

# After The Beginning

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     So I'm 104, verse 24, oh Lord, how manifold are your works, in wisdom have you made them all, the earth is full of your creatures and so on.

And it is amazing what we can see even in our own tellies about the natural world. We see things these days that we could never even have seen before.

If you've seen any of these kind of planet earth, or blue planet, or seven worlds, one planet, they always seem to show these things on a Sunday, but thankfully we're living in a day of iPlayer and Sky Plus and whatnot.

We can see these things. I was watching it with the kids recently, one of the seven worlds episodes. It was shown a seal chasing a penguin underwater.

I was just amazed, imagine what you see there. You would never have been able to see where natural eyes not so long ago. They were shown starfish, and they were made weird and wonderful creatures at the bottom of the sea, and enemies.

[ 1 : 1 6 ]     And there was this really, really strange thing. I'd never seen it before. It looked like a wee flat white thing, maybe about the size of that sheet of paper. Kind of a scrappy thing. And it looked like a bit of plastic floating on the bottom of the sea bed.

And it was a creature of some kind, and it was sniffing around. Its eyesight was poor, they said. And it was sniffing around until you find a mate, and eventually it found this other piece of white plastic, or what looked like white plastic, and they mated.

And you just think that's extraordinary. I've never even seen or heard of such a thing before. And of course all these things enable us to see underwater, and if you stick your head underwater it's just a blur when you open your eyes.

But these camera shots, they're just amazing. Think about once upon a time, nobody knew what was under the surface of the water. You just couldn't see. We take it for granted now with these programs, and you see the fish, and you see all the creatures swimming about.

Once upon a time, it was just a big mystery. Just under the surface of the water, you could pull things out like fish and so on. But really, what was down there, how deep it went?

[ 2 : 2 2 ]     Who knew? Who knew what was going on down there underneath the oceans? But what you end up admiring is all the brilliant science that goes into these things, the production, the programs, and the folk that make them.

You can feel their sense of wonder and appreciation, and the patience they need sometimes to get some of these shots of things that happen in the natural world that take forever.

And they're just filled with wonder. But you find yourself longing and wishing that for some of them at least, I don't know how many are who's involved exactly, but there's so little talk of the creator who made it all.

And you just wish that their eyes were opened, and they could see the wonder that this is not something that's come by accident, it's not something that's evolved all by itself.

This is something that God, the creator, has made. And amongst all the wonder and the world views that tell us what we're seeing and where we can find it, and they go, wow.

[ 3 : 31 ] They would say, yeah, but how did it come to be here? Why was it made? They haven't got an answer for that, if you rule God out of the picture, there's no answer to why or who made it.

That's a great question. That's what ought to be in the heart of every human being, who has made this? This can't have all happened by chance and by coincidence.

And you just wish sometimes that folk would have their eyes opened. Do pray for these people, because somebody like David Attenborough became a Christian, I don't know where exactly he stands on that spectrum, but if he spoke about a creator and said that all his years of research led him to see there has to be a creator at work here, we talk about quala bear footprints, I mean God's fingerprints are all over the creation, aren't they?

And he might not be seen, but the evidence is all around us. And you just wish in the long folk would see that. And this Sam gives us a bit of an insight as many parts of scripture do into the wonderful world that God has made.

I want to break what I've got down to say into just three headings this morning, in the beginning, in the first place, secondly after the beginning, and thirdly in the end.

[ 4 : 56 ] Okay? In the beginning, after the beginning, in the end. I will start with the first one, in the beginning.

It's good to know the Bible. I should go without saying it's good to know and love your Bible. And I believe the Sammet that wrote this knew his Bible and he loved his Bible and he loved the God of the Bible.

We're wise and we're blessed if you know and love your Bible. Make sure you know and love your Bible.

Alec Matias says, look out your window and see your God. Look out the window. His evidence is all around us. Whatever tools and whatever methods God used to do it all, and the Bible tells us he just spoke it into existence.

Whatever he did to bring it all together, it was him that did it. And the Bible takes us back to that over and over again. And here, because he knows and loves his Bible, he takes us back to Genesis chapters 1 and 2, the very chapters we read at the beginning of the service.

[ 6 : 06 ] And he looks at the world around him and he sees it through the eyes of faith. And he says, I can see the handiworks of God all around me in everything I see.

