

Looking at Creation Through the Lens of the Crucifixion

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Psalm 104
Preached On: Sunday, July 12, 2020

Crossroads Ministries
301 S. 8th Street
Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

I know there are many of you that are joining us online and we, as always, want to welcome you as a part of our Sunday evening service/Bible study. In this Covid world, those of you who are familiar with kind of our current layout, Sunday evenings is just an intensive Bible study. In fact, you know, the Apostle Paul talks about it in 1 Corinthians 3, it's also addressed in Hebrews 5, that when we are growing in our faith, that there is this progression from milk to meat, and I will unashamedly declare that Sunday nights are a meat fest. This is an all-you-can-eat meat buffet on Sunday night. Now I know some of you may be saying, "Whoa, the meat's tough for me to digest. It's difficult there." Well, that being said, here's what I would encourage you to do: just grab on to what you can grab on, okay? But Sunday night is an opportunity particularly in these days just to very strategically dig deep into the specifics of Scripture and tonight we're gonna spend the majority of our time in Psalm 104 which, by the way, for those of you that were a part of our morning service today at 8:30, discovered that the famous hymn "How Great Thou Art" was actually based upon this Psalm.

So let's begin with a word of prayer and then we'll dig deep.

Heavenly Father, tonight we confess in advance the unsearchable riches of your word. Lord, we claim that if it were not for the illumination of your Holy Spirit there is nothing that we can do with this text, and so, God, we pray that you would speak to our hearts, you would speak to our minds, that you would guide, you would direct us, and you would help us to rightly divide your word tonight so that as we look at these concepts, as we look at these ideas, that it would not just increase our knowledge but it would give us knowledge to increase our witness wherever we find ourselves. Guide us this night as we walk and journey through your word. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I mentioned tonight we're gonna specifically be in Psalm 104 but there are some strategic passages that we're also gonna utilize. Now one of them's gonna be easy to find, it's gonna be Psalm 22. We're also going to find ourselves in Job 38. Both of those are in close proximity. The one passage that's a little bit distant as far as pagination is concerned is in 2 Peter 3 and I'll give you fair warning before we get there because tonight we're

going to look at a passage of Scripture that has an overarching theme of what we know as creation or God as Creator, but we're gonna look at it through the lens of the crucifixion.

Now before we read Psalm 104, allow me to give you somewhat of a hint. One of the things that we're gonna discover in a moment is that the Lord, he adorns himself in light as a garment. It also says he lays out the heavens with a curtain. And as we walk through the passage tonight, I'm gonna go ahead and give you kind of a hint in advance, remember Jesus Christ had a very specific garment on when he was on the cross, and there was a very significant curtain that was torn at the crucifixion event. And so we're gonna look at this creation Psalm in light of the crucifixion and hopefully the Lord will give us insight for today.

So beginning in verse 1 of Psalm 104, it says,

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. 2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: 3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: 4 Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire: 5 Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. 6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. 7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. 8 They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. 9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth. 10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. 11 They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. 12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. 13 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. 14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; 15 And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. 16 The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; 17 Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house. 18 The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies. 19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. 20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. 21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. 22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. 23 Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. 24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. 25 So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. 26 There go the ships: there is

that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. 27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. 28 That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. 29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. 31 The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. 32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. 33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. 34 My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. 35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

Now as we address this concept of God as Creator specifically through the lens of the crucifixion, several things that I want to address tonight and I want to begin with what we might call creation in general.

In verses 2 and 3 it says that God covers himself with light as with a garment. He stretches out the heavens like a curtain. He lays the beam of his chamber in the waters. He makes the cloud his chariot. He walks upon the wings of the wind. Interesting it says he clothes himself with light. I know we're most familiar with that passage in Genesis 1, we have the creation account, and what you and I know as day 1, what is the very first statement that God makes in verse 3? He says, "Let there be light." In fact, when we get to 1 John 1:5, it says, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." But what's interesting to me, it says he clothes himself as a garment with light.

Now back up a few pages to the left to Psalm 22, one of the great messianic Psalms where there are specifically eight prophecies of the crucifixion experience through this one Psalm. I mentioned this morning that Psalm 110 is the most quoted of all the Psalms in the New Testament. Psalm 22 has the greatest number of messianic prophecies with any one Psalm or, shall we say, really any one chapter in the Old Testament, and when you get to verse 18 of Psalm 22, it says, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." Now just to kind of catch us up to speed, if we think about that crucifixion experience, remember that Jesus entered into that trial experience, he entered into that arena that would take place, and he was wearing a very specific garment. The Bible says that the garment was without seam. It is a singular piece of material. Over the course of meeting with Pilate and being mocked and being berated in a series of other events, you may remember in John 19:2 that they took that garment off of him, they placed a purple robe on him to mock him and to ridicule him, and the entire purpose with the crown of thorns, it says, you know, "Are you really the king? If so, deliver yourself." And there's all types of mockery taking place. Before he would go back, his garment, that singular piece, would not only be removed from him but they would do as Psalm 22, they actually gambled on behalf of it.

