

97-08-17b

Okay, we're back now from our break, and in Genesis 1, verse 2, we're addressing these three statements that are made. By the way, I say these statements are made. One of the things that at least you all may have thought of and I didn't think of, but there aren't any people around at this time, right, for all of these early events.

Not until the sixth day is Adam around. So, who is the narrator here? Who is it that is, and how did they find out what went on during the first five and a half days of creation? Somehow God had to impart this history to the early people, whether it was Adam or Moses or whoever, but we had to have some, there wasn't anybody keeping records, there wasn't anyone taking notes on the various days of creation because humankind had not been created. So this is something that God himself described after the fact to one or more human authors.

Just something to keep in mind because this is a divinely spoken history. This is something that God himself communicated, perhaps through angels who we know witnessed these events, but somebody had to describe this because there were no human observers on the scene. And it's very obvious when you point it out, but if you think about it, these words talking about what happened on day one and day two and day three, how did we find this out? Somebody told us after the fact and God either imparted it directly or through an angelic intermediary so that we would have this information.

So this is something that God really wanted us to know and he communicated it himself to make sure that we knew what happened before we got here. But here we are on the first day, we are by the way in the first day, day one of creation. God has created the heavens and the earth and the earth, the same word we had in verse one, the *aretz*, was without any contents, if you will.

It was emptiness and voidness and darkness was on the face of the deep. And this word for deep, *tachon*, is the Hebrew word. Much has been made of this because it is related in some of its etymology to words that are related in turn to the name of a goddess of the chaotic seas in the ancient Babylonian myths.

Tiamat is this goddess and she is the foe of Marduk. Marduk establishes his supremacy in the pantheon by subduing Tiamat, the goddess of the chaotic seas. And interesting remnants of the truth that have been twisted and manufactured into this myth, the way that Marduk defeats Tiamat is he calls upon the four winds and he gets the winds to blow against Tiamat.

And ultimately he cuts Tiamat lengthwise, cracks her open like a shellfish and divides her. And this is what makes the firmament in the Babylonian thing. Tiamat is divided.

Tiamat, the goddess of the oceans and seas, is divided the same way that Genesis tells us that God divided the waters from the waters. But tachon, this deep that is underneath the darkness here, is in some people's minds derivative of the same word. These are two branches from a common ancestor that they found in Eblaite and some other ancient Semitic languages.

So it's sort of an interesting link there. And it reminds us that this idea of the deep is usually associated with the oceans, the great ocean depths. In Jonah, you have Jonah sinking down to the gates of Sheol.

He sinks down into the depths, into the tachon. And then it tells us that the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And of course we have a distinct reference here to the waters.

So when God created the earth, it is a watery emptiness. Obviously, unless there were ships or islands, the fact that it is Tohu would remind you, if you've ever been out on a ship, imprisoned on a Navy vessel or whatever it might be, and out in the middle of the Pacific or the Atlantic, you can see yourself as a tiny speck on a vast, empty landscape of ocean. And on some days, there's not a cloud in the sky, and it sort of reminds you of the primordial days of the world, where there's basically just a dividing line at the horizon, and there's water below and sky above, and that's it.

And it is so vast. I start thinking about the number of gallons of water and how deep it must be, and it really makes me realize the limitations of our minds to comprehend the vastness of what God has created. But this is something that we see here, reminding ourselves at the same time, that this is all shrouded in absolute darkness.

This is absolute darkness. There is no light anywhere. And it says, the Spirit of God, Ruach ha-Elohim, is over the face of the waters.

Now, depending on which English translation you read, especially some of the newer ones, and people continue to debate what all is going on in these first few verses, Ruach is variously translated in the Bible as spirit, or as wind, or as breath. Ruach, R-U-A-C-H, can be legitimately translated in all of those ways. The question, you wouldn't even think it was a question until people start pointing this out, but there are some who believe that this is not God the Holy Spirit at all, that this is the wind.

