

God the Creator

By: James Boice

Announcer:

Our speaker this morning is Dr. James Montgomery Boyce. He is pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. He is currently the chairman of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. He has written many, many books. One of the most recent is a commentary on Genesis one through eleven. He has degrees from Harvard, from Princeton Theological Seminary, and he has a doctorate from Basel in Switzerland. My wife and I had the privilege of attending Tenth Presbyterian a number of years ago. We found Jim to be an excellent speaker. We were impressed by the fact that his preaching has a solid exegetical base behind it. As we got to know Jim and Linda and his family a bit, we were also impressed by the fact that they are deeply committed to applying the principles of God's Word to their own lives, and so their goal as individuals and as a family is to be conformed to the image of Christ. And so Jim is committed to that end. I trust that you will be attentive and that the Lord will bless us as we hear his message through Jim this morning.

James Boice:

It's nice to be back again and to meet many of you, some of whom I have seen before, and then also some of the faculty that I had an opportunity to get to know briefly the last time I was here. I understand that yesterday the other speakers who were here a day earlier than myself gave a brief introduction of what they were going to do, and I think it might be helpful if I would do that. The last book I wrote was on the first eleven chapters of Genesis. And so I'm going to focus what I say on those first eleven chapters. I find that the books I wrote years ago I can't remember, and so I like to work on ones that I've done more recently, and that's what I'd like to do here in these

main sessions we have together. I'd like to look at the first three chapters, and I want to explain in a moment why I'm going to do that. And then in the seminar look at four of the great characters in Genesis as models for what it means not only to be a Christian but to be a Christian leader.

I find from the brochure that tomorrow Bruce Wilkinson is going to do one of his "Walk Thru the Bible" lectures focusing on Genesis. And I'm glad he's doing that because it's helpful to have a big picture, and I've never found it possible myself and my own study to do that. He is just an expert at that sort of thing. When I begin to tackle a book, I tend to plod through it, looking under every leaf, and he does the opposite gives you this wonderful overview, and I'm sure he will. I find myself doing the sort of thing the farmer did in a story I heard not so long ago. A man went to visit this farmer. And when he was looking around the farm, he saw there in the farmyard a pig that had a wooden leg. And he said, I've never seen a pig with a wooden leg before. How in the world did that happen? And the farmers said, oh, let me tell you about this pig. He is the most remarkable animal. Some time ago, my wife and I were in the house sleeping and the house caught on fire. And this pig was awakened by the fire and came into the house, knocking his way through the kitchen door, came up to the bedroom, pulled the covers off the bed, woke us up and got us out of the house.

This pig saved my life. And Furthermore, he said, sometime before that, I was out in the field plowing, and the tractor fell over and I was trapped under the tractor. I thought I'd die out there. Nobody knew I was there, but the pig knew. And the pig went for help. And he brought back people who turned the tractor over and rescued me and got me to the hospital. That's the second

time that pig saved my life. There's just no animal, no pig that has ever been as remarkable as this one. And his friend said to him, well, that's all very interesting, but I still don't understand why the pig has a wooden leg. The farmer said, when you have a pig that is as remarkable as this one, you don't eat it all at once. I feel that way about the Book of Genesis, and I'm sure Bruce Wilkinson will have to give his own justification for rushing through the meal in 1 hour instead of taking a great amount of time. Some time ago in Philadelphia, I began preaching on Genesis, and one of the members of the congregation asked me afterwards why in the world I would ever begin an exegetical study of this book.

There's no great theology in Genesis, he said. I think what he really had in mind was that he had heard me speaking on the Gospel of John for eight years. And in his mind he was thinking John's Gospel, 21 chapters, eight years, Genesis, 50 chapters, came out to about 25 years. I think he didn't want to listen to the book that long. But I said as I responded to his question, It's not a case of Genesis not having great theology, which is what he said to me, but rather being the basis for all theology. All the great theology of the Bible has its roots in Genesis, all the great doctrines. And therefore there's a sense, and I believe a very deep sense in which you don't understand the Bible until you understand the beginning of it all here in the Book of Genesis. What Genesis really does is get us back to our roots. And we're a generation, especially in America in these years, that is looking for roots. Mentioning that word Roots brings to mind that television phenomena of the late 1970s, 1977, actually in which Alex Haley's remarkable book, Roots, was aired on television for the first time.