Now I want you to think about what that garment would have looked like some 2,000 years ago because this is strategic to the passage. Now remember without seam. It would've been a garment in that day that obviously had a place for the head to enter through, and it would not have had a place that covered the arms. It would've been cylindrical in appearance with a simple hemisphere cut out of the top. Now that is interesting to me because it says that the Lord arrays himself with light as a garment and you and I today find ourselves in a world where every single day it seems like we wake up there's a new scientific discovery, and there's a new approach, there's a new response, or whatever it may be to the size, to the structure of our "known universe."

You know, one of the things that I'm a big believer in is that the Bible is not archaic at all, that we are simply through our means of education we are catching up with the Bible. Do not be surprised if given enough time and enough information they discover that what we know as the universe is somewhat cylindrical in its size. And you say, "Well, why would you say that?" Because he says he wears light as a garment. And yet Jesus Christ, he wore this garment without seam that was so important that people would be willing to "gamble" for it.

It then says that there is a curtain that has stretched out the heavens. You know, in Matthew 27 Jesus is upon the cross and he breathes his last breath, it immediately follows his last statement where he says, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." The Bible records beginning in verse 51 of Matthew 27 that when he breathed that last breath, when he made that last statement, it says that that famous curtain, the Holy of Holies, the veil was torn. It was torn from top to bottom, obviously recognizing that it was not a human instrument that did so. But if you look at the construction of that famous veil, it would've had the width of an average man's hand, and it would have had a seam about every 36-48 inches.

Now I want you to think about that for a moment. Have you ever taken, at least this happens in my house, we have kind of a little game that Tracy and I play. I think that when a t-shirt or some type of garment finally gets to the comfort level I like, she thinks it needs to be discarded. I think when it's thin enough that it starts wearing its own holes, that's when it just fits the way it's supposed to. And we kind of have a little routine that when Tracy discovers one of these garments, she places her finger so slightly in whatever tear there is and she displays her strength in front of me which is interesting because an undershirt, for an example, has seams in it, does it not? There are seams at the shoulders. There are seams at the neck. And when she tears it, what does it do when it hits a seam? It always rides up the seam, does it not? Imagine that veil being torn. When it tore, it would've had to go through at least 6-7 seams the width of a man's hand.

Such a significant tear therein, and then what we discover is then the rocks quake. There's an earthquake that happens. Now remember if you look at the strict chronology of the crucifixion event, the veil doesn't tear because of the earthquake, the earthquake happens because of the veil. And so here we have at the beginning of this great Psalm on creation, that he covers himself with light as a garment, and it says he stretches forth the heavens

like a curtain. Both the garment and a curtain were significant events in the life of what you and I know as the crucifixion experience.

As we make our way into verse 3, it says he lays the beams of his chambers in the water. Hm, he lays the beams of his chamber in the waters? You know, you go back to Genesis 1 and you get to day 2, now day 2 is an interesting day in the creation account. It is actually the only day that is not said to be good. It says there that the Lord puts a firmament that is between the earth and the heaven, and it says that there are waters above and there are waters below. And what's interesting here when it says he puts the beams of his chambers in the waters, I get the imagery of Isaiah 6. Remember when he sees the Lord high and lifted up and he sees the pillars of the temple of heaven, he sees the grandeur and the glory of God, the picture that we get here is that the Lord's chambers do not cease where eye cannot see. In other words, his chamber, his post, his pillars extend to the entirety of creation.

It says that when he moves, he moves upon the clouds of a chariot. Do you not think of Elijah immediately when you hear of a chariot being caught up in that famous event? But so many times there is the picture of the clouds being the means of movement. Was it not Jesus Christ himself that when he ascended on high he did so through the clouds? When he returns, he will do so through the clouds? Ezekiel, the throne of God pictured by the four cherubim around the edge, it moved wherever it went upon the clouds. Elijah is taken up in the clouds. There's all this imagery that's used all throughout Scripture regarding the clouds.