And you can imagine that some of these people are those who also believe that maybe the Genesis creation account is derivative from the Babylonians, or the Sumerians, and they're thinking about Tiamat, and about the four winds that Marduk marshals, and they're thinking, well, here we've got wind. We've got wind in the Babylonian, we've got wind in Genesis. Ruach is legitimately translated wind in various places, and so they say this was a wind that blew over the face of the waters.

We're talking about a physical universe here, and you can see the way somebody's mind would work on this. Well, have we just made a bold assumption that it has no basis in fact, or is this in fact the third person of the Trinity? A lot of people are very hesitant to, oh, you're Christianizing the Hebrew account here, you're reading in Trinitarianism where it doesn't belong, and so forth. Well, what is the biblical evidence? Can we confidently believe this to be God the Holy Spirit? Well, first of all, we take a look at this word Ruach, and I will just tell you and anticipate our own conclusion.

It is not a wind. Secondly, the word Elohim is sometimes thought to be a superlative, that something is very big or very awesome, and they'll say this is an awesome wind. It's a Ruach Elohim.

It's a wind as big as God or as awesome as God, and that this is just a superlative. And you'll find some English translations that say, an awesome wind blew or hovered or swirled over the face of the waters. And of course, the way they understand Ruach and Elohim determines how they take that verb, which we'll be looking at here shortly, translated brood or hover.

So, what are we to make out of this? First of all, think about what the word is communicating to us, whether it is wind, breath, or spirit. What's the basic idea we have? What happens with the wind? You remember when Jesus is talking to Nicodemus over in John 3, and he says, in your standard King James, it says the wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Well, what's the idea of wind? It is something you cannot see. It's invisible, but it has effects. Its effects are visible, but it is invisible.

Well, that's true of a spirit, and it's true of the wind, and it's true of breath. Breath accomplishes something. We have to breathe to live, but we can't see our breath.

But it is vital. It is synonymous with our life in many ways. Wind can drive a boat.

Wind can move the trees. Wind can come up in a gale and lash the waters into a stormy froth and so forth, but it's invisible. And in that sense, to ancient man especially, it was mysterious and unexplainable in that sense.

Where do the winds come from? Where do they go? All we know is something is pushing things around. Something is impelling my boat across the lake. Something is bending the trees and blowing the leaves and stirring up the dust and kicking the normally calm sea into waves.

And in that sense, you can see the free exchange using the same word for both. They are invisible things that exert a force. And rach is used legitimately for spirit in some cases and wind in the other.

The argument has been made that the same thing is true in Greek and that *pneuma*, *p-n-e-u-m-a*, the Greek word, which is always used for the Holy Spirit and for the human spirit, there's one place in the New Testament where it is translated wind, and that's John chapter 3, when Jesus is talking to Nicodemus. And so then you wonder, well, there are many uses of *pneuma* in the New Testament. Why in John 3 do we translate it wind instead of spirit? Is it one of these words like *rach* that can be used for both? My conclusion is no, and that we have misunderstood Jesus' comments to Nicodemus, who is a teacher in Israel and who knows that there is a spirit of God.

And you can't switch definitions for the word within one sentence of each other the way our English does in John 3. There's a perfectly good Greek word for wind, and it's *a-n-e-m-o-s*, *anemos*. This word has its brother in Latin, *animatus*, or I don't know Latin, but *a-n-i-m-a-t-u-s* is from *anemos* in Greek. And what does it mean? It means a wind.

It comes over into English as *animate*, something is animated. I looked up *animate* and *animated* in the dictionary this morning, and it says something that is full of spirit. The Greek and the Latin both have the idea of something that is alive.

It has the idea of full of air. The Latin had the idea of full of air, full of life or vitality and so forth. So all of these things are linked together, and so it's not unreasonable to see why people might take this and say, well, this is a wind.

But we have to also think about the context here, and since you have no preceding context, we're at the beginning, and we're talking about God and his actions. One of the first things we notice here is that there hasn't been any mention made of wind, but there has been mention made of God, and so we would expect that something related to God is going to be present here. We also know from the verb, this is not a verb.

There's a perfectly good Hebrew word that means to blow or to swirl or to do any one of a number of things that wind does. But this verb is a very rare word. It's never used of wind anywhere else in the Old Testament.

