

Scripture Reading:

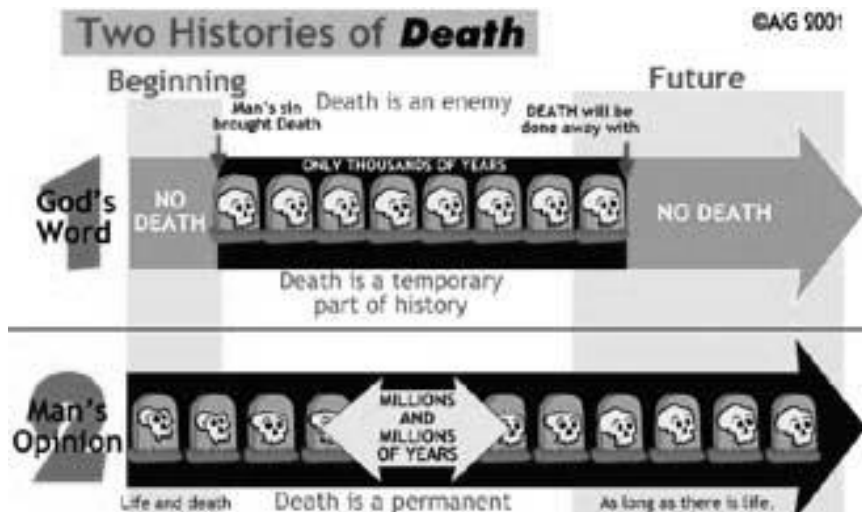
Acts 17:22 “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings. 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' 29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. 30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.””

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." Matthew 7:24-27



“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”
Genesis 1:31a

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
Genesis 2:16,17



“The last enemy that will be destroyed is death,..
“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
I Corinthians 15:26;54-57

"Paul on Mars Hill... God is Our Creator!"

The Apostle Paul has come to Athens and after being provoked by their blatant idolatry he uses their own ignorance to introduce them to the eternal Triune God of the Scriptures. He does so by presenting God in a way that might seem a little strange to many modern evangelists... Introducing Him as the "God, who made the world and everything in it."

As I have pointed out in recent weeks, this sermon by the Apostle Paul played an important part in my conversion, and since I was particularly in need of seeing God as the Creator, I may seem just a bit passionate! *[tell the story of the watch-maker]*

As most of you know, understanding and knowing God as our Creator is a subject that we address often here at Church of the King... We do so for three reasons:

- A proper understanding of this doctrine is foundational to a right understanding of the Gospel
- The doctrine of God as our Creator is under vicious assault today in our modern world
- This doctrine is essential if we are to have the joy and comfort that God promises to His faithful people

This morning I will touch on the first, leave you with some food for thought on the second, and focus on the last: Desiring that you have joy & comfort!

Believing that Genesis chapter one gives us real history in a real way is foundational to the Gospel and our comfort because we begin down a very slippery slope if we cast doubt here:

- Soon the creation account is seen as "just great poetry" and not long after that the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is just a great example for us to learn from.
- Soon our Creator and redeemer is seen as just one among many gods we could draw strength from.

Genesis is the Book of beginnings and that is where we get our foundational understanding of God, His creation, the fall of man, and the plan of salvation. We learn of the wickedness of sin and the overcoming love and justice of our sovereign God. We read the creation account often here at Church of the King because we believe it is important to be familiar with it...

- In all of its simplicity and depth!

If you ever have doubts about whether God made the world in six literal days, just ask one of the young children what took place in the beginning after we finish reading the Genesis account!

- They will not find any "gaps" in the text and they will know nothing of long ages or frameworks to give us billions of years.
- Those are only found by those who are trying to fit God's revelation into the world's understanding of history!

Sadly, that thinking is EVERYWHERE today

Why have prominent men led people to believe that the earth is BILLIONS of years old?

- I would suggest that they needed all of that time to get rid of God!

Too simplistic you say?

Think about it this way... Why do we believe in a young earth?

Because Genesis gives us an account of how God created the world in six days and specific genealogies that give us an age of approximately six thousand years.

- So, why do the secular humanists believe in a very old earth?

Because materialistic evolution needs a LOT of time to accomplish all they claim that it has done [*tell story of realizing that time was God*]

- So there you have two different world views with two very different conclusions...
- Which has “the evidence” on their side?

From a human standpoint there is substantial evidence for both positions and such evidences each have their strengths and weaknesses. You can spend hours and hours going back and forth with the debate, but notice that each side is bringing their presupposition to the table: [*ask kids to define presupposition!*]

- As Christians we point to evidences for a young earth and question those that say the earth is very old: We do so because God has revealed how the world was created and when!
- Secular humanists point to the evidences for a very old earth & question those that say the earth is young because they NEED an old earth to keep God out of the picture.

Here is where we as Christians need to understand how this battle of our day impacts the Gospel & our comfort:

- IF God lied, or was even deceptive, about when or how He created the world, then why should we trust Him about anything else that is revealed in the Bible?