And last but not least, at least for this first section of creation in general, how about the wind? It says that he moves upon the wings of the wind. Now confession is always good for the soul and I hope you don't think less of me because of my confession but I'm just not a fan of the wind. I don't like wind. In fact, Tracy often somewhat snickers at me because I'm always watching the weather. I don't mind heavy downpours, I don't mind drought, I don't mind thunder, I don't mind lightning, but the wind just gives me the heebie-jeebies. I don't know if it's because I grew up in tornado alley in Texas and every other day at school we had to go through a tornado drill. I don't know if that's it. I just don't like the wind and I think part of the reason is I can't see where it's coming from and I can't see where it's going, all I can see is what it impacts as it passes through. Is this not the same illustration Jesus used in John 3? Here's Nicodemus, a man who's wise theologically, he's wise in the ways of the world, and he can't understand what does it mean to be born again and Jesus says, "You must be born not only of the Spirit but of water." He says, "You must be born again." And then he describes the Spirit as the wind, "No one knows where it comes from, no one knows where it's going, all we can see is what it impacts along the way."

So as we walk through these first few verses of Psalm 104, we see kind of creation in general. There's this imagery that we'll return to again of a garment, there's this concept of the heavens being laid out as a curtain which will rent at the crucifixion, there's the beams of his chamber rooted in the waters of creation, his clouds are his chariot, and the wings of the wind is how he moves. By the time we get to verse 4, it deals with creation

specific. Not just how the Lord has created the order and how he responds therein, but how he has specifically done so.

Notice it says he makes his angels spirits, the ministers of a flaming fire, who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be moved forever. Now I find it interesting he calls his angels ministers of a flaming fire. By the way, this is repeated again in what we know as the book of Hebrews 1:14, he calls these angels ministering spirits. And tonight's not a study of angelology and I'm sure many of you are familiar with this, but the biblical picture of angels is not the Hallmark picture of angels, this idea of short, little, fluffy guys with halos always making everybody happy. In fact, most of the time the angels show up, there are times of communication, there are times of comfort, but there are times of much the opposite. Do we not remember Sodom and Gomorrah? Do we not remember in the book of Revelation the angel that was holding back the river Euphrates? Over and over in the Scripture the angelic beings are warrior like.

And what does it say? He creates his angels spirits, the ministers a flaming fire. You know, in Genesis 3 when the garden of Eden was no longer accessible by humanity, who was it that the Lord put at the gate? The cherubim. What did they have to keep humanity out? It said a sword of flaming fire traveling at each and every direction.

By the time we get to verse 5, this is where we could camp out for a long time but I promise we won't do so tonight, he laid the foundations of the earth that it should not be removed forever. Now let me fast-forward. When you get to Revelation 21, he said, "I saw a new heaven, I saw a new earth, and I saw a new Jerusalem for the former had passed away." Notice it says that the foundations should not be removed forever. Now think about that in an everyday, shall we say, perspective. If you were commissioned to or if you have taken part in the restoration of a house, when you take a house that is in a dilapidated condition or maybe it's been through a horrible storm, if the foundation is still solid, you leave it there, correct? You don't change the foundation, in fact, you adapt to the foundation that you already possess and have. In fact, just a few weeks ago we were moving a fence at our house and on our property and we were moving it from one end of the house to the other, and one of the things that I discovered is that on the other side of the house the footings of the foundation came out further than I expected. Can you guess how far I got with digging through that footing? Not very far, right? Because the foundation is firm and you've gotta work around it.

Notice it says he laid the foundation of the earth that it should not be removed forever. Now we know there have been times where the earth has been destroyed specifically by water as alluded here, and we know there's a time where it's going to be destroyed by fire. We'll read about that in 2 Peter 3 in just a moment. But the foundations are secure. Now this is where we go to Job 38, just a few pages to the left. The book of Job is one of those books of the Bible that many people consider an enigma. It's one of my favorite books in the Bible and I don't know what that says about me, but Job is this character who's probably the great great grandson of whom we know as Noah. He's called the greatest in the east. He lives in a place called Uz. He has 10 children, a fortune, and a wealth of material items. One day there's a conversation according to Job 1 and 2 where Satan and

God are having this conversation and Satan makes this declaration, he says, "You know, the only reason that Job serves you, the only reason Job worship you is because you've blessed him and you've taken care of him. If you'll take that stuff away from him, he will deny you and curse you." Remember what the Lord says? "If you take it away, he'll still bless me." So what happens the next day? A horrible storm comes in, all 10 of his children lose their life, and his fortune and his wealth evaporates. In fact, the only thing he doesn't lose is his wife and that's a whole other sermon in and of itself. But nonetheless, he does not curse God. He does not reject him.

