

The Big Picture - Scene One

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[0 : 00] Well, our message this morning is, to say the least, going to be somewhat, what shall I say, cerebral? I guess every message ought to be, or you shouldn't be considering bringing it.

But we do have some rather heavy content, and I do not apologize for it, because it is, after all, the Word of God, and based upon the Word of God.

And we are talking about the big picture. If there is a bigger picture than the one that we are going to be presenting, it is bigger than my mind is able to conceive.

Not that I can conceive this one either. But if it is, it is reserved unto the Almighty Himself. So we are going to be dealing with the big picture to the extent that God has been pleased to reveal it.

Because there isn't any other way that it is possible for us to know it. We certainly cannot know it based upon the wisdom of man's mind. It simply does not have that kind of capability.

[1 : 10] So what we are going to be sharing is available to us only because God has been pleased to reveal it. So I am calling this the big picture, Scene 1.

I do not know for sure how many scenes we will be developing as we move on through this, but there will probably be half a dozen at least. Our big picture is concerned and limited to how this impacts the human race.

Added to that includes our meager understanding of how it impacts angelic beings as well.

The Bible mentions angels throughout, yet does not reveal a great deal of content about them. So I want to warn you, if I may, that we are going to be reading most of this content simply because I do not have confidence that I can express it as concisely as it needs to be otherwise.

So I have taken the liberty of writing down these things and sharing them with you. I suspect that they may generate a great deal of questions or comments, and that's understandable, because what we are talking about has to do with content that has occupied the minds of theologians and philosophers for literally centuries.

[2 : 47] Basically, why is there something rather than nothing? So I've got a number of propositions that I want you to consider, and we will be gearing them toward the content that we read this morning in our scripture reading, particularly insofar as conclusions are concerned.

And, well, let me just refer you to a couple of things. The first one has to do with the last passage that we read, which says, they existed and were created.

Some translations, I think the King James says, for by thy pleasure they were created. It pleased God. That's where we're going.

It was God's pleasure. Why is there anything that exists? Because it pleased God to bring it into existence. And then preceding that, we read in the middle portion of 1 Corinthians passage above that, then comes the end.

When he delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when he has abolished all rule and all authority and power, for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

[4 : 41] The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For he has put all things in subjection under his feet.

But when he says all things are put in subjection, it is evident that he is accepted who put all things in subjection to him. And when all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself also will be subjected to the one who subjected all things to him.

That God may be all in all. That's where we're going. And then on the opposite page, Peter admonishes his audience in Acts chapter 3, to repent therefore and return that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things.

That's where we're going. The restoration of all things. Right now, the planet is a work in progress. But when this is fulfilled, all things will have been restored.

And that has been a promise from ancient times. So, we are going to consider the items before us in a manner that will, I trust, provoke your thinking, that will resolve some issues, that will settle some questions, and will raise some others.

[6 : 39] Why is anything here? Where has everything come from? What is its purpose or meaning? Where is it all going? And why?

What will have been accomplished when it has all been concluded? Will it all be concluded? Is existence circular with no conclusion?

So, we just go around and around and around and repeat. Or is existence linear with a finite beginning and a conclusion?

What is everything all about? Or is it about nothing? Is there no point to it all? If so, what is the point?

Is anybody out there? If there is somebody out there, what is he up to? What is his point? If there is nobody out there, then can we rationally conclude that nobody plus nothing equals everything?

[7 : 45] Did inanimate matter, being eternal, create animate matter? Minds of our finest scientific endeavors have no answers at all to the why.

Only by revelation do we get the why. The one behind it all has let us in on it to the extent that he wishes to do so.

We are simply told in that Revelation 4 passage that God created because he was pleased to do so. We don't have any other reason.

It is divine revelation versus human speculation, or we might say a perfect example of the sublime to the ridiculous.

