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Genesis Part 3
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Genesis Chapter 1, if you have your Bibles. Let's go ahead and get to work on this. I want to talk to you just briefly today on Genesis and probably the first verse I want to focus on is verse number five in Genesis chapter one. It says "God created the light day and he called the darkness night and evening came and then morning, the first day." Evening came and then morning, the first day. So I want to just pause there a little bit and chat with you. You know it's interesting because if you're not careful you can run past Genesis and wonder and think okay I'm not sure that's real, it's a myth. So I want to give you three main ways that American Christians think about Genesis. It's not just a story, it's real, but I want to give you three main categories that their beliefs fall in to. And these are all people that believe the Bible is inspired but they disagree on the interpretation. So even in our audience there might be some that would disagree on how we interpret Genesis. But here are the three main categories that they generally fall in to: there's the twenty-four hour view, that God created the world in six sequential days, one hundred forty four hours, rested on the seventh and they were all marked by the morning and the evening as you just heard me read about from verse five. And then there's the day-age view. The day-age view would say I believe he created it in six days and rested on the seventh but we don't know how long that day was, that day may have been longer than twenty-four hours, we don't know, maybe it was a God day. So it was longer, bigger, some would even surmise that it could be a million years go by. So, the day-age view believes in the sequence but not in the duration. It would say that it's longer than a twenty-four hour period. And then the third view, and I'm not going to talk about these views today, so this is all you're going to get, but I'm just giving you these views that are out there in any given church you would go to, even here in town, the pastors or leaders might have a different view than we might have. The framework view - and that is that Genesis is a figurative framework and although it's very real it's God's work narrated by Moses in topical ways and this view says that Moses was not speaking to the duration of a twenty-four hour period when he was writing. It was evening and then morning and the first day and the second day and so forth. And also maybe the sequence might be out of order than the way that God created the world, but Moses is giving this framework view. So you might have heard others talk about the gap theory and all these various theories. All of those theories will fit under those three umbrellas, alright? So I'm not here to teach you about umbrellas.

What I like to do is stick to the Bible. It's kind of a new plan. And going to all of the seminaries I did really helped me to do that. It helped me to really kind of parch through what is man's speculation that we may call theology, the study of God. The book of Genesis isn't conducive at all to theology because pretty much, it's about the human condition. It's all about man's relationship with God. It's not even that much of a study in to God, to be honest. Genesis is how God relates to humans and Moses is of course recording this under the inspiration of the holy spirit, so it's really powerful. Anyway, we get in to the message, verse number five. Then evening came and then morning, the first day. Then look at verse number eight, skip down to verse eight. And God called the

expanse – sky and then evening came and then morning the second day. And God said let the water under the sky be gathered unto one place and let the dry land appear and it was so, and God called the dry land earth and He called the gathering of the waters - seas. And God saw that it was good. Verse eleven: then God said let the earth produce vegetation. Notice how God sets something in motion here – let the earth produce vegetation, seed bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with it's seed in it, according to their kinds, and it was so. And the earth produced vegetation, seed bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it. That's a key phrase there: trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds and God saw that it was good. And here we go again, verse thirteen, and evening came and then morning the third day. And then, in verse nineteen, if you skip down to verse nineteen, we see that evening came and then morning, the fourth day.