This is the verb that we're going to take a look at in a moment. So if we take a look at spirit and we take a look at *Elohim*, they say, well, *Elohim* is a superlative. It's an awesome wind.

It's a mighty wind. Are there other places in Scripture where *Elohim* is used as a superlative so that this could mean mighty wind? Well, as far as *Elohim* as a superlative goes, the next place we have this in Genesis is in Genesis 23, 6, where it talks about Abraham. And it says, Abraham is a prince of *Elohim*.

Well, does that mean he's a mighty prince or that he's a prince of God? That's Genesis 23, 6. *Elohim* as an adjective in that sense is found again in Genesis 30, 8, where it talks about Rachel struggling or wrestling. And it says she had wrestlings of *Elohim*. Well, were

they wrestlings of God or were they mighty wrestlings? It's Jonah 3, 3, the city of Nineveh.

It says it was a great city. It was a city of Elohim. Well, does that mean it was a great city or that it was a city of God? It's not always easy to tell.

But all of the other occurrences, those are the ones where you could possibly tip it the other way. But all of the other occurrences in Genesis 1 of Elohim are clearly God. God the Creator, God the Maker, God the Speaker, God the Rester on the seventh day.

And why in one verse, especially the second verse, would Elohim suddenly mean something other than God? It's not likely. So first of all, we satisfy ourselves that Elohim is not a superlative here. It doesn't mean it was a mighty spirit or a mighty wind.

This is actually the God who is the actor and the subject of this entire chapter. And then when we go to Ruach, we come down on the side of the Spirit. This is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of God, Spirit with a capital S, because we do not have any reason to take it otherwise.

Ruach occurs 18 times in the Old Testament, and it never means wind. It never means a mighty wind. The next occurrence, Spirit of God, Ruach Elohim, that's the phrase that occurs 18 times in the Old Testament.

There's no other place in the Old Testament where Ruach Elohim means mighty wind. So there's no reason to take it that way here. The next place we find that phrase, by the way, is in Exodus 31.

And that is the account of the tabernacle. We might turn there. We have an interesting parallel here.

Exodus 31, Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom. Now, God did not fill Bezalel with a mighty wind, we hope. But this is the next time we find the phrase in the Old Testament.

I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work all manner of workmanship. Now, isn't it interesting that we have the Spirit of God in Genesis 1-2 associated with God's initial act of creation and manufacture. And here, for the construction of the dwelling place of God in Israel, we have the next occurrence of that phrase.

The Spirit of God is involved in the, in fact is necessary to, the construction of the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God in Israel. The reason the Spirit of God fills Bezalel is to give him wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and all manner of workmanship so that

he can do artistic works. That is, of course, what God does in creation.

It is an artistic work. It is a work of manufacture. It is the creation of a dwelling place.

God did not create the earth to be empty, uninhabited. He created it to be a dwelling place. So, I think we can have confidence that this is, in fact, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, who is stated elsewhere in Scripture as being a part of creation.

The earth was without form and void, or the earth was emptiness and voidness. Darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God, God the Holy Spirit, was hovering over the face of the waters. This word hovering, you may have heard sometime in the past that this is the idea of brooding.

It's a word that's used of an eagle, and it's young in the nest. And that is, in fact, a legitimate observation. This is a participle in Hebrew, and so it's prefixed with the letter M, and has as the verb form rakaf.

And so it comes out as mer-rakafet, which means moving, hovering, or brooding. It's a very rare verb. It's used in a cow stem, which is just the declarative, like you use in a simple statement, over in Jeremiah 23.9. And since we only have two uses of this verb in the Old Testament, we probably ought to look at these to make sure we understand it aright.

Jeremiah 23.9. Jeremiah is describing himself. We remember him by reputation as the weeping prophet, the author of lamentations. And he speaks in verse 9, My heart within me is broken because of the prophets.

All my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine has overcome, because of the Lord and because of his holy words. For the land is full of adulterers, and so on.

In verse 9, when Jeremiah says, My heart within me is broken because of the prophets. All my bones shake. This is the verb rakaf.