You know that series, of course, because nearly everyone in America has seen all or part of it. This remarkable black author traced the origins of his family back through the days of slavery in the south to his African progenitors. And this book was then serialized on television and was broadcast for seven consecutive nights during that year, 1977. They didn't expect it to be anything unusual, but every single night of that broadcast, more people turned in as those who had seen the early segments talk to their friends about it and said, you really have to see what's being done on television. By the last night, the 7th night in the series, 66% of all the viewers in America were watching Roots, and this was seen at that time, and more have seen it since by 130,000,000 Americans. It was the most watched television program ever up to that point. People began to ponder the reason for that phenomena. They said, well, it's a product of the race issue in America, and people are interested in the black experience and all of that. Haley himself didn't give that explanation to it. Haley said, we're a generation that is rootless.

We don't know where we've come from, and because we don't know where we've come from, we don't know who we are and we don't know where we're going. And Americans have a great hunger to discover what their origins are. Haley thought, and I believe he's right, that Americans simply identified with the characters of Roots and with Haley himself in particular, and immediately began an attempt to discover their own routes. I'm told that on College campuses, courses in "Roots" were inaugurated the following year, and the libraries were inundated by requests from people that wanted to find out who their ancestors were. The only problem with Roots and these attempts at discovering our ancestors that so many are engaged in is that they don't go back far enough, because while it may be helpful to know that your family came from Africa or England or Ireland or France or Germany or the east, whatever it may be, the real

origin, the one we need to discover is that origin that we all have in the God who is described to us in the early chapters of the Bible, even in verse one. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth.

I've noticed one other thing that I want to say by way of introduction, and that is that even in the secular world, there has been an acknowledgement in recent years that the discovery of one's religious Roots really does make a difference in the way one lives. Just about three weeks ago, I was given a report on American values that had been researched by the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company. They weren't looking for a religious discovery in any way. They were simply looking at American values, and were trying to project on the basis of what they discovered, what they might be in the future, and I suppose apply this to their business, the life insurance business. What they discovered, much to their surprise, is that the significant difference in America is the religious difference. And that's to say that the big differences in outlook and values and involvement or lack of involvement in life are not the differences between those who are old and those who are young. The generation gap or men on the one hand, and women on the other, which is the gender gap or differences between the rich and the poor are those in the cities or those in the suburbs.

Relatively speaking, the differences that they discovered in those areas were insignificant. But the difference that did matter was whether one had a strong religious conviction. And according to this secular report, those who had a strong religious experience performed better in all the areas in which they were interested. This past October, George Gallup of the Gallup Poll Organization gave a speech at Princeton University in which he talked about his findings in the

area of religious values. Gallup is the one whom, you know, a number of years ago surveyed Americans in a broad way to see how many would identify themselves as being born again. Out of that poll came the results that many of us have quoted many times since that 50 million Americans identify themselves as having had a born again experience. That's interesting. It may not be terribly significant, but it's interesting, at least if only because 50 million is a large number. Well, Gallup said that after he had done that, he began to ask the question why it is that if there are 50 million Americans who identify themselves as being born again, there seems to be such little impact from that body on American life.

If there are many of us Christians, as we claim there are, why aren't we making a bigger difference? And so he began to suspect that many of those people who identify themselves as having had a born again experience really haven't experienced much on a deep level. And so he devised ways of sifting through those who identify themselves merely as being born again to find those who, the way he puts it, are deeply and highly religiously motivated. That is, those who in their own experience say that religion makes a difference. He discovered as he conducted this poll, and he didn't go into the details of all the ways he did it, but he discovered that about one American in eight that is, about 12%, identified themselves and proved by the various things they said in answer to the questionnaire to be deeply and highly religiously motivated. And then he said, he began to analyze those people for their values and their involvement in life. And he made a discovery which in my judgment, I suppose, is the sort of thing we should expect all along. But in terms of what we've been taught in America is absolutely mind boggling.

