

The Beginning and the End

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, a very good morning to you on this first Sunday morning of the new year.
- I think it's wonderful that the new year day is on a Sunday. What a way to start the new year. The best way you could ever start it is with the Lord's Day.
- So maybe this is going to be a special year, who knows. But let's trust it is. I'm glad to be with you and glad to be able to say to you a very blessed new year.
- And may it be a wonderful year in your life. May all your problems be little ones. And we all want that.
- But sometimes they're a little bigger. And then we've got to cope with them. I once heard a fantastic preacher in this country. And some of you will know him.
- [1 : 0 2] Some of you might have heard him. Oswald J. Smith. Well known because of running the People's Church in Toronto, Canada. But also probably been the greatest missionary statesman the world has ever known.
- But wrote many books, wrote many poems, wrote many hymns. Here's one of them.
- Another year. Another year. Another year has now been born.
- The old has died. The new is here. We turn away from all the past and face the future without fear. Another year.
- Oh, may it be. A year unsullied, Lord, by sin. The past we cannot alter now. But we, the future, still can win.
- Another year to work and pray. To lead lost souls, dear Lord, to thee. Forgive us for our past mistakes. And make us all we long to be.
- [2 : 0 7] Another year to send the light. To those who have not heard thy name. A year to welcome gain or loss.
- And humbly all thy blessings claim. That's it. Just four little stanzas. And I trust it will be a blessing to you.
- Well, we've read from the word. We've sung some beautiful songs that fit in perfectly with what I have to share with you today. And we read a moment ago, and thank you for reading it so well, where it said, It is done.
- I am. Alpha and Omega. The beginning and the end. And so as I thought, mused, prayed, and prepared myself for your service here today, I sensed in my spirit that instead of preaching quite a few other things that I could have preached, that God was really leading me to the word beginning.
- The word beginning. Yesterday we ended the year. Today we begin a new year.
- [3 : 2 5] That's how it is. Across the world. Not matter in what country it is, or what community it is, or what color we might be, or what nationality we are.
- That's it. It ended, and it's now started. The beginning and the end. The Alpha and Omega.

People are asking, at this time, is this the end? And I think every year that comes around, people wonder, is this the end?

Is this when it will all start happening? See, we often say, the straw that broke the camel's back.

And we wonder, how many more crises, disasters, wars, morality, corruption, can this dear planet of ours endure before, before it actually breaks apart?

[4 : 35] We've started the new year, 2017. Now how will it end? We always say, do we not, we don't know what tomorrow holds.

But we do know who holds tomorrow. And that's certainly so, especially if you know Jesus. If you know who holds tomorrow, then we're okay.

Then we do not have to fret. So the question is, whose hand are you holding as you move in to another year of your life?

Whose hand are you holding? That is the important thing. Even though God, the almighty, indescribable, awesome God that we sang about, even though he has no beginning and no ending and is often called alpha and omega, he understands time.

He understands time. For he talks about it in his word. This little book, the Bible, has lots to say about time.

[5 : 53] That's why, of course, most things for us have a starting point and have an ending point. They begin and they end. We have a moment in time when we became somebody.

And we call that our birthday and we have a big celebration. I often wonder why we do it because we celebrate in getting older. But we love it and we do it.

And then there comes an end. The end is death. Death. Everything seems to have it. A year has a beginning and it has an ending. If we take studies, we have a time when we begin and a time when we end at graduation.

And everything seems to have this thing about it that it starts and it stops. When it comes to God, you see, God talks about time and says things like this, my times are in his hands.

He talks about the signs of the times. He talks about the last days and the perilous times that we will be living in. And we know that time is short and eternity is sure.

[7 : 04] God speaks in his word about time and you and I are creatures of time. Whether we like it or not, time is our enemy many times.

we are often bound by time. And many of us like to have those times when we don't have to bother about time. When we can just be on holiday and be in a nice place and just forget about the clock and take our watch off and forget about time.

But what is the Bible really saying about it all? Well, it talks about a beginning. It talks in the beginning God.

in the beginning. Today is the beginning of the new year. It is the exact start of 2017. It's just a few hours old.

And you and I find ourselves sitting in a church building singing the songs of Zion reading the eternal word of the living God. What a place to be in.