And it means his bones are moving. They're not stable, they're not sound. There are many, several good words to describe what your bones can do, to shake, rattle, and so forth.

But this word has the idea of moving, of not being settled, of moving from place to place, moving about. That's why it's used in the Kal stem. This is a pl participle in Genesis 1-2.

Pl, you remember, is the intensive stem in Hebrew. And it's got a particular vowel pointing, the ie pattern in Hebrew, so that if you were going to put rakaf into the pl, it would be rikef. And we have it used in the pl, and that's in Deuteronomy 32-11.

And this is the passage that you may be familiar with, as an eagle stirs up its nest,

hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings. So the Lord alone led him, Jacob, and there was no foreign god with him. This Deuteronomy 32 passage is interesting.

That, by the way, is the same place, just a verse earlier, where we saw the use of *tohu*, when God found him in the empty place. And this language harks back to Genesis 1 intentionally, that this was the genesis of the nation. Jacob was in bondage, and the creation of the nation of Israel, this language, these allusions back to Genesis 1, remind Israel that God performed an act of creation when he made them as a nation.

They were *tohu*, they were out in the wilderness. And God, like an eagle hovering about in its nest, going back to Genesis 1-2, the spirit of God hovering or brooding over the waters, this is what God did when he set Jacob up on his feet and made him into a nation. So it's a fascinating wordplay that goes back and reminds them of the purpose that God gave this Genesis 1 account to them for, to remind them that God is the creator, he is the controller, he is the originator, he is the one that assigns purpose to what he creates.

The earth was emptiness and voidness. Darkness was on the face of the deep. The spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Remember what we said about *ruach*, about there being something invisible that exerts a force. That's the nature of the spirit. The spirit is something inside us that's invisible, but it has its effects and its outworking in our physical actions.

And what does this mean? It means that into this situation where the heavens and the earth have been created, the earth is emptiness and voidness, suddenly we have the presence of God in the person of his spirit. Something has come into this construct, this creation of heavens, earth, in darkness. The presence of God is now there.

God has been standing, if you will, or speaking from outside and creating these things, but now the spirit of God is present within that creation. This is what is theologically called the eruption of God, I-R-R-U-P-T-I-O-N, the breaking through into a situation. We study this concept in the Gospel of Mark, in the baptism of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus comes up out of the water, the heavens are torn asunder. And what comes into creation? What comes into the situation, descending like a dove? It's the spirit of God. This is the way that God breaks into a place, breaks into something in creation with his presence.

It's in the person of his spirit, and it's an eruption. It's a breaking in. And here the presence of God in this formless and unfinished status of creation is manifest by the spirit of God.

Then in verse 3, we have the first quote of God, and in Hebrew it's beautiful, it's just two

words. Yah-or. God, in the whole first day of creation, he speaks two words.

He says Yah-or, in the whole day. And it is, let there be light. In Latin, if you look at this in the Vulgate, it says, fiat lux.

And this is where we get the term fiat, that something is created by divine fiat. Fiat means, let there be, in Latin. Fiat lux.

Yah-or. God said, let there be light. And there was light.

We have here the picture of God being present in a situation. Because he is present, because his spirit is hovering and is in contact with this creation, God can identify the problem at first hand. He's not distant.

He's not wholly other, at some far off place, speaking about something that's far away. He is present right there in the midst of creation. And this is almost cause and effect.

The spirit of God is moving about over the face of the waters. And God sees what needs to be done. He says, we need light here.

This situation calls for light. And God says, let there be light. And there is light.

It reminds us that our God is a personal God. He's in contact with his creation. He's intimately involved with it.

Although he is separate from it. And this is the first act of Fiat. Light comes into being by the spoken word of God.

Yah-or. God saw the light, that it was good. And God divided the light from the darkness.

We want to see this idea of division occur throughout Genesis chapter 1. And this is not dividing in the sense of schism. Or in the sense of rejecting one thing and choosing another. This is division in the sense of assigning a function.

Assigning a sphere. Darkness, in this context, is not inherently evil. God assigns it a role and assigns it a function.

It is to alternate with the light. God saw the light, that it was good. And God divided light from darkness.