In the first place, those who are highly, deeply religiously motivated are happier than everybody else. Noticeably so. He said, as he put these figures together, that the differences, this one and the others I'm going to mention are generally in the scope of eight to one. Eight more of those who are deeply, highly religiously motivated would describe themselves as fundamentally happy, as compared to the others who say for the most part that they're not. Secondly, they have better families. Their families tend to stay together. The divorce rate among those who have the high religious motivation is an 8th of what it is in the population at large. Thirdly, they are less prejudiced. This is not what we're told. We're told that religious people are the most prejudiced of all. Not so, according to George Gallup, they have far more toleration of other nationalities and races and people from different social classes. And the last one, perhaps the most striking of all, 47% of those who identify themselves in that way say that they are engaged weekly in some sort of social activity that is helping other people. They're either tutoring somebody or they're visiting in an old folks home or they're engaging in some kind of work in the Church that has a social dimension to it.

And George Gallup said, and I think the other polls indicate as well that those who have found their religious roots and therefore know who they are and what they're here for tend to be happier and more effective in the society in which they live. All I'm really saying by that is for those reasons alone, if for no other reasons, we should spend time studying this great book of Genesis. Now let me start with that first sentence. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth. Let me start even with just the first half of that first sentence. In the beginning, God created. I'm sure you know that in science today there is something like a revolution going on, or perhaps we would have to say that has already gone on until the early years of this century, and it

was only gathering force in the teens of the century and has gathered a great deal of force since.

The prevailing view in science up to that time had been what we call the steady state theory. That is a relatively static view of the universe. Things are as they are. They're there, they're not moving, they're eternal in the sense that matter is eternal and the laws of motion are eternal.

And all that we see is eternal. And that there really wasn't any such thing as a beginning. It made it rather difficult for scientists who were raised in the scientific methodology to take very seriously the origins of reality as we have them portrayed in the Bible. But then, beginning in the late teens and progressing on up to our own time, there's been what I call almost revolution in science. In the year 1913, there was a man named Vesto Melvin Slipher working out at the Flagstaff Observatory in Arizona who detected a shifting light spectrum where light from the most distant objects in the universe was observed. Those of you who are scientists know how that works. A light spectrum is a fairly identifiable thing, almost like a fingerprint. And it's easy to tell if you have that light originating from a burning substance, exactly what the substance is, what had happened. And what this man Slipher discovered is that that spectrum of light had shifted somewhat. It was all there as an identifiable subject, but it wasn't where it should be on the spectrum. The only explanation for that that he could find is that the light was coming from objects that were moving away at such tremendous speeds that it actually affected the way light appeared to the observer.

In other words, it changed the speed of light because of the velocity of the receding object he projected. On the basis of that, that we have something he didn't even know what to call it at the time. But something like an expanding universe, everything is moving away from us fast so that

those things that are closer to us are moving away at less rapid speeds and those that are further away are moving away at more rapid speeds. A little while after that, a man by the name of Edwin Hubble in the year 1919 formulated this into the laws of the expanding universe. And sometimes after that, two Bell scientists, using very sophisticated electronic equipment, found what they believe to be the Echo of an original beginning. It's generally talked about in science today is the big bang theory, the idea that things are not static, but that all the matter in the universe was together at one time, perhaps 15 to 20 billion years ago, and that now there has been a big explosion and everything is rushing outward as a result. That's absolutely phenomenal. Robert Jastrow, who is the director of NASA's Goddard Institute, wrote a book about it.

Not so much from the religious point of view, though the title of the book was God and the Astronomers, but from the point of view of the astronomers or scientists who were confronted with the evidence that now seemed to point backward to a moment of creation. His point was that the scientists didn't like it. Somehow, it's not what they expected, and it's certainly not what they wanted, because if there was a beginning, whether it was a big fireball explosion or something else, then there was an origin to the universe beyond which they, by their scientific method, could not go. You have to move into the realm of theology at that point and have to say, well, whatever the beginning was, it had to have been caused by something that we cannot investigate, that is, by God, who, by being God, is forever beyond our ability to analyze him. Jastrow wrote a very interesting paragraph that came toward the end of his book. At this moment, he said, "It seems to me as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation with a scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story

ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance. He's about to conquer the highest peaks. As he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."