I remember reading an article the other day regarding one of our leading atheist lights, so-called light, Richard Dawkins, who's written a couple of bestsellers on the New York Times bestseller list, and rather than propound the idea or entertain the idea at all that there may be a creator, there may be a personal infinite God, he has preferred to opt for alien and alien spaceships and spacecrafts who came to Earth and deposited what was necessary for the beginning of life as we know it.

[9 : 27] So that's what I mean by from the sublime, which is revelation, to the ridiculous, which is Richard Dawkins. Some scientists, so-called, will go to almost any length to keep God out of the picture entirely.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He created from an innate desire to do so. He did not create anything from necessity nor compulsion of any kind, only of desire.

It pleased him to do so. So, he created from a position of personal pleasure. God never existed from millions of years ago.

That would make him time-bound. God existed in eternity that is devoid of time. God existed in a state of timelessness.

And this is what Isaiah meant in chapter 57 when he referred to God as the one who inhabits eternity. Time never existed until God created it along with space, which also never existed before Genesis 1-1.

[10 : 58] Time and space are both created to accommodate physical properties including human beings and all material substances.

God is spirit or non-material. when he was addressing the woman at the well. He said God is spirit. A lot of people want to read that God is a spirit.

That is not permissible. And I think the Greek makes it very clear that God is not a spirit. God is spirit. And there is a difference.

God is not composed or made up of stuff. God is non-corporeal or immaterial.

Here's a very important point. I want you to get this fixed in your mind. Matter, substance, materialism has a point of origin.

[12 : 01] Spirit is eternal. That's perhaps the most profound distinction between that which is material and that which is immaterial.

All physical matter in all forms has a point of origin. There was a time when matter did not exist.

Granted, it's difficult for us to conceive of such a time. But I think the scriptures make it quite clear that there was a time when there was no world, no planets, no suns, no moons, no universe.

Yet, there was God. And God existed in an immaterial form as pure spirit being.

So, spirit has the upper hand. Spirit is the originating factor, not physicality. And we tend to think in terms of the physical because we are so familiar with it.

[13 : 11] We ourselves are physical beings and we live in a physical world. But there was a time when none of these things even existed. It was spirit that gave existence to matter and everything that concerns it.

So, matter has a point of origin. Spirit is eternal. It is the greater of the two. It is the spirit that gave rise to the non-spirit.

So, we are saying that from non-matter, matter came. Because non-matter brought matter into existence.

It is important to note that we not make the same mistake that pantheists make in that God is not part of his existence and what exists is not part of God.

God exists in an entirely separate entity apart from all that he has created. So, creation has not come out of the being of God except as he commanded it to come forth.

[14 : 28] Creation is not part of God. It is separate from God. He exists above and beyond that which he has created. So, God created matter independent from himself.

And when God decided to create, he needed only to operate within the confines of his own nature and character.

Outside his own character and nature, he could not go simply because it would be contrary to it. God is sovereignly and irrevocably committed to attitudes and actions that are in keeping with his own being of absolute holiness, truth, and wisdom.

Thus, God created all things and with that creation came a divine perspective or viewpoint of all that he had created and all it would become.

Let me repeat that. God created all things and with that creation came a divine perspective or viewpoint of all he had created and all it would become.

[15 : 52] In other words, when he created, he also had a distinct plan in mind down to the smallest detail.

He knew exactly what he was about. He knew exactly what he intended to accomplish. He knew exactly what directions this process would take and he did all of that out of his own good pleasure and self will.

Included in that divine perspective was his decision and this is really important. In fact, this is so important I am calling this the first institution.

The first institution. Included in the divine perspective was his decision to endow the highest order of his creatures which so far as we know are angelic and human with volition.

Volition becomes the first divine institution of the created order. That is, he has created angels and humans with a will that could choose between right and wrong when confronted with a decision.

[17 : 28] This is absolutely critical to understanding why we are here, where it is all going, what it is all about, the purpose of life, everything else is all bound up in this.

