

S T U D Y G U I D E

DUST *to*

An Overview of the Bible with R.C. SPROUL

GLORY



S T U D Y G U I D E

Dust to Glory

An Overview of the Bible

R.C. Sproul



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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1

Creation

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The account found in the first chapters of Genesis makes unique assertions regarding the time, author, and method of creation. These assertions set biblical Christianity apart from other world views and philosophical systems. Into a dark, empty, and chaotic void the voice of God speaks and brings light, fullness, order, and life. A perfect and wondrous setting is put into place for the image bearers of God to work, dwell, and reflect the glory of God. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the creation account found in the first chapter of Genesis.

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify and explain the three unique assertions of biblical Christianity regarding the creation found in Genesis 1:1.
2. To contrast the assertions of the Genesis account of creation with other philosophical systems.
3. To evaluate the significance to the ancient mind of the words “formless,” “empty,” and “darkness” in describing the primordial earth.

QUOTATIONS

O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works.

—Psalm 104:24, 31

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The title of this series is *Dust to Glory*. The purpose of this study is to give a brief overview of the Holy Scriptures.
 1. The essence of the life of Christ was his passion to be obedient to every Word that proceeded from the mouth of God.
 2. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).
 3. The great crisis of our age is the neglect of the content of Scripture.
 4. We need to renew our resolve to understand the content of Holy Scripture.
- B. The first proclamation of Scripture is found in Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”
- C. There are three important words in this verse that are central to biblical Christianity and set it apart from many other world views. These three words are *beginning*, *God*, and *created*.
- D. The word *beginning* asserts a starting point in time and history.
 1. The book title, *Genesis*, means beginning.
 2. This assertion of a starting point in time contrasts with other philosophical systems.
 3. The nineteenth-century philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, taught the “myth of eternal recurrence,” meaning, time has no starting or finishing point.
 4. The book of Ecclesiastes addresses the pagan skepticism attached to the idea that there is no purposeful beginning or conclusion of history and concludes it is a “vanity of vanities.”
 5. Many other modern cosmologies (studies of the origin and structure of the universe) agree that there was a beginning in history. The question then arises, “who or what started the universe?”

-
- E. The word *God* indicates that a personality is the author of everything.
1. There is a radical difference between all creaturely existence and the author of creation.
 2. Anything that has a beginning must also have someone or something preceding it in order for it to begin.
 3. Scripture proclaims the existence of God—a being without a beginning, eternal, and self-existent.
- F. The word *created* indicates an action by someone at a point in time.
1. An artist or musician demonstrates “mediated creativity” by rearranging already existing substances. He creates within an established medium.
 2. God creates outside of a medium. His acts of creation are *ex nihilo* or “out of nothing.” God alone can create something out of nothing.
 3. God’s method of creating is by the divine imperative which is the transcendent, majestic, holy command of God.
 4. God speaks into the void and says “Let there be . . .” By the sheer power of the command of one who eternally has the power of being in Himself a universe is formed.
- G. “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2).
1. The unformed universe is described with three negatives that in the ancient world would be considered very threatening to human existence and meaning.
 2. *Formlessness* is absolute chaos with nothing having any order.
 3. *Emptiness* describes the worst sensation we have in our souls when we feel frightened or alone and therefore feel empty. The entire primordial universe is empty.
 4. *Darkness* is a term that describes not the presence of something, but rather the absence of something—the absence of light.
 5. The Spirit of God hovers over the formless, empty, darkness of the deep. The voice of God speaks, “Let there be . . .” and form replaces formlessness, fullness replaces emptiness, and light replaces darkness.
 6. The lights come on, a world begins, and a setting is established for God to scoop his hands into the dust and to prepare a creature for his glory.

BIBLE STUDY

1. According to 2 Timothy 3:16–17, what are the purposes for which God has designed Scripture? Can it achieve these purposes for us if we are ignorant of its content?
2. Every worldview seeks to answer this fundamental question: Why is there something rather than nothing? What is the answer that Genesis 1:1 gives to this basic question?
3. Based on the creation narrative in Genesis 1, is God independent of or dependent upon the universe? Did He have a beginning? Do the answers to these questions mean that He is fully sovereign or only partially sovereign over what transpires in creation?
4. From what materials does God create the heavens and the earth? What is the Latin term for “out of nothing”?
5. Genesis 1:2 describes the universe as being formless, empty, and dark prior to the Lord’ creative act. According to R.C., were the qualities of formlessness, emptiness, and darkness considered good by the very first readers of Genesis? How does the prediction about the destruction of Judah for her sin in Jeremiah 4:23 inform us about how God evaluates that which is “without form and void”?
6. Many ancient mythologies depict a war of the gods against the forces of nature that brings about the existence of all that now exists. Must God battle independent natural forces or other gods to create His world in Genesis 1? What does He actually do in verses 3, 6–7, 9, 11, 14–15, 20–21, and 24 to bring creation into existence?