I want to talk to you about these four days of creation. I want to talk to you about my own experience and my own encounter in this and something that just came very really to me, even this week. There's a guy named brother Lin from China and in the 1970's or actually early in the 1940's, was arrested for the first time, as the communists took over, in 1949 and they tried to destroy the church, and he was arrested for another time in 1955 and in prison for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And he was sentenced to twenty years of hard labor and then he was released back and forth on several occasions between 1955 and 1978 but spending twenty years in prison. So he started preaching again and in 1980 only four people came to faith in Jesus Christ under his ministry. In 1990, when he was checked on again, brother Lin had baptized over 1,000 new believers. And in 1990, the secret police came in to one of his evening worship services with a place pack, stopped the meeting, confiscated all the Bibles, all the song books, destroyed his printing equipment in the back, threatened his members not to return to this gathering place, took the membership list role so that they could intimidate the worshippers, and they arrested him again. They took him in this time to kill him of course and he is recorded as saying these words, he said that he would not stop preaching the gospel of Jesus. "I've already spent twenty years in your prisons. What else can you do to me? I fear nothing more." And it's the memory of that kind of ministry that makes what the American church is going through here at this time kind of laughable. So God is drying up the finances a little bit to get our attention, to show that we really need Him anyway. Just a thought. So I was thinking about that story and pulled it out to share with you, because I was also thinking about how challenging it is in these times of famine and it's not that it's laughable, but it's like that we've never really had to suffer before. But there are rhythms of creating and so it was evening and then it was morning the first day. Noticed He created the expanse of the sky, that He created a possibility, the atmosphere, if you will. Someone texted me in between services and said "I've always tried to picture what nothing looks like, that God created the world out of nothing." What does nothing look like? That's right. And whatever that looked like, that's what He did. And He creates this expanse. I think some of us think that, you know, He's got the whole world in His hands, so then it was just this kind of ball and just kind of formed it and shaped it like play-doh. It's way bigger than that and way more mystical than that. There was nothing and then all this was formed and the spirit brooded over this formlessness and all of that and this creative, and then God separates and creates an expanse or a space and that's what He is trying to do in

your life sir. He is just trying to create enough space to allow the circumstances, the darkness and the yuck in your life, to create enough space so that something can be birthed in to the atmosphere and that's what happens when you praise. When we worship God in this place together there's nothing greater, nothing better than to sing praises to His name and it creates an atmosphere, almost like a little cloud in here, a little weather system of Jesus blessings and you can drink that in and it's so amazing. And on the second day it was evening and then it was morning the second day. The dry land appears. And the dry land comes out. So the first thing is atmospheres are created in verse five. And then God gives power to the seed bearing plants, that there is this power in the seed that goes in to the ground, in to the soil. Have you ever wondered what it's like to be a seed? Probably not. But the agricultural examples that I have in my mind: you stick the seed in the ground and then it's amazing, you just kind of let the darkness take over really and then that plant grows up toward the light, doesn't it? I mean, what did you do? You might have given it some water. If you're in the fourth grade, you over-watered it, but you wanted to see this thing kind of come up, this plant, and God did that with the earth that we can see, this power, this seed to bring the next. It's amazing as worship pushes back the swirls of threatening darkness in your life that would say there's nothing here, there's no life here, and worship kind of brings that to life. The seed bearing does as well. Jesus said: except a grain of wheat fall on the ground and die, it abides alone, but if it dies it will bring forth much fruit. Then evening came, verse thirteen, and morning the third day. God placed the sun, the moon, the stars in to place. We've talked about the degrees of light. It's brighter in the daytime than at night. But there's still some light there at night, even though it's dark, there's still some light there. It reminds me of dependable light, that there is just this light you could lean on and depend on, this dependable light, if you will. And so, you and I have grown up on that. And the reality is the world has never known complete darkness because we've always had the stars or the sun and the moon. And so we can see that God put these things in to place and spoke the world in to existence powerfully and creatively. And, in many ways, that's what happened with the resurrection, isn't it? That on that third day that Jesus comes out of the darkest place, that Jesus comes out of a place of death, the place of separation and he brings us new life. And verse nineteen says: evening and morning came the fourth day. And I think it just represents abundance. It's kind of like this next fruitfulness, if you will. You know in sports and in music you have this kind of idea of the one hit wonder, you know, VH-1 the 1970's, the one hit wonders, you know? I could start naming them but I don't want to show my age today. But in sports it's the same way. Some guy can think of names. I'm not going to call names because maybe they might even be watching on the internet and I'd depress them if they were. They really didn't have a great career or anything, showed up at the right moment, the right time, hit a home run at the right time and they're in the hall of a fame because they hit a home run at the right time or threw the touchdown at the right time or whatever it might be just as kind of one hit wonders. But God's not like that. He says it's not one and done but to be fruitful. The seed is always about the next. That the seed that you plant is always about what is coming next, isn't that cool? That God set up multiplication. Anything God is involved with multiplies, doesn't it? Satan's in to destruction. God's in to blessing. Satan's in to squeezing out and choking the life out of and God's in to bringing to new life. Even out of nothing, God can create something. I don't know what you're going through. You might be going through a really dark time.