Don't ever lose sight of it. It is this very thing that makes us accountable beings to a higher source. And the higher source, of course, is God himself.

It is because we have been endowed with a capacity to make choices. Volition becomes the first institution.

Man is created in a state of moral neutrality with the freedom to remain positive toward his creator or go negative and rebelled against him.

Let me repeat that. Man is created in a state of moral neutrality with the freedom to remain positive toward his creator or go negative and rebel against him.

[18 : 47] And when I'm talking about man here, I'm talking about the first man and the first woman. I am not talking about mankind as we exit the womb. We know that that entrance of new life into the world is tainted with the sin nature that gives man a built-in propensity to be self-serving and self-seeking and it's very ego centered and this is the essence of the problem today of course.

So when God created Adam and Eve, he created them with a capacity and ability and it is that by which he holds them accountable.

It is the violation of the divine pleasure that produces guilt that resulted in Adam and Eve hiding from God in the garden because they had experienced something that they never knew before and that was guilt and the guilt was produced from having made a willful wrong decision.

They had stepped over a line and when they did so they knew it. But also included in the divine perspective was God's full knowledge of the choices that angels and men would make.

And of course we humans have to constantly think in terms of well if God knew that Lucifer was going to become Satan why did he create him?

[20 : 34] If God knew that Adam and Eve were going to rebel against him and bring upon all of humanity all of their progeny the incredible conflict and pain and suffering and misery that we experience in the world why did he create them thusly?

It's because it was in accordance with his pleasure. it's difficult for us to buy that because we cannot in our perspective we cannot willingly say knowingly say that God was pleased to bring all of this suffering and all of this pain and all of the heartache and disappointment and disease and death upon the human race because it pleased him that's right that's right it pleased him but you've got to keep this in mind it pleased him in accordance with his perspective not ours and this of course these differences in perspective inevitably lead us with all kinds of questions such as why is this happening to me what did

I do to deserve this where was God when the twin towers came down why didn't he prevent that why didn't he prevent tsunamis why didn't he prevent epidemics of disease how could he allow these things to take place where thousands of lives innocent lives are just wiped out we cannot justify that because we don't have God's perspective we've got our perspective and it's very limited and I think most people are willing to agree that it's true we have our perspective and it is limited God sees the big picture and his perspective is different from ours and we don't want to quibble about that we do not resent the fact that God has his perspective and we have ours but what we do tend to resent is this is that he doesn't let us in on his that's what we tend to have against him we want him to justify his actions and explain himself so that we can understand and then it'll be okay and when he doesn't it just irritates us to death bothers us greatly causes some to even abandon their faith well if that's the way

God is going to be that's the kind of God we serve I don't want anything to do with him and we find this attitude rampant throughout humanity well if that's the kind of a God nothing to do with him I told you before about the gentleman I spoke to I think at the time he was probably in his fifties and we struck up a conversation and he asked what I did and of course it opens a can of worms good I guess for people who are into that but I wrote God off a long time ago really what happened and the story went on as a seven year old boy whose father was critically ill and supposedly a Christian family and the pastor came in and prayed for his father and neighbors came in and prayed for his father and he is a little seven year old boy prayed desperately that

God would spare his father's life and he didn't father died and at the tender age of seven this man became convinced that if God didn't care anymore about the needs of a seven year old boy to spare his father's life whom he needed desperately if God didn't care any more than that there either wasn't a God or if there is a God he didn't want anything to do with him and he wrote him off a lot of people have done that for different reasons because God wouldn't give them this or do that for them or because God wouldn't prevent this or prevent that God how can there be a good and loving God who allows a mother and five children in her car to be wiped out at an intersection train crossing and you tell me that there is a good and loving

[25 : 31] God who could have changed the timing just a few seconds so it would have made all the difference in the world and those people would not have been statistics they would have been survivors you mean to tell me that God could do that and he chose not to who would want anything to do with a God like that when you understand that God created man with a volition this truth and this scenario alone the volitional thing the first institution this alone can satisfactorily account for the existence of evil in a world created by an all good and beneficent