DISCUSSION

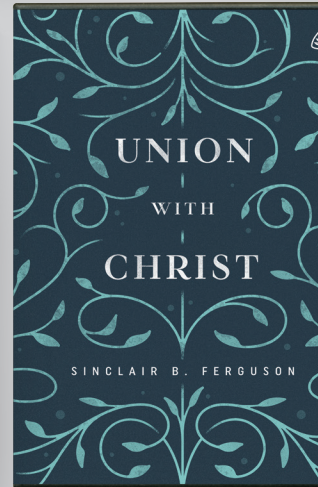
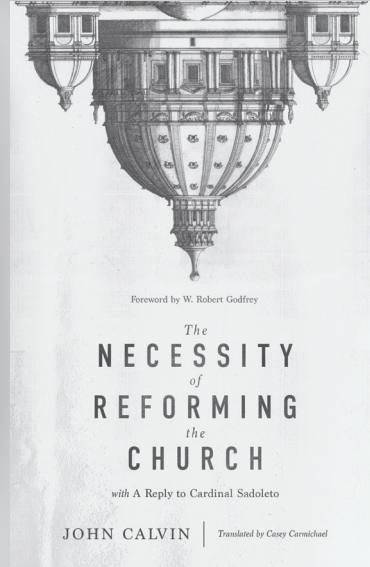
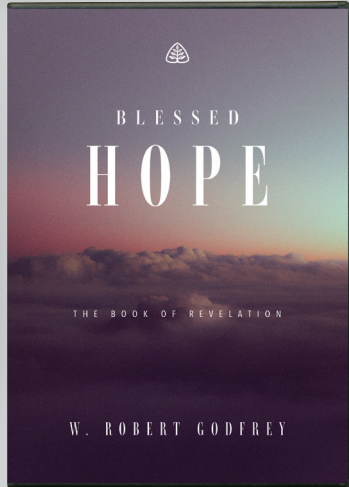
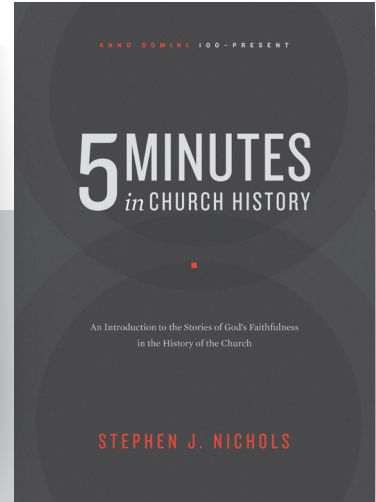
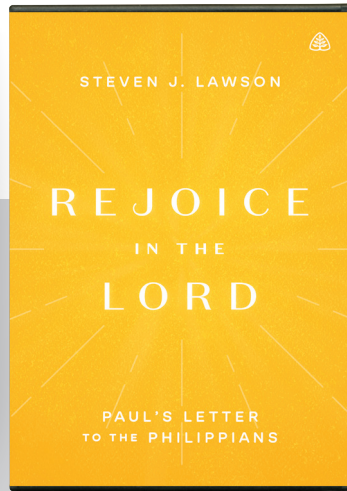
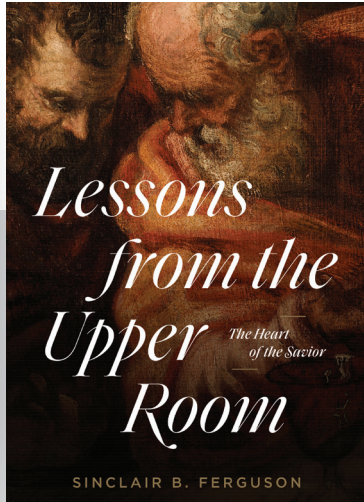
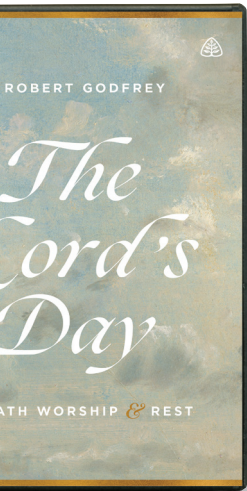
1. Human beings cannot create something out of nothing but we can imitate God’s creative abilities at home, in our families, in the arts, and in the workplace. How do you “create” life and other things in your life and sphere of influence?
2. Are most human beings content to live as creatures in submission to their Creator? What are some of the ways mankind rebels against its creatureliness? How have you sought to usurp the Creator’s rightful sovereignty over your life?
3. Read John 1:1–18. What does the role of the Son of God in creation mean for our relation to Him? What does the activity of God’s Son say about His equality with our Father in heaven?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Sproul, R.C. and Robert Wolgemuth. *What’s in the Bible?*

Sproul, R.C. *Not a Chance*

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