So again we have another time where Satan and God are having a conversation and God said, "Have you considered my servant Job, a man who is perfect and upright?" And Satan says something in Job 2:4, if this is not pertinent to our world today, I don't know what is, "Oh, what a man will give for the health of his own flesh." In other words, what Satan knows is this: we'll give up everything to stay alive. We'll give up freedom. We'll give up mobility. We'll give up everything to stay alive. Interesting how we see Job 2:4 kind of playing out in many lives, do we not? As humanity, we are literally willing to give everything up just to continue to exist and to survive. He says, "You know what? If you let me touch him, he will curse you." God says, "Oh, you can't touch his life but I'll let you touch his body."

Remember the next scene? Job is on the dunghill, that's what the Bible says, and it says he is ravaged with sores from head to toe. He says, "By dust I came into the world, dust I will return. Blessed be the name of the Lord." And he did not curse God.

Now why is that background so necessary? Because over the course of the next 36 chapters Job is in a fight for his life, not his physical life but for his emotional life, his mental life, his spiritual life. He has three friends and fourth who shows up who claim that he is completely in the wrong and he must have had some secret horrible sin or something that is hidden because obviously God would not respond this way to him if he was in a right relationship. By the way, let me give you kind of the ending as we go. You do realize that at the end of Job God calls his friends to repent but never Job to repent. By the time these four individuals finally end their discourse, Job 38 shows up and God shows up out of a whirlwind out of the north, and he speaks unto Job. In fact, he says beginning in verse 1, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" By the way, this next verse is one of my favorite in the Bible. Forgive me. "Gird up now thy loins like a man." I have said that numerous times in my house. "For I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Now in Job 38 there are actually 35 questions that God asked Job that if you were to get a collection of the smartest people on all of planet earth, we couldn't answer all 35. There's no way. In fact, there's nobody here who can answer the very first question that God

asked: where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? He didn't ask what are the foundations of the earth. He didn't ask where they are. He said where were you, and there's not a single living being who knows where they were when God established that fact.

Now why is this important? Because when we get back to Psalm 104, it says he laid the foundation of the earth that it should not be removed forever. Do you find it interesting that of 35 questions that God asked Job, by the way, he asked questions about are you able to expand the boundaries of the waters, can you loosen Pleiades and Orion. I mean, there's all kinds of incredible things there, do you find it intriguing that he starts with the foundations of the earth? He says they've been established with a line. He says there is a corner stone. Why is this important? Did you know later in Psalm 118, Jesus is gonna be called the corner stone? Some of y'all remember, I know I was a child when this happened. My mom happened to be in one of those singing groups that toured around back in the '70s and '80s, remember the old song "Jesus is the corner stone"? That's derived from Psalm 118 but it's also connected here to 104 and Job 38 because what the Lord is stating is that his measurement, his line, the foundations have been established and according to verse 5, they will not be removed forever.

So we see creation in general, we see some specifics, but by the time you get to verse 6, there's an interesting series here where the creation is actually rebuked. Now I'm gonna read verses 6 through 9 again and then I'm gonna share with you two divergent roads that people walk down, and then we're gonna kind of unpack it here. "Thou coveredst it," this is creation, "with the deep as with a garment," there's that word again, "the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth." Now I mentioned that there are two distinct passages that people walk down. There are two schools of thought when it comes to these specific verses about what God is speaking of and one school of thought is based on verse 6 and the other is based on verse 9.

There is one school of thought and it is probably the most populous thought that this is describing what we know as Noah's flood. This is that time period when God judged the wickedness of man and in doing so he destroyed all the flesh save Noah and his family members, and that by doing so, remember the rainbow which, by the way, you do realize that God's symbol for faithfulness has been hijacked by another entity, correct? That being said, that rainbow was a symbol, a symbol of God's faithfulness. It was a symbol stating that never again would he "judge the earth with water." Oh, he is going to judge the earth again, is he not? And it is by fire, not by water. And so there is one school of thought that says, well, it's going back saying that there was a time where the earth was judged, it was rebuked. The problem I have with that, and by the way, that's probably the greatest of consensus is the earth wasn't judged in Noah's flood, humanity was. The earth had done no wrong. Humanity was wicked in all of their hearts, and it says he destroyed the flesh. Nowhere in the Noah story do you find anywhere God saying, "I'm gonna get

you, creation. I'm gonna get you or I'm gonna do..." No, it was all about humanity's wickedness.

There is another, shall we say, rarer thought. You can go back up into verse 6, "You coveredst it with the deep." You know, you go back and look at the story of Noah's flood, it's never called the deep. It's called the waters. The deep. That's an interesting word. In fact, you may not know this but that word actually shows up in the second verse of your Bible. It does. It talks about the deep being covered. It talks about the waters being overflowed. It talks about the fact that the earth was formless and it was void. For the sake of time tonight, I'm not gonna go into all the minutiae of both of those streams of thought but can we just agree that for not only from David's perspective but from ours, there has been a time in the past where the earth has significantly been flooded and it has been overrun by the waters, and according to verse 9, it will not happen again.