God while God cannot be charged with the creation of evil he must ultimately be charged with the creation of beings in whom resided the potential for evil and actions contrary to the will of a good God and creator and of this God willingly pleads guilty why then did he do it it pleased him to do so it was his good pleasure to do so because God has a perspective that we know not of and in God's perspective everything is going to turn out so that he will be able to say what he said after the original creation and behold it was very good well it's going to be very good again but only as a result of a very painful process so all of humanity is going to go through on a different scale a similar kind of thing that our

Lord went through when he paid the horrible price that he paid of death on the cross separation from the father for the end result of the glory the glory that would result from that there is going to be a glory for creation as well but not without the pain and the process and the suffering that goes with it that is all part of the picture God was pleased to do so in his perspective in his perspective it will all have been worth it including the death and separation of the father and the son it will have been worth this is for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross and suffered the shame for the joy that was set before him this is ultimate issues that we are talking about this is the big picture this is where it is going and where we will be when we get there when we say

God was pleased to do so has he no right to do whatsoever he wills with that which he himself has made and owns would anybody dispute your authority or your right to do what you will with that which you make and own some of you know that I dabble in woodworking a little bit I have not gotten my skill level to the place where I can conscientiously call myself a skilled woodworker I am at the level of wood butcher right now and sometimes I'm like the guy who I don't understand what's wrong here I cut this board off twice and it's still too short you know sometimes that's my woodworking skill but I'll tell you one thing when I take a piece of wood in hand and do something with it that's my prerogative that's my business it's my right it's my call and nobody has the authority or the right to tell me what

I can or cannot do with that piece of wood granted my level is somewhat limited but within the level of my skill but then when we're talking about God he doesn't have skill levels he's just perfection personified but we have skill levels and I can make a circle out of a piece of wood I can make a square or I can make a triangle or I can do what I often do with a piece of wood I turn it into a piece of firewood but in any case it is mine to do with as I please and I have not yet had a piece of wood rise up and say to me hey what are you doing you can't do this with me didn't you look at my grain at how beautifully proportioned and colored it is what right do you have to make this out of me never had that happen

[31 : 47] God's had it happen a lot we who are endowed with thinking capacities often charge God foolishly with why did you do this or why don't you do that or how come you allow this why didn't you prevent that what's going on here this isn't any way to run a railroad God gets that all the time but he is infinitely patient so hath not the potter power over the clay does not creative ownership endow the creator with complete discretionary powers operating only within the confines of his own character and disposition does not and should not all of creation serve at the pleasure of the creator yes should does it surely I jest we all know that it does not we live in a creation that is in a mode of rebellion and this is what is wrong with the planet man in a rebellion mode self serving self seeking mood only produces conflict because we all tend to be self serving and self seeking and when you get an aggregate number of people all of whom are pushing and pressing for their own interests conflict is the inevitable result and this of course is what we've got it's the basis for marriages breaking up it's the basis for friendships ending and it is the basis for wars being declared and fought how many times have we left blood and treasure on foreign soils because of these very things that we are talking about throughout scripture

God appears focused upon just two things and there may be others but my limitation of understanding is always operating number one the manifestation of his own glory now some people have a problem with that because when we are only interested in the manifestation of our own glory we call that egocentric we call that selfish we call that undeserving we call that big headed or whatever but with God who is perfection personified the manifestation of his own glory and that being his express goal is not at all inappropriate because he is one and the only one who is in a position to appropriately pursue that end he is deserving he is worthy he is the creator he is perfection personified to quote to quote one of our most famous well known philosophers