And he goes back and he remembers how the Bible starts and it starts with, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In the beginning, God.

He doesn't try and argue for that. It's not a book of philosophy that tries to explain, well how do I know there is a God? The Bible just tells us yes there is. And it doesn't mess about, God is, God works, God does.

This is what God did. In the beginning, God did this. That's where it starts and if we're wise, that's where we start as well. We don't need arguments and debates or a place for them, I'm sure.

But the Bible just starts by saying, this is a book about God and this is what he did in the beginning. And as Samus thinks about that and he thinks and he meditates and he reflects and he writes about what inspires him and what delights his soul and he thinks back to the God of creation and as it were he picks up his pen inspired by the Holy Spirit and he begins to write a poem, a Sam, the one that we know is Sam 104 and he begins to write it down and he thinks about this God who has made all things.

[ 7 : 35 ] And he thinks about the days of creation as we read in Genesis chapter one and you can actually, as you go through the Sam, you can trace that, his knowledge, his love for Genesis chapter one as you go through, he starts with God, bless the Lord, oh my soul, Lord my God, you are very great and in the beginning there was just God clothed with splendor and majesty and there was darkness but God is light and he covered himself with light as with a garnt and day one is seen right there in the greatness of the God who was there at the beginning.

And then in verses second half of verse two through to verse five, he's looking at the firmament and what God has done stretching out the heavens like a tent, the things that God did on day two dividing the waters from the waters and you see it's there from verse two to verse five.

Then from verse six through to verse eighteen he starts talking about the land and the seas and the plants and the trees and the things that God created on day three.

And then he comes in verse nineteen and he starts looking upwards and he starts thinking about the moon and the sun and the stars and from verse nineteen through to twenty-three he's thinking about the things God did on day four.

And in between all these things starting from verse eleven he starts making reference to birds and animals and to human beings, the land animals, the creatures, sorry I'm going to miss out the birds and the sea creatures, the biggy part, and verses twenty-five and twenty-six going back as far as verses twelve and seventeen, the things from day five they're all in there.

[ 9 : 20 ] And then the land animals, the creatures, man, they're dotted about the rest of the sand from verse eleven onwards. There's various references to birds and animals and human beings and creatures, the things of day six.

And somebody said, and I've got a lot of sympathy with this, I think it's probably right that from verse thirty-one down to verse thirty-five, the end of it, you can almost see a picture of the Sabbath in there with the creation complete.

The Samus, as it were, he pauses and made the glory of the Lord endure forever. The Lord may hear a choice in his works. You can see something of the Sabbath day of holy rest where the Samus says, I'm going to sing to the Lord and I'm going to give praise to my God, I'm going to meditate on him, I'm going to rejoice in him and bless the Lord.

Oh my soul, he laments sin, but he praises God for what he is and is there not a picture in there somewhere of what we can worshipfully do, as it were, on day seven.

So there's this great unity in the Bible, the greatness of God and of all his works and it ought to inspire you and me in the way that it inspires the Samus to say, bless the Lord, oh my soul, praise the Lord, isn't God great, isn't God amazing, isn't God wonderful.

[ 10 : 43 ] That's where the Samus is coming from and as he thinks on his Bible and he thinks about his God and what God has done in the world, he just bursts into the song of praise.

May you have that song of praise in your heart as you look at God's word as well and look at the wonderful things that are all around us here in his creation.

That was in the beginning and the second place, what I've called here, after the beginning, after the beginning, what does that mean? What does that mean? There's a little verse in John chapter five, after Jesus has cured the man who'd been paralyzed for 38 years at the side of the pool of Bethesda, the man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him and this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

But Jesus answered them, my father is working till now and I am working. He speaks of a God who doesn't stop working, a God who is engaged in every way.

Now God is a working God, my father is working even till now, says Jesus. Some people, if they acknowledge there's a God at all, they kind of think of him almost as a kind of retired God.

[ 12 : 13 ] There are churches and individuals within the broad Christian spectrum, perhaps not really Christian at all and they think of God as kind of really detached.

Yes, I believe God made the world but then he kind of walked away and left it to get on with itself. Some people use the image of a clockwork universe as though God wound up the creation and then left it to tick down and kind of didn't have any more to do with it.