Very easy for theologians to be smug at this point, but we shouldn't be. What we should do is turn our minds back to these great statements of Genesis and see what God himself has to tell us about those origins. This phrase, "in the beginning, God," is a fascinating one from a philosophical point of view. One great scientist said that it is the most tremendous sentence ever penned. You might wonder why that's so. It's so because of the statements profundity and because of the fact that it came from what most people would acknowledge as being a relatively innocent and certainly uneducated, perhaps even unsophisticated people, Moses and the tribes of Israel, for whom this became the first and greatest of their biblical books. One of my great friends and a person for whom I've learned a great deal is John Gerstner, a professor of Church history and theology out in Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, where he served until recently.

I heard him talk about "in the beginning, God" on one occasion, and he said that way back when he was in high school, somebody asked a question in the science course he was taking, which he thought at that time was the most profound question he had ever heard. It was his science professor, and his professor said, the most significant question that anybody has ever asked is this, why is there something rather than nothing? Well, at the time Gerstner reflected on that and said, that is terribly profound. Why is there something rather than nothing? And then he began to think about it, and he said that as the years went by and he began to learn a little philosophy, and

especially as he learned how to reason, he recognized that it wasn't nearly profound as he thought it was originally. As a matter of fact, it wasn't even a true question.

Problem with the question, you see, is in trying to define what nothing is, you say, why is there something rather than nothing? You're setting up an antithesis. You're setting up an antithesis between something and nothing. But if on the one hand of the antithesis you have something, what is it that you have on the other hand? What is nothing? Try to define nothing sometime. If you think you can say what nothing is, you're the person least qualified to define it. Because as soon as you say "nothing is," "nothing" ceases to be "nothing," and becomes "something."

Jonathan Edwards, one of the greatest theologians America has ever produced, said, "Nothing is what the sleeping rocks dream of." And then Gerstner said, if you think you know what nothing is, you've got those rocks in your head. You're not following that, are you? Look, if "nothing" really is "nothing," if you can't define nothing and you say then that the big question is between "God" and "nothing," the big question evaporates because "nothing" is nothing and you're left with "God." What I'm saying is that that's what the first verse of Genesis does. The first verse of Genesis is profound in its analysis of reality because it recognizes that putting something over it against nothing provides no solution whatsoever. Nothing evaporates, and in the end, all you can have is the God who brought everything into being. When you take a sentence like that, "in the beginning, God," and you begin to think about it, you see that right away it eliminates a lot of the possibilities that are suggested in our time.

First of all, it eliminates atheism, because if in the beginning there was God, then God exists and everything we know came into being through the existence and the power of that God.

Boice: God the Creator

Voiceover:

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James Boice:

First of all, that eliminates atheism, because if in the beginning there was God, then God exists and everything we know came into being through the existence and the power of that God. In the beginning, God also eliminates materialism. I don't mean materialism in the social sense, that is those who live for money, but rather materialism in the philosophical sense that says matter is the ultimate reality in the universe. If in the beginning there was God and matter came into existence through the creative power of that God, then materialism as a philosophy is eliminated because matter or material is not the ultimate reality. God is the ultimate reality. It also eliminates pantheism. Pantheism is the idea that God is in matter, that he's so related to matter that you can't distinguish between the two. It's sort of the power of creative development within matter.

It's sort of the thing that many people have in the back of their minds when they talk about evolution as an explanation of the development of the universe. See, if God was in the beginning alone, and then after that came matter, then God is not identified with matter. Matter is the product of the creative power of this God. So when you come to this verse, you see you come to something that's not only terribly profound but also to something that is terribly helpful because in terms of the possibilities of our day, it eliminates a great many false doctrines. This first chapter of Genesis also tells us a great deal about God, and perhaps that's really where we should focus. I've taken some time to try and explain why Genesis is important and why Genesis 1:1 in particular is important. But having done that, the real value of this book, and indeed the value of

the Bible, is to teach us the nature or characteristics of this God who has created all things and has created us. Look at the various things we learn about God in this chapter. First of all, we learned that God is self-existent.

