

Dalziel St. Andrew's Parish Church : Motherwell
Sunday 15th January 2012 Genesis 1

Genealogy is all the rage these days. The growing popularity of TV programmes like, “*Who do you think you are?*” indicate that. Quite a number of folk I know are keen to find out where they came from. Personally, I’d rather read chapters 1 & 2 of Genesis. It’s a lot quicker and, let’s face it, who wouldn’t want to say that God is their Father? Well, unless you’re a zealous atheist, who believes only in evolutionary theory, that is? Mind you, maybe it makes sense to describe an unbeliever as someone who is researching the family “*tree!*” I’ve often wondered, though, which “*branch*” they might choose – Gorilla, Chimpanzee or Orangutan?

Okay, in **E100** this week, we are dealing with the creation narratives – i.e., beginnings. In fact, in these early chapters of Genesis, amongst other (literally) groundbreaking events, we read about the first day, the first word, the first sunrise, the first nightfall, the first man, the first woman, the first marriage, the first deception, the first sin, and the first lie. But, before we get ahead of ourselves, let me remind you that there was something (or, rather, someONE) that preceded all of these firsts – “***In the beginning God...***” Those simple four words are set right at the start of our studies in order to remind us that **the LORD reigns supreme over all that He has made**. As some of you know, I am trying to BLOG some of my thoughts on our website as we go through the E100 programme. And, there is an opportunity for anyone to add comments or ask questions along the way. The very first response I got to my first entry was the question, “*Who made God?*” My response was simple – “*if someone had made God, they would be God.*” By definition, God is greater and more powerful than anyone or anything else. Before Him there was nothing and, the Bible teaches us that, it was out of nothing He made everything. And, that’s not just a nice theological statement. It is important that we grasp the significance of this – **God is so much greater and more powerful than we can imagine.**

Some folk seem to portray the LORD as a type of *celestial Superman*, a spiritual version of the “*man of steel.*” Let me tell you something - when we think that way about God, we are in danger of flipping the Genesis account through 180 degrees. Instead of accepting that God has made mankind (male and female) in His image; we fashion God in our own likeness. The problem with this is that we wind up with a God Who sees and judges things the same way we do. That is not what the Scriptures say elsewhere – “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the LORD.*” (Isaiah 55:8) What we hear about Creation bears this out. A phrase comes up again and again - “*And God said...*” The LORD did not even lift a finger to make the universe in all its splendour; He just spoke and it was done. Now, that’s powerful. In fact, that is all-powerful. So, you see, **God is stronger and wiser than even 100 supermen!**

And, there are a few other things God reveals about Himself in this opening chapter. Witness the variety of vegetation and creatures mentioned – **He is a God of creativity and imagination**. Think about the way in which one thing leads to another and builds upon what has gone before in a beautiful and functional way – **He is a God of order and life**. Reflect for a moment on the way in which God speaks about the work of His hands – “*And God saw that it was good...very good...*” – **He is a God Who delights in His Creation and wants to share a dynamic relationship with planet and people.**

Most of us would know that an atheist is someone who believes there is no God, and that an agnostic is a person who is open to the possibility of God, but without any personal knowledge of Him. However, just as dangerous as either of these views is the deist, who states that the God Who set in motion the universe, no longer has any interest or direct involvement in it. My friends, too many in the church have the view that God is a like a watchmaker who tightened the spring of the universe and then stepped back to watch as it wound down, without any care or thought for it.

This deistic philosophy has been one way of explaining the various bad things that happen in our lives, like sickness and suffering. There is only one problem; it is not a Biblical explanation. However, if you have read chapter 3 of Genesis, you will already know about the origin of the many

things, which trouble our planet – it's YOU and ME!

Our first parents (Adam and Eve) were placed in a splendid garden, where they had everything they needed provided for them. The single thing they were instructed by the LORD not to do, was the very thing they craved. Pain, sorrow, guilt, anxiety, friction between people and a breach in that relationship with the One Who made us, have all resulted from their willful disobedience. And, we can't get all high and mighty, pointing the finger at them and blaming them alone. For, every day, each of us, if we are truly honest, fails spectacularly to obey God.

Those who are hard on Adam and Eve need only read the stories that follow of how almost a whole generation became so wicked in the time of Noah, that they were literally swept off their feet (Genesis 6 & 7). Not to mention the arrogance of those who built the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). The subliminal message they were broadcasting was that they were personally powerful, in charge of their own destiny, not needful of God's help. Well, you know the adage, "*Pride comes before a fall.*"

Thank the LORD that, in amongst all of this disorderly behaviour, there were some brief shining lights to guide us to the truth. Noah, his wife and family were not perfect. But, they showed enough respect for God and His ways that He began again with them, offering a fresh start. And, the sign of the rainbow has always been one, which brings a smile to the face of a believer. I know you recall the chorus, "*Whenever you see a rainbow...remember God is LOVE!*" ☺ Neither is it a coincidence that a true rainbow has **seven** colours – the perfect number to represent the goodness and grace of God. You see, the sin of mankind always creates darkness, but the unconditional love and forgiveness of God brings light.

But, before I close this first set of reflections on our studies in *E100*, I must mention say something about a main character I have, as yet, only alluded to. The Bible assigns him different names – satan, the devil, lucifer, the prince of this world, Beelzebub, the evil one and father of lies. In the Garden of Eden, he appears in the form of a serpent to tempt the man and woman. Sadly, many people, Christians included, have one of two equal and opposite reactions to satan – either they act as if he simply does not exist, or they attribute to his power every bad thing that happens to them. Now, don't get me wrong, the devil is crafty and cunning, sneaky and powerful; it is his avowed intention to derail you from living a life of faith in God and dependence upon Christ. But, unlike the Creator, he is not all-powerful. And, sometimes, he doesn't even have to try that hard to defeat us and draw us away from the LORD; we do that well enough on our own!

Let me draw a comparison, which ought to reassure you as you fight the good fight. Satan is the father of all lies – the LORD God Almighty is the Father of all that lives. Lucifer is a fallen angel of light – Jesus is the "*Light of the World.*" Christ is the "*Living Word of God*" – the serpent speaks with a forked tongue! He who gets cross must bow to the One Who hung on the Cross. The prince of this world is as nothing, compared with the King of Love.

There are two main lessons for us to rediscover as we follow through on these studies in the Old and New Testament. First of all, when sin rears its ugly head, God is ready to forgive and save those who repent. Secondly, no matter how loud the serpent hisses, he can never match the Lion of Judah when He roars!

Prayer: Lord, forgive the times when I have eaten forbidden fruit or built monuments to my own achievements. Wash me clean and give me a fresh start this day. Let my life radiate the warmth of Your love and shine with the light of Your presence, through Christ my Saviour. AMEN.