I remember a T-shirt you used to be able to get back in the 70s, God is alive and well, which went against the spirit of the age and it sounded promising to begin with. God is alive at well and at work on a less ambitious project and that was supposed to reflect the idea that God had made the world, it was a failure and he kind of turned his back on it and walked away.

That's not the picture the Bible gives us of God at all. As Sam is such a wonderful testimony to the God who's involved and the God who cares, the God who sustains and provides for his creation.

A child might ask a question like, what does God do all day in heaven? Does he get bored up there just looking down on us?

[ 13 : 32 ] And the opposite is true, isn't it? The opposite is true. There are obviously theological answers to that that the Christ who intercedes continually for his people at the right hand of God.

But there's also the kind of picture we get from a Sam like this. There are things that he did in the beginning as we saw he creating this world and the universe and all that there is.

There's that picture. Then there's also the things he's done since the beginning, after the beginning, the ongoing things that God does.

And we get a little flavour in here, just a couple of examples. Verse 11, God who makes springs, verse 10, springs gush forth in the valleys that flow between the hills, they give drink to every beast of the field, where the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

God satisfies the thirst of his animal creation. He houses the birds, verses 12, beside them the birds of the heavens dwell.

[ 14 : 38 ] They sing among the branches. The trees of the Lord, verse 16, are watered abundantly. The cedars of Lebanon that he planted, in them the birds build their nests. Nests the stork as their home, and the fir trees he houses the birds.

He sends rain, like verse 13, from your lofty abode, you water the mountain, the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. He feeds the animals. Verse 14, you cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate that he might bring forth food from the earth.

Who's doing all these things? Are they just happening by themselves in nature? There's a God who's doing all these things and creates all these things.

He educates man. In verse 14 and 15, you cause the grass to grow for the livestock, plants, so that man can learn to cultivate them, so that he can learn how to bring forth food from the earth.

And it's not even just the necessities, the bare bread and water that we get. You even provide luxuries. You could just give us water, but you give us wine from grapes to gladden the heart of man.

[ 15 : 55 ] Oil to make his face shine, almost like a kind of makeup. We don't need to have shiny faces, but God blesses us in that way too. He gives us things like oil to make our face shine.

He provides the seasons and the days and the nights. You make darkness. It's night when all the beasts of the forest creep about and the creatures go out seeking their food and the sun rises and then they go back to sleep.

And so on. God provides the seasons and the days and the nights. They don't just happen by accident. It's not a mechanical universe just going round and round. There's a God who's controlling all these things that the Bible's wanting us to know.

That is the one that provides life and sustains life. And when the time comes, he withdraws life. All these creatures verse 12 and 27, they all look to you to give them their food and due season.

And when you give it to them, they gather it up. When you open your hand, they're filled with good things. When you hide your face, they're dismayed. And when you decide to take away their breath, they die.

[ 17 : 02 ] There is a God who is involved and does these things on a day by day basis. He keeps the whole creation provided for.

He keeps the whole creation regulated and sustained. Atheists would be horrified at some of this because they say, no, it's nature that's doing these things.

The universe does these things. It's the way it is. You're imagining that there's a God up there that does it. And it'd be horrified to think that there are people who believe there's a God who's guiding all this.

And sometimes I wonder if the great quest to find life on other planets, which there may be for all I know, I don't know anything. But maybe there is, maybe there's not.

But sometimes one of the quest or the desperation there is sometimes in the billions that are spent trying to find it, is it just to try and show that this earth is not all that special, it's not unique, it's not got a special place in God's mind.

[ 18 : 06 ] There are things that are here. Again people would say, well, they're not here for any reason. They just happen to be there. Don't tell me there's a mastermind at work.

Yes, there is. That's what the Bible tells us that he makes the, again verse 14, you cause the grass to grow for the livestock, for the livestock.

There's a reason the grass grows. It's for the livestock. Plants for man to cultivate that. That's why they're there. It's not just against, not just a happy coincidence.

God has made these things for that purpose. The high mountains, they're there for no reason, aren't they? No, the mountains are there for the wild goats.

The rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers. Why is there a moon there? Because there is, says the atheist, says the secularist. No, he made the moon, verse 19, to mark the seasons.