Muhammad Ali it ain't bragging if you can do it well God can do it so in his case it ain't bragging it's just stating a truism that's all and the second thing that he is about is going to be the elevation of man's pleasure and enjoyment beyond his wildest imagination and I am convinced Wiseman opinion scripture doesn't say this in chapter and verse but I think it alludes to it that the greatest pleasure the greatest enjoyment that we are going to have in heaven it's not streets of gold and gates of pearl and all of that stuff greatest enjoyment we are going to have in heaven is being perpetually exposed to the majesty and the glory of

God himself it's going to be one major wow after another we are going to be so enamored and so taken up and so taken aback by what God is pleased to reveal about himself and I'll tell you why that is because he is an infinite God he is a God with no limitations with no borders so we will never cease to be amazed at what we are able to learn understand and appreciate about the creator it's going to be just one magnificent experience after another and don't worry your pretty little head about ever being bored in heaven or sitting on a fluffy cloud someplace taking harp lessons and strumming a harp isn't going to be anything like that it is going to be a perpetual divulging of the nature and character and majesty of

God and you'll never get tired of it and you'll never weary of it it will be a perpetual blissful experience the likes of which we just can't imagine when we talk about an infinite God you realize what that means it's just a word we throw around infinite it's lacking capacity I mean there is no limitation we can't imagine that God is such a being that he knows what every one of us is thinking he even knows what you are thinking about thinking now multiply that by six billion because it isn't just you that he knows this about we are talking about infinite knowledge and if you feel like this makes you feel really small you're a lot smaller than that and he's a lot greater than that so his ability to reveal and manifest himself to those of us who have such a thimble like capacity for understanding and appreciation we're never going to run out of things that this infinite

[39 : 32] God will be manifesting to us it will be an experience the likes of which we just can't describe here we just can't imagine this is the big picture in as few words as I can put it and this big picture takes into consideration all of all of all of all of humanity and how God is going to address them all of these things are part of the big picture the fall is part of the big picture redemption is part of the big picture the restitution of all things is part of the big picture and when the time comes and we are in glory and it is all wrapped up as the scripture passage says then God may be all and in all and our time here on earth however many years or decades it has been will just be very very tiny segment of that big big picture

I do not think there is anything so important in understanding the existence of a good and righteous and loving God and the existence of evil there isn't anything as critical to understanding that as is the reality of human volition why doesn't God why doesn't God how could God you've got to remember part of the whole plan allowed for accommodated man's rebellion man's sin and that's all working toward God's conclusion so why is the world as screwed up and in the mess that it's in just go take a good look in the mirror that's why that's why it's because we are what we are pogo comic strip says we have met the enemy and they is us we are the enemy don't blame

God for the misery and the heartache the death and disease that's in the world out there blame humanity and you know maybe I'm reading something in the white spaces don't want to be guilty of that but let me just offer it as a suggestion when God said for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou wilt surely die you could have also added and I think very accurately but it isn't there but this is a wise man opinion in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die and you will succeed in creating a whole new kind of world that you're not going to like very well and you're going to have to live in it and

Satan and I don't understand his formulation as a serpent that too is just part of creation story that we don't understand but Eve Eve was in a posture of neutrality and I would say innocence as well we have no reason to believe that she would have within herself wondered about eating from that tree and doing so we have no reason to believe that but the tempter nudged her from her position of neutrality he just egged her on a little bit you will not surely die God knows that in the day that you eat your eyes will be opened and you will understand good and evil she didn't understand good and evil all she understood was good she didn't understand good and evil but that was what resided in that tree of the knowledge of good and evil and he nudged her out of her position of neutrality and she succumbed to the temptation and this is what we've got this is the big picture as

I see it now I have one caveat to add to all of that much of what I have told you for which I do not have specific chapter and verse may not be right I think it is but it may not be right the only thing that I can tell you for sure is right is where I can point to chapter and verse and this is what it says but Marv has filled in a lot of the blank spaces between those verses and the last thing in the world that I want to do is fill them in with just my opinion because frankly my opinion has been proven wrong so many times and has let me down so many times I don't have much confidence in it at all and neither should you but to the best of my knowledge and understanding what