He assigned each one its part or its sphere. This verb for divide is used five times in chapter 1. We find it here in verse 4. We'll see it again in verse 6. Verse 7. Verse 14. And verse 18.

And the last time we find it is similar to the first. If you look at verse 18, God is going to put lights in the firmament to rule over the day and over the night and to divide the light from the darkness. To assign them a function.

Now, there's been a lot of talk about, well, what about day four of creation? God doesn't create the sun and moon and stars until the fourth day. And yet here is light. Where is this light coming from? How can you have the statement in verse 5, God called the light day and the darkness he called night, so the evening and the morning were the first day.

Well, how can you have evening and morning? We define evening and morning by the rotation of the earth, the setting and rising of the sun. And there is no sun at this point. One of the beautiful symmetries in the Bible is contained right here in this idea.

Turn over to Revelation chapter 22 and verse 5. Revelation 22, 5. This is the new heavens and the new earth, the new Jerusalem. There is a pure, in verse 1, river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its stream and on either side of the river is the tree of life, which bears twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month.

The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him. They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads.

There shall be no night there. They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light, and they shall reign forever and ever. The story of creation and the story of human history, the story of the universe, begins and ends in the perfect creation of God with the light that emanates from the presence of God himself.

You don't have the sun shining forth at the beginning. God himself is light. We know that from 1 John 1.5. God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

And so the account in Genesis begins the story and the account in Revelation ends the story in the same way. You have the glory of God shining forth as a light. You don't need the sun.

You don't need a glowing body of hot gases to illuminate. It's the presence of God that does that. And so for the first three days of creation, it is simply the presence of God and the spoken command of God that that light shine within creation itself.

We know that God preexisted creation, and in that sense his light has always shone, but it wasn't shining within this creation until he spoke it into existence. So creation will end as it began with a sunless, eternal, and perfect light, the light of the presence of God. And that is a great place for us to close this morning.

When we resume next time, we're going to see the nature of the division that God makes between light and darkness. What should we think about this darkness? We know from Scripture that darkness is not inherently evil. We have passages of Scripture, such as in the Psalms, where God describes himself as dwelling in darkness and as shrouding himself in darkness.

What exactly does that mean? How are we to take this division of light and darkness and the things that happen the next few days of creation? Well, that's where we will resume next Sunday. Let's close here in prayer. And as we do, I hope that as we go through Genesis, we remember that as interesting as these things are in terms of the account, it's also important for us to remember what God is revealing about himself.

God is involved intimately in creation. He didn't create the universe to be void or to be emptiness. He created the earth to be inhabited and to accomplish a purpose.

He has that same purpose for us. And his purpose in dwelling with us and dwelling in us is the same. He has a purpose.

And he is intimately involved with us and wants to be in the same way that he is in these initial acts of creation. God went to a lot of trouble to construct the universe and everything that's within it. He has placed us in that context to accomplish a purpose.

And we're important. We wouldn't be breathing air. We wouldn't be living a life if God had not incorporated us into his perfect plan.

And so we're important. And God has given us this account in Genesis 1 to remind us that he is a God of compassion. He's a God of mercy.

And he wants us to be productive in the positive side of his plan. And he has bent the greatest efforts that omnipotence can produce to making that happen, not only in our creation but also in our salvation. So it should be a great comfort and a great encouragement to us when we think about creation because God went to a lot of trouble to put us where we are.

And he's not finished with us yet. Let's close. Father, we thank you for the place that we occupy in your plan and in your purpose, for the love that you have expressed toward us and making every provision for us in instructing us and teaching us in the way of wisdom.

We thank you that we have the opportunity and the privilege of fulfilling our calling and our purpose and of reflecting your glory. We pray that your work in our case will not have been in vain but that you will be at work in us to will and to perform your good purpose. We pray that in all these things, in our conversation, in our thought life, in the love that we express toward ourselves and toward others, that we will demonstrate the work that you have performed, the purpose that you have intended for us, and that in that way your plan will move forward, your glory will be reflected, and we will be true disciples of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

We ask it in his name. Amen.