That really means that God had no origins. Nothing was there to bring God into being. God was; God is; God always will be. God doesn't depend upon anyone or anything else to create him. Now, you see, that creates a problem for us, and it certainly creates a problem for science, because if God is self-existent, that means he isn't subjected to the laws of cause and effect by which we know all things. The way we proceed in our advancement of knowledge is by studying the laws of cause and effect. We see an effect, and we say, what cause is adequate to account for that effect. If God is self-existent, he's not subject to that laws, and that means that he is not subject to our investigation by means of our rationalistic or scientific processes. God may be known to us, but if he is known to us, it's because he reveals himself to us, not because we're able to seek him out. R. A. Torrey wrote about that years ago, saying that this is one reason why the scientific mind and people in general are so hostile to the idea of God. God is beyond our knowing.

We don't like that. We want to be able to get God down here where we can examine him. We want to be able to put him under our microscope. We want to be able to figure him out and then say, "Ah, We've got him, we know who he is. We've analyzed him. Now we can do away with that and go onto something else." God is not like that. So whatever this book of Genesis does in terms of our knowledge of God, it lifts us up from where we are to contemplate that which is ultimately, in the final extent, unknowable. We're never going to exhaust God, even in all the

reaches of eternity. The fact that God is self-existent means something else, too. It means God isn't answerable to us. You see, if you create something, there's a certain sense in which that which you create is responsible to you. Children are responsible to their parents within a certain framework. We are responsible to God within an even greater framework. But God, being God and self existence, is not responsible to us, and he doesn't have to answer our questions. Sometimes he does. We have lots of questions about things, and the Bible is given to us to answer those questions.

But God does not have to explain himself. God does something in our lives that we don't like, something in our lives that we don't understand. And we say, oh God, why in the world did you ever let this happen to me? God may explain it, but God does not have to. And as we live and grow in the Christian life, we find that there are those times when things happen and God does not explain them. And it's simply a mark of growing in spiritual things to recognize that at this point God is God and we are the creatures and we simply must conform to Him. These verses tell us something else about God. Not only that God is self-existent, they also tell us that God is self sufficient. Now, self existence means that God has no origins. The fact that God is self sufficient means that God has no needs, doesn't need us, doesn't need anything. People don't like this either. They tend to talk as if for some reason God created men and women to supply a need in himself. It may have been a need for company, kind of imagine God up there in heaven all alone, feeling lonely.

"So I have to do something about this. I just can't sit around here feeling sorry for myself all day. I think what I'll do is create a universe and fill it with people to whom I can relate." Ah, There we

come in. Now we're doing something for God, aren't we? We're supplying a need that he feels in himself. Sometimes it's talked about in terms of love. We say, oh, God wanted to love somebody, but there wasn't anything he could love. So he created us to love Him. And we have to be careful at that point, of course, because God has created us as persons in his image with the capability of loving Him. And he does love us. But you see, we get off track when we begin to think that because of that, somehow we're essential to God, that God needs us. We forget there was a Trinity. God had company in himself in eternity long before we ever came into being. And God had love in himself and shared love in the Godhead long before we came into being. So when God created us, he didn't create us to make up a need in himself.

That's humbling. We don't like to hear that, but that's the case. Let me put it in these terms. If God doesn't need us, God doesn't need worshipers. It's our privilege to worship him. It's a joy to worship him. It's our duty to worship Him. But God doesn't need us to worship him. Yet, I think it was Torrey who used an illustration saying if tomorrow the sun should suddenly disappear so that nobody could see. Or if, on the other hand, tomorrow the sun should be there, but men and women should all become blind. The fact that we couldn't see the sun wouldn't affect the fact of its existence, it would still be there in all its glory. In the same way, he said, if tomorrow every man, woman and child on the face of the Earth should become an atheist, disbelieve in God and have no relationship to him whatsoever, he would still be as glorious as he is in His Majesty as the sun is in its glory even apart from us. God doesn't need helpers. He uses us. It's a joy to be coworkers with Jesus Christ in the service of God the Father.