[45 : 40] I have described by way of the big picture I think jibes with if it is accurate then it's going to really be something I believe that it is questions or comments we've got a few minutes is there a microphone available and again I apologize for for having read most of this I think I just read about all of it but it's the only way that I could be sure that I would get in what I really wanted to say and not omit something so Ron has a question here up front here oh okay go ahead in the back I'm sorry we'll take your question in a minute she's got the microphone go ahead with the mic and then bring the mic up to Ron Marv you mentioned in the beginning that this would be very thought provoking and the thought that

I had that never occurred to me before but when you mentioned spirit and you said that spirit was eternal we know that our spirit then is going to exist for eternity does that mean our spirit existed for eternity and past well I don't think in terms of our spirit as being eternal I think of our spirit as being everlasting there's a distinction between everlasting and eternal eternal means no end no beginning and no end everlasting everlasting suggests the beginning but not an end so God has an eternal spirit man has an everlasting spirit as far as I know I think angels are everlasting spirits angels are spirit beings they are ministering spirits sent to be the heirs of those who shall sent to minister to those who will be heirs of salvation so angelic beings are not physical beings they are spirit beings but they are spirit beings who at one time did not exist so far as we know they always will have life ongoing but they didn't have eternal life

Ron here's the microphone you had mentioned about the five children that got killed and why would God let that happen to me those five children are going to go to heaven and that's a lot better place than here and hopefully the mother was driving the car would go to heaven too but I have a theory and my theory is that God when he wipes out a hundred people then he's bringing some of them home that are Christians that are believers and the rest of them he knows that they would never if they continue to live would never come to full faith to salvation they would never be believers that's just my theory you mentioned that Richard Dawkins said that spaceships brought people to earth and that's why he didn't believe in the creator well who does he think created those space people and that's really reminiscent of the

Mormon beliefs so if Mitt Romney who is a Mormon ever runs for president I certainly wouldn't vote for him because he doesn't have God on his side that's another God that the Mormons have if you don't know what the Mormons believe you ought to check it out and one last thing we're talking about God's creation 6,000 years that's just a blink what did he do eternity past which is billions and billions and billions of years that intrigues me okay well I we we cannot help but ask ourselves that question however when you say billions and billions you are saddling God with time even with billions and billions of years but you've got to understand that eternity eternity is not unending time eternity is unending it isn't time of any kind eternity is not millions of years or billions of years or trillions of years the thing that makes eternity what it is is that it is timeless and that's where

God dwelt before he created time our problem is we just can't get away from the time mode because we're locked into it same way we're locked into space and we just think that God had to have existed billions and billions of years ago but he didn't God has always existed but he dwells in eternity and he still does God does not live in time today time is merely a divine creative provision for space and for creatures he created time at the same time he created space and we need time in order to accommodate space and we need space to accommodate time they go together we live in a time space continuum God does not live in either one he is separate from those he is outside of space and he is outside of time and he invaded if you will our world of space and time when he came to

[51 : 24] Bethlehem as a babe he came from the father's presence he came from eternity into time and space and took upon him a physical body and was made in the likeness of man just utterly amazing other comments or questions all right may we stand please father we have discussed some things this morning that are certainly over our head and you are so far removed from us in your perspective and in your thinking and in your holiness and in your wisdom and we wouldn't know anything about you apart from your willingness to reveal yourself and we are grateful for what you have revealed in creation especially grateful for what you have revealed in your word and in your son and we pray that as a result of what we have considered this morning you will enable us no matter what comes into our life to keep this issue of perspective before us it will buoy us up it will strengthen us it will equip us for what may be difficult times ahead personally or corporately to know that you are in complete control and that you have a perspective a picture that is absolutely perfect ours is so small and so flawed and so filled with questions and frustration and yet none of these things exist with you we just rejoice over your being the God that you are and over your perspective in Christ's wonderful name we pray amen