

# *Truth for Today*

## *The Bible Explained*

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## **Seven Days of Wonders**

### **Part 4 of 4 : There remains a rest**

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.  
English Standard Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

#### **Introduction**

With today's talk we reach the fourth and final part of this series of studies on the first 34 verses of the Bible, which I call the 7 days of wonders. As on each of the previous three occasions, I'll begin by reading the whole passage. 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."

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."

My wife always used to be puzzled as to why she had no recollection of an event we had both lived through as young people, and which was, without question, one of the most momentous events of the twentieth century, the Apollo 11 moon landing. It was only as her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday was approaching, and I was putting together, along with a brother in the Lord, a 'This is your life' presentation for her, that the reason for this came to light. The moon landing had been eclipsed by a much more important event in her life. For whilst Neil Armstrong was preparing to take his one small step on the surface of the moon, she was taking the most important step that anyone can

take – one that can truly be called a giant leap - because the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1969, the day that Apollo 11 landed on the moon, was also the day that my future wife came to Christ.

Now, for those of us old enough to remember those days, especially if we are believers, one of the most memorable moments in all of those moon missions had occurred seven months and three Apollo missions earlier. It was Christmas 1968 when the three astronauts aboard Apollo 8 became the first men in history to fly fast enough to break free from the pull of earth's gravity, so as to journey out to and around the moon. They were the first people ever to look back from the vantage point of lunar orbit, and watch the earth coming up over the barren lunar horizon, the spectacular sight that they captured in what was to become one of the most famous photographs of all time, the picture that came to be known as "Earthrise."

One of those crew members, Jim Lovell, realised that he could hold his thumb up in front of his eyes and completely hide the Earth from view. "Everything I ever knew", he said, "I could hide behind my thumb." That experience made him think deeply about our place in the universe, and about why we are here. But the flight of Apollo 8 wasn't only memorable because of the view. On Christmas Eve 1968, an estimated audience of 1 billion people tuned in to listen as the three astronauts broadcast from lunar orbit. They began by each saying a few words about what the experience meant to them personally. "Then", to quote from Kevin Fong, narrator on the BBC podcast 'Thirteen Minutes to the Moon', "With the world listening, the astronauts did something that no-one back on Earth was expecting."

One of the team in Mission Control, listening back on earth, described his reaction to what he heard next in the words, "It was like - Wow! Where did that come from? The hair stood up on the back of my neck." Another said, "It was just mind-boggling. It brought tears to my eyes and to most of the people in the control centre...." What had the astronauts done to create such an impact? - Simply to read, in the majestic, measured phrases of the King James Version of the Bible, those stunning opening verses of Genesis chapter 1, the first 10 verses, in fact, of the passage that we have just read now, the passage that we have been looking at in detail over this series of talks.

Way back at the start of this series, I tried to answer the question "Why is it so important to study, and to preach about, the first 34 verses of the Bible?"

Perhaps the response which comes most readily to my mind is the need to mount a great counter offensive, against the onslaught that has been made upon these verses in modern times. Particularly since the publication in 1859 of Darwin's book, usually known by what is in fact a shortened version of its title, *On the Origin of Species*, the pseudoscience of Evolution has been appealed to as a basis on which to undermine the authority of God's word. But it has also been adopted as the obligatory mood music to accompany any and every sphere of human activity, so that you cannot go to admire any spectacular wonder of nature without being told how many million years it is since it was formed, and having it presented in an evolutionary context, instead of simply seeing how it glorifies our Creator God.

Now it is quite right to counter-attack. We are exhorted in Scripture to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints<sup>1</sup>. Paul writes to the Philippians about the defence and confirmation of the Gospel<sup>2</sup>. He writes to the Corinthians about destroying arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God<sup>3</sup>. It is right too that we should support, encourage, and rejoice in the labours of those who are usually referred to as Creation scientists, those who amass evidence to bring down the house of cards which is what Evolution really is.

Worthy and worthwhile as these things are, they were not intended to be the primary purpose of this series of talks. My thought was rather that we should come, with immense reverence, to these verses, which are, after all, the opening breaths of the wonderful revelation from God which we have in our hands when we pick up a Bible, and that we should bring with us, as it were, a blank

sheet of paper. The idea was essentially to put out of our minds the awareness that we are immersed in a world where it is taken for granted that these verses are myth, that they are not literal history, and that they are at best a kind of beautiful poetic saga, the product of the vivid imagination of some ancient Hebrew philosopher. The idea was that instead we should come in simplicity before God, asking Him to unfold to us the very first things that He wants the world to hear. We mentioned that Christmas Eve broadcast from Apollo 8 in order to see, and perhaps to some extent to appreciate, the impact which the opening words of the Bible have when they just hit you, as they did on that day, for all the people in Mission Control, and for that vast worldwide audience, quite literally out of the blue.