This is the first church that I've pastored where the other churches I pastored at weren't struggling financially, I knew when we went there they were struggling financially, we led them out to freedom. This is the first one where God has led us in to a challenging dark night and it's dark. I was talking to God about it on Monday. I was talking to God about it. I was just saying: God, why the night and why so dark. You may not know this, if you are new here, but in the five years that I've been here I have not allowed a pastor appreciation offering because God told me not to when I came. It's funny to say that now because I didn't know that God was going to ask me to do some things that people wouldn't appreciate. That's kind of funny, isn't it? So I know October is pastor appreciation month, but something that we've done over the years since I've been here is that we take a pastor appreciation offering and we give it away and we bought a playground. Remember that story? I'll just tell you the story in case you missed it. But we said don't give this offering if you don't want to give or you're religious or this offends you, because this is not your tithe or anything. But we heard about a school right here in Winston Salem that there was no money to build those kids a playground and that school had been in existence for decades. And those kids were trying to raise money for a playground and they didn't have any chance to raise that money but they thought they did and they believed. And they had tried to raise it and their parents were poor and I think the statistics were 90% of those kids that went to that school were on free lunch. In other words, they did not have the money and their parents, the PTA club was non-existent, there was no way they were going to be able to raise those funds. So on a Sunday morning, we took up a pastor appreciation offering and we gave that offering to a teacher who took it in with the understanding that you can't tell anybody that it came from us. And so they put the money in there together and the kids got together and realized they had been raising money all year that last year and coming in to the new year they just wanted a playground and when they counted the money, look what happened, there was enough money for that school to build a playground and bless those kids. Can you say amen? Now, we did that. We got involved in that. Why are you saying that? It's because when something seems the darkest, when it seems impossible, God has a way of just bringing light from the strangest places doesn't He? That God who is in charge of the light can do all of that. You think about Adam and Eve when they walked with God in the breeze of the day, and we will get to Adam and Eve soon enough in the series, but when you think about them walking with God in the breeze of the day, how come God didn't walk with them in the night when they would be afraid? I don't like that. I would like God to be a God of the night. You say pastor I know he's a God of the night. Yeah, but when you go through the night it don't feel like He's God of the night, it feels like He stuck you out there and you're all by yourself. Now for the religious people around you, I'm just talking to a few of us here. Now the rest of you, you find you got it all, you got your little theology and all that but for me God scares me to death a lot. So Monday, I'm asking God, I'm saying: God, why tonight and why so dark? Why is it so dark? And I began to look at this and began to look at the verse I've already highlighted to you. It says: then it was evening and then it was morning and God says to my heart, or the thought came to me, night comes first. Darkness comes before the new day is born. Night always comes first, why? So God will get the glory. So that people will say: man, that church survived that guys ministry. Look at how God's blessing them. That guy almost killed them. And God wants the glory in your life sir. He doesn't want you to take your

career by the horns and do something. He wants you to yield your heart to God and say: God, however you want to use me, however you would like to spin me in this culture because my vocation is my voice to those that need to hear. So that I will serve, I will love. That God takes us off to that night, that night. I mean He walked with Adam and Eve in the daytime, what's up with that? It's in the night when we need Him. No. He says it's in the night that I'm doing something. I've got a few little thoughts for you about the night. Check this out. That things are in a famine spiritually in our nation and we are in a famine financially in our nation and God doesn't rescue out of a famine, he gets you through a famine, He sustains you through a famine, that each night in Genesis shows us that the morning brought some kind of newness so that each