

Today we begin a series of messages on the general subject of surveying the history of the Bible. There are many very good ways to study the Bible. It is always a good thing to study it book by book, chapter by chapter, and verse by verse, but it is also good sometimes to get a more general overview of the Bible and look at it in its broad outline. This we propose to do in this particular series of messages. We want to look at the Bible in its general scope, in its panorama, in the whole sweep of its revelation, and to do this we shall look from Genesis to Revelation. Obviously, in a study like this, it is extremely necessary that one pick and choose the things that we are going to talk about, and I have had to do this. Everything cannot possibly be covered in a series like this, and yet we want to hit the high spots and see the highlights of God's dealings with men in the history of the Bible.

Broadly speaking, there are three main periods of Bible history. The first begins with creation in the book of Genesis and continues through the Old Testament, concluding with the book of Malachi. The second broad period is that time between the testaments from Malachi till the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The third broad period is the period of the New Testament, the period from the time of the life of Christ to the close of that first century, and the writing of the last book of the Bible.

In the Old Testament period which we begin today, of course, the first thing is the creation of the world and of man. We read this account in the opening chapter of the Bible in the book of Genesis, chapter 1. "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth," a statement so simple, yet so complete. "And the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," and then beginning at verse three, we have the account recorded of the things that God did in the seven days of creation that continue on through the rest of that chapter. There are many differences of opinion about some of the details of creation and I do not propose particularly to deal with those differences. But I would like to point out some of the more obvious and important facts that are revealed to us about the creation of the world, and of man in these opening verses of the book of Genesis. The first is this: it is God who did the creating. The God of whom this chapter speaks is not the God of man's imagination. When the surveys go around and ask people, "Do you believe in God?" and when they get a rather large number of affirmative answers indicating that many people apparently do believe in God, they need to ask the second question, "What God?" And the "what God" is very clearly revealed to us as the creator of the heavens and the earth. This is the God who Moses knew, and I think that we need to realize that Genesis, being written by Moses, should be understood through Moses' eyes and through Moses' mind. When Moses wrote, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," Moses was speaking of the God he knew. Moses was not a primitive man. Moses is relatively recent in the history of man. Neither was Moses an uneducated man; on the contrary he was a highly educated man. He was educated in all the wisdom of Egypt, we know that the Egyptians were thoroughly advanced people. Therefore, Moses was a man who could be precise in his thinking or in his manner of expression. Furthermore, language was well developed

at this time and Moses was not stuck for words, and he did not grope for some ways to express that which was being revealed to him. In other words, when Moses said, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," He is speaking of, and thinking about, and recognizing the God whom he knew, not some intangible entity way off somewhere or some impersonal force which no one could know personally. He is the God who had revealed Himself at the burning bush, the God who had revealed Himself to Moses in the miracles, and the God who revealed Himself in the deliverance out of Egypt. This is the God with whom Moses had talked personally and had communion and fellowship with daily. This is the God who created the heavens and the earth, not some God of man's making, not some God of man's mind, not some God of man's imagination, but the God who revealed Himself in the personal acts and the personal encounters with Moses himself. So when Moses said that God created the heavens and the earth, he tells us very precisely who the creator is.

Now another thing we notice in this passage is there are a lot of details as to how God did this creating. You often hear people say that the only important thing that we need to know from the book of Genesis about creation is that God did it, not how He did it. Indeed, some people say, the Bible doesn't tell us much about how He did it. This is not so. Granted, there are lots of details that we would like to know, but actually speaking, there are many details we are told in this passage about how God created the heavens and the earth, and how He created man as the capstone of creation. So a lot of the how is given here as well as the who.

There is a third thing we need to consider and that is when. When does God do this? Well, I cannot pronounce with finality on this question, but I can point out to you, that in verses 1 and 2, however, you may consider them or whatever time they may refer to, there is no marking off of time. In other words verses 1 and 2, do not specify the length of time that may be involved in the original act of creation. Concerning the days which follow beginning with verse 3, some people believe that these days are rather long periods of time, and sometimes the word day is used that way. Others believe that these days are as we would understand them now, 24 hour days. And the word, of course, is used that way too. But however you consider the length of the creative days, it is important to notice that man was created at the end of the sixth day. Man in other words is a recent creation of God, however old the earth may be according to verses 1 and 2. Man was created at the end of God's creative activity. Man is the capstone of God's creation and God did all of this in order that He could have human beings that would have fellowship with Himself.

Of course, it was not long before man ruined this plan of God. It was not long before man broke that fellowship which God had established with Himself. It was not long before man sinned and thus upset the whole purpose which God had had in order to create him. This is why man needs a Saviour, because although he was created perfect at the beginning, he broke that fellowship and sinned and now needs someone to restore that fellowship with the living God. That someone, and the only one who can restore that fellowship is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The creation account of Genesis is not limited to Genesis. It's referred to in other parts of the Bible. If you do not believe Genesis 1 and 2, you have not gotten rid of the account of creation. For you find creation is referred to several other times in the Bible. For instance, it is referred to in the 20th chapter of Exodus where God gave the ten commandments. It is referred to several times in the writings of Paul and it is referred to at least once in the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, if you could believe that Moses was not giving us the truth here, then you will also have to give some explanation for Christ saying that in the beginning God created man and woman, male and female, Adam and Eve. You'll find this record in the 19th chapter of Matthew. And also you'll find one of the most important accounts of creation, at least of the purpose and meaning, and implications of creation in the 5th chapter of Romans where Paul says that one man, Adam, did one thing, sin, and created the consequences of death for all the race; and in contrast, one man, Jesus Christ, the God man, did one spectacular act in His death on the cross of Calvary with the consequence that all who believe in Him may have everlasting life. If Adam is not real, if Adam did not actually do the sin that he did, then, of course, you do not believe in sin or in sin being passed on to the race. But if Adam sinned and if the race is thus involved in sin, then we need a Saviour. If you can get rid of Adam, then, of course, you do not need the Saviour, according to Romans 5. But if you need a Saviour, then it's because of what Adam did when he sinned, after God had created him. In other words, the two go together, one act of Adam brings the consequences of sin and the act of Jesus Christ brings the consequences of righteousness to all who believe in Him.

This is God's story of creation. He did it. He did it by very specific means, He created the earth in ages past but man recently and He did all of it in order that man might have fellowship with Himself. Man ruined that, and you may be in that state of ruin today. But if you will receive the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ said He would take you to the Father, He would guarantee heaven and He would never cast you out. This is the new creation, a creation in Jesus Christ. Will you accept Him today?