Those who try to make peace with the world with a compromise, begin by questioning the clear reading in Genesis chapter one, but then they soon struggle to explain how a real Adam & Eve actually lived. Then they have no basis for believing that man fell into sin which brought forth death and destruction. The next victim of the slippery slope is the flood as it is presented and of course there is no reason to trust all those detailed genealogies. Next up is whether we can even trust the actual text of the Old Testament & even know who the real authors were!

- By the time we get to the New Testament on this wrong path, we have lost all basis for needing the authentic Gospel, so Jesus becomes just a great man who has SO much to teach us by His great example!

As we consider how foundational the doctrine of Biblical Creation is this morning I have provided some helpful illustrations from Answers in Genesis to encourage further discussion and study: They demonstrate the nature of the battle and the conflicting world views. In the cartoon labeled “the problem,” we see how our enemies often understand the nature of the battle better than we do: Their cannons focus on destroying our foundation.

- We have focused our cannons on the results of their world view and wonder why we seem to be making no real progress.

The “solution” is to focus on the destruction of their foundations while still engaging with issues like abortion, homosexuality or divorce.

- As our Lord promised, if we are faithful in fighting the battle as we should, the gates of hell will not prevail: Remember, their foundation is sand!

You should also ponder & discuss the “Two Histories of Death” to more fully understand how the important and essential doctrine of creation gives great comfort to us as Christians.

The first timeline is the Biblical picture of a Creation that is first declared very good by God & then marred by man’s fall into sin and the ensuing deaths. God comes into history to redeem man with Jesus as the new Adam, death is defeated & God’s creation is restored.

In contrast the second time-line is what you have with man’s philosophies: Death from beginning to end!

This is true whether you are a modern version of an Epicurean materialist thinking we only live once & then die... Or a mystic who like the Greek Stoic thinks we get to come back over & over again, just to die over & over again. Demonstrating another major problem with doubting that Genesis tells us REAL history:

- **If you accept the world's presupposition and demand that we have billions of years in the world's history... Then you must also accept that there were at least millions of years of death, LOTS of death, before the coming of modern man.**

You have this problem whether you use the gap theory that says all that times was tucked between the first and second verses of Genesis one, whether you say each day was some long age or whether you say that Genesis is not real history at all, but just dramatic poetry or a framework to help us understand how God works.

- **The bottom-line is that IF death has been a part of the creation for millions of years, then just what is it the Jesus has come to save us from?**

Why would Jesus weep before the tomb of His friend Lazarus if death and destruction had been a natural part of His creation for so long?

- **IF we tried to face death in a family here at Church of the King with such a view of history, how could we get any more comfort than the world gets when they quote some Scriptures or a cute poem to make them feel a little better.**

Why would the Apostle Paul see death as the final enemy to be defeated if death has been so much a part of the Creation for millions of years?

IF we want real comfort and real understanding in troubled times...

- **Then we must begin where the Apostle Paul did with these Greek skeptics: With the God who made the world and everything in it!**

I want us to understand this morning that the New Testament not only presents God as our Creator...

- **But that He is presented as the Creator who made the world just as we are told in Genesis chapter one!**

Both Matthew and Luke use the genealogies of Genesis to establish the historic timeline of history and the coming of Jesus. John in his Gospel begins right where Paul does here in Athens: John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

Sadly today many look to these famous words to prove the divinity of Jesus as the 2nd Person of the Trinity, but then turn right around and look to evolution or science to explain how things were actually made in the material world...

- **Failing to comprehend who Jesus really is and what He has done!**

John's pointed language not only confronts the wisdom of the world like these Greek thinkers that Paul is preaching to, but he clearly points us right back to the early chapters of Genesis. Because of sin, darkness has descended over the creation & God wants to take us from darkness back into the light:

Listen to the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Saints at Colossi: Colossians 1:13 "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

- **Jesus is the creator and sustainer of ALL things!**

Does God give us any information about how Jesus made all things? Yes, He does, right there in the first chapter of Genesis and I want to argue this morning that it should give us great comfort as Christians and rightly strike the fear of God in the hearts of those who hear the Gospel presented.

- IF we try to change the plain meaning of Genesis chapter one, we dilute both our comfort & our witness!
- Why am I so adamant about this?
- Why do I think we should all be so adamant about this?

Because this is exactly how the Bible deals with this important chapter!

Sadly, the debate is often focused just on what the words can or cannot mean here in Genesis chapter one.

- What is more important for us to see is how the creation of the world in six literal days demonstrates both the power and the creativity of our covenant God.

Yes, we will be shunned, ridiculed, and laughed at today if we say that we affirm the truth of Genesis one:

- That God made the world in six ordinary days!
- We must affirm what God affirms

Answers in Genesis has another cute cartoon sketch that helps us to understand this: A young girl is explaining what Genesis one tells us about the creation and a young man then says, so you are saying that God made everything in six 24 hours days? She affirms that this is exactly what she is saying, and his response is a surprising, “why did He take so long?” That’s right, in reality God could have taken billions of years to do this work and He also could have done it in an instant.