night served just as much purpose as the daytime. The night was just as important as the day. You have to say that or God creates purposeless stuff. He created the night and then the day. First there was evening, then morning. God loves the night. God loves the night because you don't know what He is doing in the night. God wants humanity humbled. Look at this. The night, the darkness concealed the mystery of the creative process of God. It concealed the mystery of the creative process of God. The night, the darkness, concealed the awesome power of God at work when we can't see. The night, the darkness, concealed the joy and the hope of a brand new day. You didn't know there is a day coming. There is a day coming. You only learn by getting older that this too shall pass and there will be a day where we will look back and say: boy that was a long night but thank goodness He got us through the night because it's a brand new day. The night and the darkness always serve to mute things. You ever pray, maybe it's just me, maybe it's just me, you ever pray and it feels like: is there anybody up there, could you give us a little help here? and you're like: it's so dark. Our children were small in Florida and the weather is really violent and unpredictable, so the storms would hit, and I remember vividly Darla holding Whitney on her lap one time when a storm was just rumbling the house, just rocking the house, and Darla was singing to Whitney. And Darla can sing, though she won't sing in here I'm sure but, she can sing. And she says "who's in the middle of the storm?" and then she would say it a little bit stronger with an answer and she would look at Whitney and she was holding her and she would say "God is. Who's in the middle of the storm? God is. Who's in the middle of the storm? God is." And she's holding Whitney and she would say "I'm not afraid cause God's in the middle of the storm." Verse two goes like this and maybe you need to hear verse two today: who's in the middle of the dark? God is. Who's in the middle of the dark? God is. Who's in the middle of the dark? God is. I'm not afraid because God's right smack dab in the middle of the dark. I don't know if you're darkness is sickness, finances, relational trouble, all I can say to you is God is in the middle of the dark working out a mystery and the creative process to bring something about in your life that wasn't there before and what was nothing, seemed like nothing, could not be created, anything created out of that, God says: I can take that which you can't see and turn it in to something beautiful and I will show it to you when we get to the daylight. The night and the darkness brings faith to our lips as we beg for the daylight. It does mine. It did on Monday and Tuesday. God where are you? We've done things right here. We've done things in a good and Godly way. We've done everything that we know to do, where are you? And that brings faith to my lips. The night, the darkness, strips away humanities' ability to strive. There's no more striving. Nobody in here has a briefcase full of plans that's gonna solve the problem. God is re-shaping, re-creating what His church looks like.

The reality is all of these pews need to be flipped around and we need to be looking out, and I'll stand back here and preach and I will encourage you and stand behind you and build you up and give you ministry skills, so that you can go and do the work of the 24/6 church, which is loving God six days a week and then coming in here, not giving glory to anybody up here and with our faces turned that way we give glory to God on that seventh day and celebrate what God has done. That's the church of the Bible, not the church that we see in America right now. So, until that church comes about, perhaps it's going to stay night. I've been saying for almost fifteen years that we better be careful because when charitable giving is taken away, the funds of the church are going to leak out the back door. That people are going to stop giving once they can't deduct it off their taxes. I mean think about that, think about the game changer. That's going to be the pastor that plays golf on Mondays and Fridays. That's a game changer. It's a game. Nobody wants to go sign up and go to bible college and be a pastor now because it's not a career on the list. It's a calling, a calling to die, verily verily I say to you. You're a grain of wheat. Crawl in to the dirt of humility and serve my people and die sucker. Die right there. And out of your death many people will be found to be faithful and be effective and be fruitful. And that's brother Lin in China right there. We've never heard of him, never saw him on television, didn't even buy a tape, don't even think he produced a taped series. Why do we long for the daylight? Is it not for our own desire for visibility? God