In that same year, 1968, the Christian philosopher and author, Francis Schaeffer, published his book, *Escape from Reason*, in which he wrote, "It is possible to take the system the Bible teaches, put it down in the marketplace of the ideas of men, and let it stand there and speak for itself"<sup>4</sup>. What I wanted to do in this series of talks was essentially to apply that principle to God's introductory statement of the Bible.

In that frame of mind then, let us approach the summing up and conclusion of this study. We began this series with a reflection on that most profound opening verse of God's revelation, the first breath of the entire God-breathed story, Genesis chapter 1 verse 1. We devoted an entire talk to that verse. Then, in the second and third talks, we looked in some detail at each of the two sets of 3 days, which I described at one point as being like two courses of bricks, with the second laid on top of the first. I suggested how the first three days can be seen as a kind of allegory of the Gospel, and how the second three, building upon, and making use of what we might call the raw materials created in the first three, are clearly directed towards a climax, the creation of Man.

## **The End**

Now we come to the End. We've reached the final chapter in this great saga. A brother I knew and respected many years ago used to say "It's the end that counts." That's true in many things. It's true in many ways of every human life. As someone has said, "The Christian life is full of ups and downs, but the last one is always an up." It's the end that counts. How, then, does this story end?

The simple answer is that it ends with Rest. The Creation story, the 7 days of wonders, culminates in God's rest. And yet the wonders do not end there, as I think we can see when we stand back and look overall at the unfolding of the entire message of the Bible, that which J.N. Darby, in his introduction to the Bible<sup>5</sup>, called "the divine parenthesis in the midst of eternity." Surely the Rest which we read about in Genesis chapter 2 verses 2 and 3, is intended to picture for us the final and eternal rest. What God has ever had in view is not only that rest which He will enjoy, but also that which, through the Redemption wrought in Christ, He will have saved sinners such as us, entering into and enjoying as well. As Hebrews chapter 4 verse 9 says, "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God."

Notice that it says that on the seventh day (not the sixth) God finished the work that He had done. Now there is no suggestion that God actually did anything on the seventh day. In fact the whole idea of the Sabbath, so firmly laid down in God's Law, and so deeply imprinted into the history of God's earthly people Israel, rests upon the clear understanding that no work whatsoever is to be done on that day.

And yet the Scripture says that God finished the work on the seventh day. The conclusion I draw from that is that the rest was an integral part of the entire process. It was always, from the start, the last item on the agenda. And it wasn't, of course, that God was exhausted and needed to take time out to recover, as we would after six days of continuous labour. This was the rest of satisfaction. It was the rest of delight in a job well done. The rest was ever the goal, and the ultimate objective for which the work had begun.

## **The Seventh day is Holy (for God)**

Notice also that it says that God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because that was the day when He had rested. Now the meaning of the word “holy” is “set apart for God.” God lays claim to the seventh day as especially His, in a way which distinguishes it from all the other days that went before, precisely because it was the day on which He rested. The thought of the Rest, that eternal Sabbath which remains for the people of God, is, it seems, something especially treasured by God, something, we might say, close to His heart.

And so we come to the crux of the whole matter, and the glorious lesson of these final verses of our study. What is God, in all of His purposes and actions, really driving it? What is His ultimate goal? It is nothing less than a world of unimaginable joy and bliss, bought at the cost of the blood of His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down His life for us all. In that world God will forever dwell in the midst of a vast company of blessed, redeemed creatures, the fruit and harvest of Christ’s mighty work on the cross.

We see in verse 28 of chapter 1 that the very first recorded action of God towards men was that He blessed them. God has ever delighted to bless. He longs to bless us beyond our wildest dreams! And it has been remarked that God’s seventh day was Adam’s first. God introduced Adam and Eve into a world where all the work was already done, just as in the Gospel today He does not ask us to do, what would of course be impossible, that is to work for our salvation, but rather offers it to us as a free gift, the work all done, and the price already paid in full. How tragic, then, it is to observe how humankind, with the mind poisoned against God by Satan, is ever ready to believe the worst of God, to see Him as harsh and demanding, and never to realise that He has only our best interests at heart.

I often reflect on those well known words in the American Declaration of Independence, where it speaks of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It’s the words “the pursuit of happiness” that I’m getting at. The expression always conjures up for me a tragic image. It’s not, of course, the meaning the authors intended, but I always picture someone endlessly chasing after something, like a naturalist trying to capture a beautiful butterfly in a net, but whenever he almost reaches it, it flies off again. People spend their lives just like that, pursuing happiness but never quite finding it, and all the time God is, as it were, standing behind them with outstretched arms, saying, “If only you would turn round, and come to Me.”

There is a rest for the people of God. There is a happy ending to life’s story. It’s found in Christ, and only in Him.

May God bless all of you today.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk on Genesis chapter 2 verses 1 to 3 in our series entitled Seven Days of Wonders - talk number T1360.

<sup>1</sup>Jude 3 <sup>2</sup>Phil 1:7 <sup>3</sup>2 Cor 10:5 <sup>4</sup>InterVarsity Press London 1968 <sup>5</sup>Bible Truth Publishers Addison Illinois USA

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