That's why 2 Peter 3 is so important. Turn to the right. This is our only New Testament passage and then we'll come back to Psalm 104. By the way, those of you who are "looking at the clock," we're not gonna go this slow through the rest of the passage, I promise. 2 Peter 3. When you get to 2 Peter 3, we're gonna begin in verse 5. It says, "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Now it's interesting a lot of folks use this passage to look back into creation and say, "Well, you know it says on day 1, let there be light, day 2, there's a firmament and such. Well, you know, a day is as a thousand years, a thousand years is as a day." You do realize that this passage really has nothing to do with the creation account? It has everything to do with the recreation account where the Lord is going to dissolve what we know as the material world and recreate the new heaven and the new earth and the new Jerusalem and the time frame of a thousand years to a day isn't about what happened in Genesis, it's about what's gonna happen one day in Revelation. So why would we allude to it tonight when we're looking at creation and Genesis and flooding and such? Because there's this passage that says that the earth as we know it today was at one point in and out of the waters; that this same earth has now been kept and it is reserved unto fire.

So we go back into what we know as Psalm 104, we have this majestic declaration of the Lord wearing white as a garment, and we see that the heavens array as a curtain that we picture it there at the crucifixion as being torn, we see this idea that the foundations of the earth have been established with a line, there is a corner stone, and they're forever going to be established. But the creative order, even the earth, has had a time in which it has been rebuked, there's a time in which it has been judged, and the next time that that takes place, it will not be by water, it will be by fire.

We go back to Psalm 104, it then talks about a restoration process. Now I love restoring old cars. My wife likes me to restore old houses. I understand the restoration process. The restoration process is take that which is dilapidated, take that which is in ill condition and do everything you can to get it back to its original form. Notice beginning in verse 10, and we're not gonna read all of this, it talks about how the creative order allows the grass to grow to feed the animals, and the animals to grow to feed us etc. There is this, shall we say, the circle of life that is presented. It's interesting because beginning in verse 10 all the way to verse 23, it is just the everyday aspects of life that the creative order now allows us to experience what we know as life. Hm, you know, you go back to verses 6 through 9, it's interesting that the Lord told Noah to replenish the earth and you may not realize this, you know he also told Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 to replenish the earth, to take that and to allow it to be what it's supposed to be.

So we have this restoration for a lack of better terms, where we see the creation becoming what it is designed to be and functioning as it should. It's basically just everyday life but I want to focus on verse 19. It says, "He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down." You know, back in Genesis 1:14, it makes the statement of the greater light and the lesser light, that's the sun and the moon, and it says they are for signs and they are for seasons, and I know many of us are familiar with that in days gone by many an intelligent man and woman looked up at the skies to get direction of where to travel and what was next and what was right around the bend, and trying to navigate life. You know, it's interesting even the magi, the wise men saw a star in the east and they knew it was the season for the birth of the Savior.

But in the book of Colossians 2, you know it says that we're not to focus on that, we're not to focus on the moon and new moons and signs and seasons, but these are for a shadow of things to come. It's interesting that we actually see kind of a resurgence, that particularly when you get into the end of the Bible, particularly the book of Revelation, there are so many things that are in its season and appointed times and signs of the times. Just think about a cursory knowledge of the book of Revelation. How many things happen in what we would call the celestial arena? Stars that fall out of the sky. Wormwood that comes to the ground. There's all kinds of things happening that are of the lights and the stars, the sun and the moon.

So we see that as creation is "restored," that again there will be a time according to Colossians 2, that that stuff's "important again," but I want to focus your attention on verse 26. To me this is a fascinating passage. It mentions a character by the name of leviathan. It just sounds evil, does it not? Now some of you may have study Bibles, you may have taken courses and people says, "Aha, this is one of those passages where we defend the 'existence' of dinosaurs in the Bible." Leviathan and behemoth and all these things. Significant problems there. If you look at Psalm 104 as it is laid out, creation has already been judged, restoration has taken place, and now we have a leviathan in the sea and most honest not only theologians, academicians and just observers of life would say, no matter who or what those dinosaurs were, we haven't had them since what we know as Noah's flood. Honestly when you look at the character of leviathan or some of you would

say with a large water beast or this multi-headed animal, you know the character leviathan who shows up in the Bible always shows up in some interesting places. He shows up here in the midst of creation. He shows up in Isaiah in a prophetic sense. And he shows up back in the book of Job 38. Job 38, he says, "Are you able to loosen the binds of leviathan?" Then later we discover that in the book of Isaiah, leviathan is called the king of the children of pride.