I want to know the day so I can see what you're doing. God I want it to be daytime because I need to understand some things, so I can tell the deacons. I'm just trying to help here. Is it not so we can see where we are and make adjustments? Yet both the night and the day work for God's glory. Can you say amen? Night time serves us well. It serves us as a calling in to the deep. It serves as a call to depend upon Him fully, serves as a time of waiting, serves as a time of seeking and serves as a time of longing for Him, not for the day. We're not longing for the day, we're longing for God. Not longing for the blessing, but longing for God. So faith is nothing but relational power. Think about this. Think about your life and faith. I thought about this, even on Monday. Adam and Eve were confident God was coming back in the garden. Why, because they hid from Him in the afternoon. They heard him walking in the garden. Oh here He comes, we gotta hide; meaning they knew He was coming. Oh he's coming. He's coming. The Lord is not slack according to His promise. The Lord is coming. The Lord is coming. Why the night? Why so long? We don't know. It's a mystery. We don't know why. But the Lord is walking and when He walks toward them there was this understanding, they knew they could depend on Him. They knew He was going to be there. So, practically then, faith is your relational power. Have you spent enough nights with God to know that He is real in the daytime too? Have you spent enough nights with Him to know he'll be back, he'll be back. When Braden was just a little tyke, two or three years old, and was struggling to stay in his own room and sleep in his own bed and we followed James Dobson. I mean by the book, by the book. It's a little awkward to kick them out of bed once they're 15, you know? What is that, your driver's license? I think it's time to sleep in the other room now. So you have to make a decision early on, so we made a decision. So we would pray with him, sleep in your bed or whatever. And I remember one night as mom got up and she walked out there and he was sleeping at the threshold of the door. He didn't come across the threshold because he knew he couldn't do that. It was against the rules. So as his mom reached down to pick him up and she was going to take him back to bed he says "is it daytime

yet?” Isn’t that what you’re saying right now in your finances, in your marriage – is it daytime yet? Can I tell you that God will be more faithful than a human parent to pick you up and tuck you in and keep you in the night as long as you need to be in the night, but you can rest assured that there is coming a day, there is coming a morning when you will be able to see, understand and all of your fear will be released. So notice God walked with Adam and Eve in the breeze just before night time. That’s a strange God, isn’t it? He walks with you in the day and in the night leaves you by yourself. Now I know He doesn’t leave us by ourselves, but it sure feels like it. There’s a great book out there – “I Know God is Real but He Sure Scared Me To Death a Few Times.” That’s literally, that’s the title of the book. You can Google it. Something real close to that - He Sure Scared Me To Death a Few Times. Well, that’s what God is doing in us. We are in a season, a dark season, a season when he is purging and working and stirring and causing us to desire Him more than we desire anything else. So we can all sing this little song, can’t we? You know. Who’s in the middle of the dark? God is. Who’s in the middle of the dark? God is. Who’s in the middle of the dark? God is. I am not afraid, because God’s in the middle of the dark. And I said to the Lord: well Lord, Adam and Eve, they weren’t totally in the dark because you hung the luminaries. The sun was gone down but the moon was still up. The moon is a constant light. And they had the stars too so it wasn’t completely dark, was it? And then Psalm 119, the verse I didn’t know, I mean I knew the verse but I had to look it up. Psalm 119:105. I had to look it up. My word is a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path. You know how to get through the night? You gotta turn on a night light. The night light in your life is His word. What does He tell you last? What did He say? I will be back. What did He say? I will keep my word. What did He say? Trust in me. What did He say? Whatever he said, whatever promise you’re standing on, whatever the Lord has whispered to you heart bank on it. It’s His word and that word puts a light right around your feet and whatever path you’re walking. It’s not daylight. You can’t get the perspective. You can’t see the landscape. You might even be scared to death if you could see how far the drop was. You might be scared to death. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.