But God doesn't need us. Jesus himself said, God is able of these stones to raise up children Abraham. God doesn't need defenders. His truth will survive without us. And although it's his privilege to use us, and it's our joy and privilege to be so used, it's humbling to know that we're not essential to God's plan. Let me take a few other attributes. Not only is God's self-existent, not only is God self-sufficient, Genesis one teaches us that God is sovereign. That is, that he is all-powerful. Everything we know came into being from this God. And because this God created things, he created it in conformity to the laws of his own being and by his own power. And he does with what he has created, what he wants to do. This is simply another way of saying that God is Lord in his own universe. God is not an absentee landlord. God is sovereign, and he is sovereign over things. And he is sovereign over people. And our duty as his people is to come to know and respond to Him. We don't like that very much. You see, it's not so much that we object to sovereignty in a general way.

We don't mind God ordering the laws of the universe scientifically. If the universe didn't obey scientific laws, we'd have a problem. If one day when you came outside, your feet rested on the pavement by the law of gravity, and the next day when you came outside, your feet floated up off the pavement because God had suspended the law of gravity, we'd have trouble. We're quite glad to have the sovereignty of God operating in the laws of science. But the problem we have is where the sovereignty of God impinges upon us personally. You see, if God is Lord, that doesn't mean that he's Lord merely of other people or other things. But God is Lord of me. That means God has the right to tell me what to do. He has the right to direct my life, and that's what I don't want. That's the essence of sin. God had the right to tell Adam what to do. He gave Him great freedom, but he did lay the one restriction on him. He said, Adam, you're not to eat of the tree of

the knowledge of good and evil. Here in the middle of the garden, you can have all the other trees, all the trees northeast, south and west but don't eat in this tree because the day in which you eat of it, you'll surely die.

And what Adam did was shake his fists in God's face and say, I don't care how much freedom you've given me as long as you lay that restriction on me. I hate that restriction, and I'm going to eat at that tree, whatever the consequences might be. In other words, Adam said, I am not going to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. I will not have God be Lord over my life. And all the problems we know in history and in the human race flow directly from that. Finally, you see, when Jesus Christ came, men and women rebelled against the sovereignty in Christ's presence because they said, we will not have this man to rule over us, and they crucified him. Genesis 1 also teaches us that God is wise or, as we say, all wise or omniscient. He knows all things. We don't like that either, because, you see, just as sovereignty presents a problem to us when it has to do with us personally, so does omniscience present a problem to us when it has to do with us personally. I don't mind God knowing you, that doesn't bother me in the slightest. But to think that God knows me, that's profoundly disquieting, if for no other reason than I'm ashamed of myself and I try to cover up who I really am when I deal with other people, isn't that what we do?

We cover up who we really are when we deal with other people? Oh, we'll reveal a little bit of ourselves to anybody, and we'll reveal a little bit more of ourselves to somebody that we think is really sympathetic and likes us. And perhaps in a romantic situation or in a marriage where there really is sharing on a very deep level, we reveal a great deal more. But I don't believe that even in

the best of marriages, even in the best of human relationship, men and women really get down to rock bottom and say what they really are in the most profound way. We cover things up. And why do we do it? We cover things up because we are sinners. We know that down in the core of our being there is a sinful nature, and we ought not to be sinners, and we're ashamed of that. And so we put on masks and we dress to make impressions, and we talk in a way that we think is acceptable to other people. What do you do when you live in a universe where you can fool other people but you can't fool God? God is the one before whom all hearts are open, all desires known.

See, if God is omniscient, God knows me, and I find that very disquieting. Genesis 1 also tells us that God is orderly. I suppose nothing comes across more clearly in this chapter than this orderly creation of the universe in a period of six days. On the first day, on the second day, on the third day. We're not orderly. And the reason we're not orderly is the reason we're ashamed of one another and ashamed of what we are. It's because we're sinful human beings. Sin, in addition to being a rebellion against the law of God, and in addition to producing shame and those who are in rebellion, also disrupts things. So our thinking is disorderly and our moral lives are disorderly as well. This is what the devil is really about, disrupting things. Those of you who study Greek will know that in the Greek language the word for devil, from which we get our word devil is "Diabolos." And if you know Greek well at all, you'll know that that word "Diabolos" is formed of two separate Greek words, "Dia," which means through or among, or in the midst of and "Bolo," which means to throw.