Now that's interesting. If it was a dinosaur, why is he the "king of the children of pride"? If he's just this large water beast, why he's the king of the children of pride? You say, "Jeff, where are you going with this?" I think there is strong biblical evidence that the character that we know as leviathan is a description of "Satan himself." He's called a multi-headed beast. You realize in the book of Revelation the beast has a contingency of 10 heads that lead his establishment? Leviathan is always bringing destruction, does not the Antichrist always breed destruction? What does God ask him? "Are you able to hook him by the nose?" There's none of us who if we went into the ring with the devil would come out alive. In fact, even Michael the archangel in the book of Jude said, "Lord, you're gonna have to take care of this. I've got nothing against this guy."

Why is that so important? Because even though you and I today live in a creative order where there is a circle of life, even though we know that when we get the weather report that there's a huge storm coming, we know the earth will not flood as it has in days past. Even in the midst of all that is happening, there is still an entity around that wreaks havoc on our lives, this leviathan whom we know in the Bible as Satan, the devil, the old red dragon. You know what the Bible says he does in 2 Corinthians 11? He disguises himself as an angel of light. Hm, interesting that even though what we know as the creative order was restored and we are awaiting that time of which it will be renewed by fire, even though everything works out the way it should, and by the way, when I say it works out the way it should, I'm not here to be critical, I'm not here to have a demeaning spirit about things, but I do remember several years ago when my family and I lived in the Atlanta, Georgia area, we experienced a drought. In fact, it was so bad of a drought that it was actually a sign of community endeavor if you did not wash your car. Somehow if you washed your car or watered your lawn, you were an evil human being. You know, everybody was to have brown grass and dirty cars because surely we don't want to waste water. We were told that it would take 30 years for the lakes to fill back up, it was so bad. They were back to their level in nine months. Why? Because there are some things we just cannot explain in a laboratory, folks. There's some things we can't just explain through a telescope. And when we're talking about creation, don't get me wrong, I think humanity can impact it, I get that, but ultimately who's in charge of it? The Lord is. So even in the midst of a drought or even in the midst of a storm where we look at it and say there's no way we're gonna get out of this, what do we know? That restorative process, that circle or that cycle of life continues but there in the midst of all this leviathan is mentioned, and yet he still is hanging around, he is still deceiving humanity, he is still leading people astray.

Well, last but not least, let's get to the good stuff, verse 30, "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth." There is a day coming where

God is going to touch what we know as the creative order again. He's not gonna touch it with, shall we say, great amounts of water. He already promised that. He's gonna touch it with a flame of fire. We just read about that in 2 Peter 3, that there's a day coming where it shall be engulfed in a flame of fire.

Earlier I mentioned the fact that the passages that we would allude to and turn to, some of you may want to turn but I'm actually going to quote it, it's found in the book of Matthew 19. Matthew 19:28, the Lord Jesus Christ says that one day the earth is going to be regenerated. Now the word "regeneration" means "to take something that is 'dead' and to make it alive." You know, and I think that's one of the issues that we have today as we observe the planet we live on, as we observe creation, if we only observe it from a non-faith, non-biblical perspective, we see it for what it is. It's dying, is it not? We are on a planet, we are a part of a creation that is dying and everybody is rightfully upset saying this cannot continue forever. If we keep doing this, we're gonna run out of that. We're gonna run out of this material, this fossil fuel. If we keep living as humanity, then this place is going to erode away some day. Guess what? They're right. It is going to erode away.

I'll never forget some years ago there was an esteemed professor at the University of Texas who said the greatest enemy to planet earth is humanity. Now if you think about that logically, that means the only way to save the planet is to get rid of us. To some degree she was right. No matter how many people we have, no matter how many fossil fuels we burn, no matter how many diesel trucks we drive, no matter how many cans of hairspray we exhaust, whatever it is, that some level we are on an ecosystem, a planet and a creation that is in the dying process. It is. In fact, the scientists will tell us that the stars are dying. Everything around us is dying. Hm, interesting that Jesus said that the creation would be regenerated. I want you to think about that. There's coming a day, as 2 Peter 3 says, where the Lord's gonna touch creation with a flame of fire, and when he does so, he regenerates it, he recreates it, he renews it and according to Revelation 21, it's a new heaven, a new earth, a new Jerusalem that will never fade away, never grow old, never deteriorate, and never need to be restored again. It regenerates itself. The Lord regenerates it.