[ 19 : 06 ] He put it there to divide the world into seasons and into days and nights. He made that night and day for our rest, for our balance and for the quality of our life.

The great sea creatures, again we speak about, you know, nobody knew what was in the depths of the ocean. They knew there was monsters out there, maybe it's whales, they were thinking of dolphins, crocodiles, somebody speculates what is Leviathan.

To them it was just the mystery of whatever's out there and whatever's under the surface of the sea. We don't know what it is, you know, in wild parts that we almost fear to go in our boats back in these ancient days.

But whatever it is, it's just God's plaything. It's put here as though it's his pet. These great mysterious creatures of the world, like God's plaything.

He made the sea so that Leviathan could play in it. We have a God, says the Bible, almighty God.

[ 20 : 12 ] And it paints a picture of a God who is wondrous and great in ways we can hardly imagine and couldn't imagine without his word to shed light on the subject.

Who feeds animals and who interests himself and takes involvement in animal feed? All the creatures looking to God for their food.

Why do you worry? Says Jesus. The sparrows, they don't worry but your heavenly father feeds them. He feeds them.

He dresses the lilies of the field just so they'll look beautiful. Why do you worry about clothes? I was intrigued recently thinking about the book of Jonah.

And of course Jonah is so hard hearted that he would rather the people of Nineveh perish than that God would have mercy on them. And he goes off in the opposite direction rather than preach the gospel to them.

[ 21 : 13 ] But the book finishes with God making Jonah aware of his own selfishness and cruelty and hard-heartedness and he says, do you not care?

There's 120,000 people in that city and many cattle. That's the way the book ends. There are 120,000 souls that don't know their left hand from their right hand and many cattle.

And you would think that would be irrelevant to God, not so. That's the way the book of Jonah finishes. Don't you care? There are all these cattle there as well as the souls that need to be saved.

And Jesus said to the people, if an ox falls into a pit from the Sabbath day, pull it out. He doesn't say leave it down there. What a terrible way to spend your Sabbath. It doesn't take two minutes to get an ox out of a pit.

I don't know how long it takes, but it'll take a lot of time and a lot of people to pull an ox out of a pit. But he says that's not Sabbath desecration. Do that. That's the humane and compassionate thing to do.

[ 22 : 15 ] And you can do that without sinning. In fact, it'd be more sinful to leave it there. If we have the love of God in our souls, then we ought to have a care for the things God cares about.

There's a lovely little story from the Welsh revival of 1904. A lot of coal miners got converted. And there was one miner, and he was seen crying on his way home from work one day, and the white lines down his face through the coal dust seemed crying.

Somebody said, what's wrong? He said, I've lost my job. He says, wow. He says, my job was looking after the pit ponies. The miners were horrible to them. They beat them. They kicked them.

They overloaded them. And my job was to, I was like the vet, almost had to nurse them back to health. He says, they don't do that anymore. Since they got converted, they're so kind to the pit ponies.

My jobs disappeared. I've been made redundant by the kindness, the new kindness in the new hearts of these miners.

[ 23 : 19 ] The things that God cares about, if we're His people, we should care about too. This is the Jesus who controls the winds and the waves, and who can make a fish swim along with a coin in its mouth at just the right moment.

It can make a donkey that nobody's ever sat on, not buckle and buckaroo, what's the word, an unbroken donkey. He can sit on it and ride peacefully and calmly into Jerusalem.

That's our Lord and Saviour. That's not all. God loves and cares and saves His people.

He loves people enough to send His Son to be the Saviour. It's not just about feeding animals and watering them and providing rain and sunshine and making the crops grow.

He sent His Son ultimately as the ultimate expression of His love. So one of us need be lost. So there's a Saviour for every single one of us if we will only believe in Him and turn to Him for salvation.

[ 24 : 25 ] That's why the love of God is seen most. I was talking to a friend recently. I'm conscious of the time. I won't take too long. I talked to a friend recently and he told me that he was arguing with this, a minister and he was arguing with somebody in his village.

Everything Alex said, the guy countered it with something. And in the end he said, think of Jesus. This is the non-Christian friend.

Think of Jesus. What a waste. He was such a good man. He had such a lot to offer. And what a waste he dies on the cross and he had so much still to give to the world. And if he'd only lived, who knows, it would have been better.