- God could have spoken everything into existence just as it was at the end of the six days.

Rather than ignoring this important chapter, rather than making excuses or coming up with clever schemes to make it say things that it does not say... We must learn to see all of richness of what God has revealed about Himself as the Creator by looking to the rest of His Word to more fully understand what is given here in Genesis chapter one...

- It is such a simple and yet profound text.
- We need to begin to open our eyes and ears to all that God desires to teach us and show us!
- Did God create all of our creation in six literal days?

Not only does the text of Genesis one demand such a reading, but it is affirmed in all the rest of Scripture. Just ask a child if “And the evening and the morning were the first day” is referring to an ordinary day or an age?

- Of course we can hear the skeptics declaring that the Bible itself says that with God a day is like a thousand years.

True enough, but whenever the days of creation are mentioned, it is ALWAYS a reference to ordinary days... For example, “in six days God made the heavens and the earth” is what we read in Exodus chapter twenty when God is commanding us to work six ordinary days!

- With the logic of these skeptics, one could argue that Jesus is still in the tomb, because it says He would be in the grave for three days!

We see here in Genesis one not only the power of God but much about His character and creativity as well.

- The works and patterns of these seven days are seen from Genesis to Revelation, IF we have eyes to see.

Can you remember the half of the tree the man in Isaiah made into an idol? God said it could not hear, nor see nor even move:

- Hard to get any real comfort from such an idol.

Paul is surrounded here in Athens by TONS of idols, none of which can hear nor see nor even move...

- So he tells them that they need to meet the God who made the world and everything in it!

Not only can God hear, He made the ear, not only can God see, He made the eye, not only can God move, but all the movement of history is under His control:

- Jesus is the creator and sustainer of everything.

It would take another sixty sermons to do a complete survey of the Scriptures where we are to be comforted by seeing God as the creator: Psalm 121:2 is a good example: "My help comes from Jehovah, who made heaven and earth." Or as we sing each week after we hear that our sins are forgiven from Psalm 134: May the Lord bless you from Zion, He who made heaven & earth!

- Each time we see this type of reference it should give us great comfort because we can reflect back to Genesis chapter one remembering the power and creativity of God who is our only real comfort!

IF, on the other hand, we see Genesis chapter 1 as only nice poetry or cannot be sure how long those days really are, then we have undermined the very comfort God desires to give us.

Another place to find comfort and to be prepared to confront our advisories today is in the final chapters of Job: Where God challenges Job with a series of creational questions that are still difficult to answer even with all of our modern science! *[I will have to leave that as your homework, and yes that is where we find those dinosaurs!]*

In closing I want to turn to where Solomon presents Jesus as the personification of Wisdom in Proverbs chapter eight: The King tells us that wisdom is crying out and that we should listen. At verse four we read: "To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. 5 O you simple ones, understand prudence, And you fools, be of an understanding heart. 6 Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, and from the opening of my lips will come right things; ... 10 "Receive my instruction, and not silver, And knowledge rather than choice gold; 11 For wisdom is better than rubies, And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her."

- Solomon goes on to talk about how important it is to have wisdom for life, for strength, for counsel and even for Kings to reign.
- But then Solomon turns to the truth of creation as the final appeal, just as we saw John do at the beginning of his Gospel:

Proverbs 8:22 "Jehovah possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. 23 I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth. 24 When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water. 25 Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth; 26 While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, Or the primeval dust of the world. 27 When He prepared the heavens, I was there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, 28 When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep, 29 When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, 30 Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, 31 Rejoicing in His inhabited world, And my delight was with the sons of men."

What I want us to carefully consider this morning is this: If ALL of that was referring to a Genesis myth, then why would anyone take seriously the challenge that Wisdom then gives?...

32 "Now therefore, listen to me, my children, For blessed are those who keep my ways. 33 Hear instruction and be wise, And do not disdain it. 34 Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors. 35 For whoever finds me finds life, And obtains favor from Jehovah; 36 But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; All those who hate me love death."

Yes we will be accused by our modern world of being simplistic at best and ignorant at worst if we affirm the plain meaning of Genesis chapter one.

- But just as we can see in that simple illustration from Answers in Genesis, those who reject the truths revealed in the early chapters of Genesis truly do love death, because they have made death eternal.

In contrast we must join with Paul in challenging people to know the "God, who made the world and everything in it" and to remind them as Paul did that this is important because "He is Lord of heaven and earth!"

Lord-willing next week we will see how Paul explains to them that this God cannot be contained in man-made temples: Rather He is the Lord of all history and will come to judge all men:

A picture that John presents to us in Revelation 14:1 "Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. 3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth... 6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people-- 7 saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

Communion Meditation: Proverbs 9:1

" Wisdom has built her house,
She has hewn out her seven pillars;
2 She has slaughtered her meat,
She has mixed her wine,
She has also furnished her table.
3 She has sent out her maidens,
She cries out from the highest places of the city, 4 "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him,
"Come, eat of my bread And drink of the wine I have mixed.
Forsake foolishness and live, And go in the way of understanding."