Now that's important and let me tell you why. The word "regeneration" is only used twice in your Bible. Twice, in Matthew 19 related to creation, and in Titus 3 in relationship to you. It talks about that when we are saved, it is the regeneration of our soul. You do realize that all of humanity is born dying. We're all in the dying process, you realize that, right? Now some of us are a little further advanced than others, but nonetheless none of us knows, in fact, the great pastor, the preacher in the area of Dallas by the name of Tony Evans, by the way, I don't know if any of you ever saw this, Tony Evans did something I don't know if I could do, he preached his own wife's funeral and it's amazing. It is absolutely amazing the words that came out of his mouth. But nonetheless, one of the things he stated at her funeral is the problem that we have with death is this: we don't know who's old and who's young. He said think about it. He said if you're 40 years of age and you're gonna live until you're 90, you're young, right? But if you're 40 years of age and you're gonna live to 42, you're old. If you're gonna live to 90 and you're 70, you're

still young. But if you're only going to live to 32, you're old at 29. You see, you and I don't know just based on physical appearance who's really old and who's really young and he used that to display we don't know how many years that we have. We are growing old. Guess what, folks? Just like this story of creation, we're in the same boat, are we not? The Lord created us, he established us, and yet we find ourselves in this circle of deterioration.

Titus 3, the regeneration of our soul. I don't find it accidental at all that the only places the word "regeneration" is used is when the earth will be touched by fire and remade, and when the Lord touches your soul and he remakes you. What happens when we're regenerated? A dying corroding body destined to a place the Bible calls hell, gets reversed. All of a sudden a spirit that according to Ephesians 2 is dead in trespasses and sins is now the Holy Spirit of God that always will be. A soul destined for hell is now a soul destined for heaven and a body that, by the way, is still eroding, will one day according to 1 Corinthians 15, it will be replaced by a new one that is incorruptible, will not fade away, and will never diminish or deteriorate.

Do you see the parallels there? That the creative order of what we know around us and who you and I are as humanity, there's some incredible parallels here when it comes to being remade, when it comes to being redone, when it comes to being regenerated which brings me all the way back to the beginning of this passage as we close. I don't find it accidental that he talks about creation as a garment and as a curtain. Let's think about that as the regeneration of our soul. What if, what if Jesus Christ had not allowed that garment to be taken off? What if he had not allowed it to be gambled over as Psalm 22 had said? What if he had not been willing according to Hebrews 12 to go forward seeing the joy that was before him? What if he had not fulfilled the prophecies? What if he had not endured the pain? What if he had not said, "Father, thy will not mine be done"? If he had not been willing to sacrifice, if he had not been willing to shed his blood, then we wouldn't have the opportunity to be regenerated. And it was his willingness to go forth in that that when he breathed that last breath, that veil was torn.

Now I don't know if you're familiar with this but when the Jewish people and some of them were aware of this and some of them were not, do you know that when that veil was torn that fateful day, do you know what they discovered behind it? Nothing. You say, "What do you mean nothing?" That was the Holy of Holies. That's where the ark of the covenant was. That's where the cherubim, and that's where the mercy seat was. You see, when Nebuchadnezzar took them captive in 586 BC and 70 years later when the Jewish people came back, they never have possessed the ark since. There's been a lot of movies, a lot of books, a lot of things, a lot of theories that have been written. Do you know what was behind that veil? Nothing. Interesting that day after day, month after month, festival after festival, and year after year, countless untold people came to that place to present a sacrifice and there was no mercy seat, there was no ark, there was no cherubim. But when the veil tore, when the curtain tore, then we had the opportunity to truly receive atonement. Then we had the opportunity to truly receive forgiveness. Then we had the opportunity to truly be in a right relationship with God.

You know, I'll close with Romans 1. It's a famous passage that we often use in an apologetic manner, particularly those that are rejecting of the things of God. It talks about that humanity can simply look at the creation and they know that there is a Creator, so much so, I love what it says here in verse 20, that they are without excuse. I've heard people say if you want to know there's a God, just look up, look out, and look in. Look up at the stars, look out at the creation, and look in at your own heart and you will see that there is a God who formed you and fashioned you.

But I love what it says, they are without excuse. When we look at the creative order particularly tonight in Psalm 104 and it talks about the garment that he wears, when it talks about the curtain that was torn, what we discover is that the creation story is really our story. It is going to be regenerated, the question is have we? Creation is going to be regenerated. There's nothing that's gonna stop it. You and I have the privilege and the opportunity to be regenerated as well. It's not by the touching of fire, it was by the shedding of blood that we can be remade and reborn and one day have an existence much like the creation that is without dissolve and is without death, it is without pain, and without all that.