What was the point of Jesus dying? That's what makes me an unbeliever essentially is what he was saying. And Alex just flashed up a prayer and asked for wisdom.

What would I say here? And he said, well, he died for me. He died for me. And the guy stopped and he said, that's amazing. And I've never thought of that. And he went away, shaking his head.

[ 25 : 34 ] And when Alex saw him again, he said, I've been thinking about what he said. He says, that's the most amazing, profound thing I've ever heard. He says, I can't get it out of my head.

But if nothing else, he died for you. That's amazing. And away he went again. And he says, he still comes back sometimes and he says that. I don't know where he's got to in his spiritual pilgrimage.

I hope. It'll be a blessing in that one day we'll be able to say that Jesus died for him as well. That's how much God loves and cares. He sent his son to die for you if you believe in him and turn to him.

The late American Christian singer, Keith Green, once said, he says, I look at the world around and I see all its beauty, all its glory, the mountains, the seas, the skies, whatever.

And God did this in six days. He says, and then I read in John 14 that the Lord Jesus has gone away into glory, where he's preparing a place for his people.

[ 26 : 36 ] He says, all I know is that if it took six days to create this beautiful world and the Lord Jesus has been working on a place and preparing a place for his people for 2,000 years, he says, well, this must be like living in a garbage can compared to what's going on up there.

You can see what he's saying, can't you? How great is our God? Thoroughly, in the end. And I will be brief.

In the end, what can we do with such a God other than to worship him? That's what the psalmist does. That's what he's thinking about all these things. He says, bless the Lord, oh my soul. Oh Lord, my God, you are very great.

Verse 24, how Lord, how manifold are your works and wisdom have you made them all, the earth is full of your creatures, and in these last five or six verses, 31 to 35, may the glory of the Lord endure forever and so on.

And he wants to sing and praise his God as he thinks about these things. The secularists might look at the world around them and say, may the glory of this world endure forever?

[ 27 : 42 ] May Mother Nature rejoice in all her works? That's not where the person with the biblical worldview is coming at. It's, may God endure forever?

The glory of the Lord endure forever? May he rejoice in his works? The eyes of faith will always see another who is above and beyond all that we sing, all that we see.

I will sing praises to him, verse 33. I will bless the Lord as long as I live. I will rejoice in him, in verse 34. I will meditate on him, I will seek to please him.

This is right and appropriate. And some folks say, well, 35s of a jarring note. How is that coming from all this glory and all this wonder? Let sinners be consumed from the earth and let the wicked be no more.

And some folks say, oh, that bit wasn't there. Yeah, it's a bit of a duff note at the end of the Psalm. It shouldn't be, because when you think of the glories of God and you think of the wonders of all He's created and you think sins ruined it.

[ 28 : 48 ] And all we see is a fallen world. We're not seeing it in the glory that God made it. We're seeing what sin has done and we're seeing a damaged world, still amazing, but damaged, ruined by the fall.

And you can't think of the things of God without thinking about how it's been ruined by sin. And that's where the psalmist finds himself. He says, I wish that had never happened.

And may the day come when that is all a thing of the past. And when he says that, he's only echoing what the rest of the Bible says, that there will be a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells and where sin is no more and sin and sinners are gone forever and the natural order is restored.

That's all he's wishing for, let God's pure, beautiful creation be restored where there is nothing that upsets it. An eternal holy Sabbath, if you please, a holy Sabbath.

Our God reigns. That's what the psalmist is screaming at us. Our God reigns and he's worthy to be praised and he's worthy to be sought and known and loved and worshiped and embraced just for who he is and what he is and how good he is to us.

[ 30 : 07 ] We all go away filled again with the wonder of God and not just God the Creator but God the Savior who sent his Son so that none of us would be lost and that we might yet inherit the new heavens and the new earth where righteousness dwells.

May we indeed all be found there. Let's pray. Our gracious God, enable us to worship you, enable us to know you, enable us to rejoice in your greatness and your majesty and your splendour and in your grace that is poured out on sinners like us.

Lord, give us eyes to see who you are, who we are, what we are and how we need a Savior like Jesus and we pray enable us to know him and to rejoice in his salvation.

Everything we ask is in his name for his sake. Amen.