under the water and has come out from it. Here at last, there is solid ground.

And now for the first time, on this third day, there is life. God now brings forth life and anchors it to the solid ground that has been through the waters.

This life has three characteristics. Firstly it sprouts, or springs forth. Life has those characteristics of robustness and spontaneity. You cannot keep it down. And so it is with the new life which is ours in the risen Christ.

Secondly, it contains seeds. It has the ability to reproduce, and thirdly, it bears fruit. The risen Saviour brings with Him out of death, a great harvest of beautiful fruit, for the delight and pleasure of God<sup>7</sup>.

In the details of God’s creative actions on these first three days, then, I believe that we see this great allegory, or picture, of the gospel, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that, on the third day, He rose again, in accordance with the scriptures.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk on Genesis chapter 1 verses 2 to 13 in our series entitled Seven Days of Wonders - talk number T1358.

<sup>1</sup>Faber and Faber Ltd, London 1930 <sup>2</sup>John 2:19 <sup>3</sup>Psalm 33:9 <sup>4</sup>Gen. 7:11 <sup>5</sup>Acts 20:24 <sup>6</sup>Romans 6:4  
<sup>7</sup>John 12:24.

---

#### **Please Note:**

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1.