[8 : 10] You've come to the right place. You're where you should be. And the Bible now refers and I direct your attention to those early verses there in the first chapter of the Bible, Genesis chapter 1.

It says, God was there and he was busy. He was busy creating. He was beginning something.

And what was he beginning? He was beginning the world that you and I walk on and you and I live on. He was creating the universe and he was creating you and me.

And the word that is used here in the original is the word bara, B-A-R-A. And bara, when that word is used, it means that you create out of nothing.

now you can't do that. There's nothing that you can do to create something out of nothing. Only the magicians can do it.

[9 : 17] Isn't that right? They can bring some amazing things out of the hat, right? No, you can't do it and neither can they do it. There's only one that could do that and that was God that could create out of nothing.

So he created it. The heavens, the earth, the animals and eventually towards the end of the chapter talks about him creating man.

Creating man. Verse 26. And many, many other things that he created at that time was called creation ordinances.

There's about seven or eight of them in the Bible. Creation ordinances. That is something that is built into the very fabric of human personality.

And you cannot escape it. If you break it, if you ignore it, it's to your own peril. Many different things.

[10 : 22] Like our marriage is a creation ordinance by God. He made them male and female. That's how he made them. There were certain things that were built into creation that can never be changed.

One of them is you work for six days and one day is to be a rest day. That's built into us. That's how we're supposed to work. And if you don't, well, it's to your own peril.

So God created in the beginning. God created. He created man in his own image and his likeness. You are sitting here today, listen, not just a child of your circumstances, not just somebody that came from your mother and father.

No, you are created in the image of God. That's what makes it awesome. In the image of God, in his likeness, you are like him.

That's what it means. You are like God. Man is the highest creation of God. And God says in his word in the beginning, I give you dominion over everything.

[11 : 44] The birds in the air, the fish in the sea, the animals that walk and jump. I give you dominion over everything. We're living in an amazing world.

Where animals get more attention than people. That's how it's happening today. But God didn't intend that. And I don't mean you be cruel to animals.

I don't mean that at all. No, but we need to have the order right. God made us and he made us for dominion over all these things. And man, it says, is wonderfully and fearfully made.

Psalms 139, read it sometime. you are a skillful marvel. Did you know that? You are a skillful marvel. That's God took you and God made you as you are.

That's why it's not really right to decide I don't like where my nose is. Let's see if we can put it somewhere else. That's why it's not really good to go and get lifts up and vortex here and vortex there and all that stuff.

[12 : 58] Because in many ways what we are doing is we are saying God, I don't think you did such a good job on me. I'm going to change a couple of things. Well, God made you like you are.

You are a divine original. There's not another one like you. That's who you are. God made you like this. In the beginning, God skillfully made you.

And he created us. He created us male and female. And he gave us what is called the sanctity of marriage.

The sanctity of the marriage vow. And as I said already, that is a creation ordinance. And you know in the book of Genesis you get every single doctrine mentioned in the first 12 chapters of Genesis.

every doctrine that's taught from there on to the end of the Bible is found in the first 12 chapters of Genesis. And these creation ordinances are there not to be broken.

[14 : 04] Then God provided everything that man needed. He provided absolutely everything. You couldn't point a finger at God. You couldn't say, God, you failed.

God, you did this. God, you... people do it, but you're not to do it. God provided everything. God met even with that first bear.

Adam and Eve, he met with them. On a regular basis, he would come into the garden, and in the cool of the day, he would meet with them. Why? Because they were made for communion.

That's why. they were made to commune with other people. And that's how you're made in the likeness of God. You are for community, whether you like it or not.

Oh, I know we get these people who say, well, you know, I'm a recluse. I like to stay away from the crowds, and I like to be alone, and this kind of thing.

[15 : 07] Well, I stay with a woman that's anything but a recluse, let me tell you. she's always ready to be outgoing with people.

I'm the one that likes to get away. I don't know about you. But we're not. We're made for people. We're made for each other, and we're made especially to commune with Almighty God, our Maker, the One who formed us and made us like Himself.

And God intended man to be fruitful and multiplied. You get that? That's what it says in that first chapter. God meant him to be fruitful and multiply, both physically and spiritually, by the way.

We usually think of that scripture as, oh, he must reappropriate himself type of thing. And we must have children, and our children must have children.