You know, it's interesting that we spend most of our days, most of our life, expending energy and resources to try to maintain and keep an order of that which will not last forever, when that which will is simply just a divine conversation away.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, tonight, Lord, we cannot exhaust not only the riches of your word but truly we cannot exhaust the observation of your creation and, Lord, you made it clear that if we would just look out at it, we would see who you are, we would see how much you love us, and we would see our need for you. And God, I pray for those of us in here or those on the other side of the camera, that maybe tonight was one of those times where we sat back and truly looked at the big picture and truly saw what you have been doing for years and truly millennia and for ages. And God, when we look at it from that perspective we realize that we are truly one of those grains of sand in the vast beach of eternity.

God, your word says that you loved us so much that you were willing to give your Son for us. Lord, we take up such a small space of the creative order, yet we took up according to Proverbs the apple of your eye; that you were willing to reach down and to shed blood for the regeneration of our soul. God, I pray tonight that if that has already happened in our life, we would never take it for granted again, and if it hasn't, that, God, we would call out to you, we would cry out to you, admitting that we are a sinful creation and we need our Creator to save us and to redeem us by the blood he was willing to shed for us. God, tonight as we depart may we not just be hearers of your word but as James taught us, may we be doers as well. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Now tonight as we have been on Sunday nights as we gather together, we're not having a "formal time of response." We're not gonna stand and sing and do what we might call a

traditional type invitation but we do have means by which we would love to communicate with you, and particularly in a global pandemic world, I've noticed that people are a lot more interested in phone calls and text messages than face-to-face conversations. And so for those of you who are not familiar, the number to text is 334-231-2313. If you'll just send a text that says help, that's all you've got to say, we will get somebody who will get with you as soon as possible to talk with you about what it is you're struggling with, dealing with. Maybe just say, "You know what? I need somebody to pray with me. I just need somebody to pray for me." Reach out to us. And by the way, that's online as well. Or you can call us at 334-364-2761. If you would reach out by text, reach out by phone, we'd love the opportunity to speak with you, talk with you, set up a time to pray with, for, whatever it may be. I know that you and I are walking through unprecedented days and so we just want the opportunity to join with you with whatever the Lord's doing in your life, however we can do so.

As we dismiss in a minute, remember I mentioned this morning that if you have not received it as of yet, you should be getting a card in the mail about blessing the homes in your neighborhood, praying for your neighbors. It is a program that will self-generate the addresses for you. So as you're walking through the neighborhood or driving through the neighborhood or see your neighbors, you're able to pray for them. I want to remind you again this is not a stalking program. This is all public information that we're using for the sake of the Gospel. If you have not been a part of that as of yet, we'd encourage you to entertain that. If you need information, go to the website and you can see that as well.

And many of you may or may not know that a few hours ago in this very place we celebrated the one year anniversary of our Korean ministry. I didn't understand anything that was said but it was wonderful. We had a glorious glorious time and one of the things that I shared with them was this: a year ago this was just an idea. This afternoon there were probably easily as many people in the room as there are right now. I said can you imagine what God will do at the fifth anniversary? So I know that there's a language barrier for many of us but continue to encourage them, continue to pray for them, and by the way, most of them don't shake hands, they do this which in the Covid world is perfect. It's a perfect handshake if you think about it, that you just give a little simple gesture of respect as you see them on the campus. They have been so good and they have blessed us so much.

Tonight I want to close you with a story I shared with them. It's kind of humorous and I'm gonna tell it the non-Korean way. I made it a little safe today. A couple of days ago, you know Pastor Lloyd who is the Korean pastor, I know his car obviously because I see him all the time. It was a Saturday morning. I drove by and his car was at the office. I didn't think anything of it. People come and go here all the time. I come all the time. A couple of hours later I passed by the church and his car was still there. I thought, "Wow, that's interesting." It kept happening, kept happening, and on Saturday nights a lot of times, I come up here on Saturday nights just to get ready for Sunday. I came up, it was about 9 o'clock at night and guess what? Lloyd's car was still here. I thought, "Wow, I mean, he's really burning the oil here. I mean, he's going for it." I left about 11:45, guess whose car was still here? Lloyd's.

So I'm going home and I'm going over the bridge here by the railroad tracks and it came to light, "I wonder if he's okay?" That car's been here for 16 hours and I had this thought, "What would I rather have, would I rather find him at midnight in ill condition or at 8 in the morning when I show up to church?" I turned back around. I figured, you know what, if something's happened, I just want to find out now, not five minutes before the service starts. I walk in the office and I go around the corner and his office light is on and he's in there and he's alive and well. I knock on the door. I said, "Lloyd, have you been here all day?" He said, "Yes, pastor. Yes, pastor." I said, "Are you okay?" He said, "This place makes me happy."

First Baptist, may this place make you happy. God bless and until next time, go be the church, don't just show up to church. May this place make you happy.