We have it in our word bowling, I suppose. Dia, Bolo, Diabolos. What does it mean? It means that the devil is the one who is always throwing the monkey wrench into the machinery. He's always disrupting things, and that's the Devil's pattern, he disrupts. This is what sin does. It disrupts. God is the only one who can bring together. And so when we look at this statement of the creative work of God in Genesis, we see, unfortunately, ourselves reflected in the opposite. God is orderly and we are not. This goes on to tell us about the Holiness of God because God creates the man and the woman in his own image, and that's a Holy image which they violate by their sin. It also tells us that God is a personal God because he created persons to stand in a personal relationship to him. What I want to say at this point and do it by way of an illustration, is that men and women don't really have trouble with God if they can mold God to their own image. We can create God to be the kind of God we want him to be. We don't have any trouble with him at all.

But the difficulty in our relationship to God is that God cannot be molded to our image and that the God who is there is the God of Genesis, one who confronts us in our sin at every point. Some time ago, I heard a story of a mountain climber who was making his way up a steep ascent of rock and began to slip on the surface. He was afraid he was going to be killed because he knew this slide went down toward a cliff and that if he went over the edge of the cliff, he'd fall to his death. He was trying to save himself. And as he was just going over the edge, he threw out his arm and he grabbed a branch that was hanging there. He broke his fall. He didn't plunge to his death, but when he tried to get himself back up onto the ledge. He found that he couldn't do it. All he was doing was hanging. Now he knew it was only a question of time until his grip would

lessen and he'd have to let go. He's going to fall. What was he going to do? Well, he hadn't been very religious up to that point, but he decided, whatever time to be religious now, was it?

And so he looked up to heaven and he said, "Is there anybody up there who can help me?" Now he really didn't expect any answer, but a great big voice came back and the voice said, "yes, I can help you. But first of all, you're going to have to let go of that branch." A long pause, and then he said, "Is there anybody else up there who can help me?" You see, that's a profound analysis of where we all are, apart from the Grace of God in Jesus Christ. We want somebody who can help us, but somebody who can help us on our terms. And the difficulty we have is that there's nobody like that. The only person who can help us is God, and that God is not the God of our imagination, but the God of the Bible in general and the God of Genesis 1 in particular. He is the self-existent, the self-sufficient, sovereign, omniscient, orderly, Holy, and personal God. You ever thought that it's really a rebellion against that God that has made evolution so popular? I'm not going to talk about evolution because it takes a whole analysis in itself. But evolution, as you know, is the alternative to creation in our Western world today.

Why is evolution so popular? Not because of the evidence. The evidence does not support evolution. It's popular for psychological reasons. People find a need to explain things apart from God. I don't know that it's ever been put better from the evolutionist standpoint than in The Hymn of man by Algernon Charles Swinburne. He wrote this, "but God, if a God there be, is a substance of men which is man. Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten; thy death is upon thee, O Lord. And the love-song of Earth as thou diest resounds through the wind of her wings-- Glory to Man in the highest! For Man is the master of things." But man is not the master of

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things. God is the master. God is the creator of things. God is the creator of you and me. And the only wise thing to do now or ever is to come to terms with that God as he presents himself to us in Scripture. Now the next time we talk about Genesis, we're going to be talking not about the doctrine of God, but about the doctrine of man and the Fall, the problem. And then in our third session, we're going to talk about the way of Salvation as we find it in the earliest pages of the Word of God Genesis Three where the whole doctrine of Salvation is discovered.

Let's close in prayer. Our Father, we ask you to bless this study of your word to our hearts. Grant we pray not that we might be tickled in our fancies in a light way, but that we might be challenged by who you really are and recognize afresh the need we have to conform our lives to that great reality. And bless us we pray as we do by your Grace through the power of Jesus Christ Christ, who lives within us, where we pray in his name, Amen and Amen.