No, not only physically, but also spiritually. So the question is, are you producing spiritual children? Are you a parent to somebody that came to know Jesus through you?

[16 : 16] Are you a spiritual grandfather or grandmother? Because the person you led to Christ has gone and led somebody else to Jesus. Now that's the multiplication thing.

That's what God intended for man to be fruitful and to multiply. Where is this creator as far as you're concerned?

This one who manufactured you. He made you. He's the manufacturer. He made you. He's your creator God. And you know what?

He wants to be number one. He wants to be first in your life. That's what he wants to be. Here we are. Here we are. This is the first of the year.

He has your first service for the new year. And he wants you on this first Sunday to make him number one.

[17 : 14] To put him first. Say Lord I'm putting you first in my life this year. No matter what the resolution you think about you're going to put him first.

He's going to be the one in your life that's most important. moment. In the beginning God. But I want you to see secondly in the beginning the enemy.

The enemy. It wasn't long after God created man that the enemy arrived on the scene. You get to Genesis chapter three.

three. And that was a sad day in man's history. A downward spiral into an abyss of slavery, delusion, separation, confusion, lying, murder, all sorts of corruptness.

just listen to John in chapter eight and verse 44. You are your father the devil and the desires of your father you want to do.

[18 : 29] He was a murderer from the beginning. When? From the beginning. He was a murderer and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.

And when he speaks a lie he speaks from his own resources. for he is a liar and the father of it. So from the beginning yes right back there in the beginning the dawn of mankind we find that man walked away from God.

Man walked away from God. And when you walk away from God who is the light you walk into darkness my friend.

You walk into darkness even the way you live your life now. If you're close to God you're in the light. If tomorrow you've sinned and you're away from God you're in the darkness.

That's how it works. And the further you go into sin and the further you allow Satan to have a grip on your life the more you go into darkness. Generally speaking there is no light in man.

[19 : 48] There is no natural light in man. We're born into darkness. We're born into sin. We're born in a way that we know exactly how to do wrong.

We don't have to be taught it. It's just a natural thing that comes our way. and there's no peace. If you're away from God there's no peace because God is peace.

The world talks about peace. We have peace treaties. We have all sorts of people trying to talk about have you heard it over Christmas? They're happy to sing about peace.

They're happy to talk about peace at Christmas. But really there's no peace in the human heart. There is no peace there.

And then there is only selfishness. We're full of self. We just want to do it our way. You know back there in the garden of Eden when the old devil came along he said to Eve eat of this fruit it'll be okay.

[20 : 58] God didn't really mean that you would die. Surely not. And you see if you eat it your eyes will be opened and you'll be as God.

What was he saying? He was saying you can be your own God. You can make your own God if you want to. And so men have their gods.

Right now they don't serve God. Right now they don't come through these doors. Right now they'll ride past backwards and forwards. they'll be in their homes. They'll do things with their families and they'll try to live their life but leave God out.

What are they doing? He'll be as God. And so they're playing right into the hands of this devil. This enemy of ours who has filled our hearts with selfishness.

And any troubles you have in your home and your family and your marriage is usually selfishness. It's I want to do it. I want to do it my way. And we don't get off our high horse and we don't ask forgiveness and we don't say sorry.

[22 : 10] It's selfishness. Selfishness. There's only lying in us. You see, there's lying there. There's untruthfulness. We're experts at that, covering the truth.

There's often no fruit of righteousness in man. There's only darkness, death, and destruction. Did you perhaps see the documentary this week on TV of the Houdini man, right?

Who was on the run for so many years. Some of you might have seen it. And how he slipped through the police's roadblocks and how he climbed out of jails and how he moved around in the darkness.

Most of his deeds were done in the darkness. Slippery character. Amazing. If you watch it, it affects you. Man has walked and is walking in darkness.

That's what happened in the beginning. In the beginning, it happened. But let me hurry on. Let me hurry on to the next beginning.

[23 : 28] The next beginning is the beginning was the word. All right? In the beginning was the word. John 1 1.

That's the verse. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God and the word came and lived amongst us, became flesh, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth.

Here's the change. Here's where the change comes. Here's where the hope comes, my friend. In the beginning was the word. Here's the hope.

Hope has arrived in Jesus, in the word who is the word of God. This book is the word of God left for us. Jesus was the embodiment of the word.

The word Jesus, what about it? What if you read it there, if you read it in John chapter one, he is the living word from God. In him, it says, was life.

[24 : 44] In him was life. People want life. People look for life. They look for life in things, things, in playing sport, in buying a big boat and going out onto the water.

They want life. They just want to enjoy life, right? But, life is found in Christ, in Christ.

He was creating all things. You see, the word was with God when it all happened. God was back there in the book of Genesis. He was there in the beginning.

It was God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit. The word was there when the creating was being done. He was with the Father. And now he comes.

He comes, as we remembered at Christmas time, he comes, and he comes as the light. He was the light of man. And you often see light, don't you, with all the Christmas things.

[25 : 53] There's light everywhere. And people put lights up, and you have lights on your Christmas tree, and then they send you a message, you know, pass the light on. Did you see that? That one?

Don't stop the light being passed on, and there's some light in their hands, and they pass it to the next person, and they tell you, now don't stop this, but send it to somebody else, so you pass the light on.

You know, people are just longing to find the real thing, the real thing. They want peace, they want the light, they want life, they want it, it's in Christ, it's in the living word.

It says his light shines in the darkness. That darkness that we were born in, that darkness that Satan led us into sin, that darkness, this light shines in that darkness.

darkness. And you know what it says? It says, then he must be received. He must be, to as many as received him, that is the light, to as many as received him, to them he gave the right, the authority to become the child of God.

[27 : 04] And you know when you receive him, you know what happens? The light goes on. The light goes on. You've experienced that, many of you. you've experienced the moment when you received Christ into your life.

My, what a change, what a difference started. Might have been a flicker, but it was there. And the light goes on. There's no other way. Those friends of yours, those neighbors of yours, those family members of yours, those workmates, listen, there's no other way for light to go on in their lives, but through Jesus Christ, the living word of God.

So as you begin a new year, be sure you begin it with God. God on the throne, God in the right place in your life.

Be sure to begin it with this one who is light. And then just finally, yes, the beginning was that God created.

The beginning, there was the enemy right in the beginning. The beginning was the word has come. But I want to tell you lastly, it's also about the beginning and the end.

[28 : 31] The beginning and the end. 2017 started. If God doesn't break into 2017, we're going to end it. On the 31st of December this year, we're going to end it.

Because it has a start, it has an ending, beginning and an end. Revelation 21, behold, I make all things new. I am alpha, I am omega, I am beginning, I am end, I am first, I am last.

I had the first word, I'm going to have the last word. People need to realize that. That's how it's going to happen. It's not going to change.

God's not going to change it for some so-called powerful leader in the world. God's not going to change it for some powerful businessman that feels he's controlling a whole lot of things in this whole world of ours.

God's not going to change it for him. It doesn't matter who he is. God has the first word and he has the last word. Now while the world that you and I are part of for this another year of our lives, this world is lying in the lap of the evil one.

[29 : 50] That's what it is. Listen to the word, Luke 4, 5 and 6. then the devil taking him, that's Jesus, up onto a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

How about that? What an amazing thing. The devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

and the devil said to him, all this authority I will give you and their glory I'll give it to you and their glory for this has been delivered to me and I give it to him and say I wish now the devil is saying here I have it in my control.

I have it all in my control. I'm in charge of the world at the moment. Now that's the only way you can explain what goes on my friend. Because you're living in a world that's anything but perfect.

You're living in a world where there's so much unfairness, so much hurt, so much pain, so much trouble and we all stand back and say so and so man was a good person, that shouldn't have happened to them.

[31 : 12] No it shouldn't of course. But what is it? The devil's in charge. The devil's causing havoc. causing disasters and all sorts of things are happening in this world that are inexplicable.

You cannot understand it. It causes total confusion at times. And he offers it to Jesus, you see. And Jesus doesn't take it because it wasn't the right time.

It wasn't the right time. There is a time. There is a time. And what else does the Bible say? We can take courage as we face another year because there is an end in view.

Satan is going to be bound. He is going to be put into the lake of fire. God is going to have the last word. Not only with you and me and our friends and our workmates and the leaders of this world.

He's going to have the last word with the devil himself. And eventually he is going to be bound and he's going to be thrown into the lake of fire.

[32 : 20] For God has the last word. That's our hope, friend. That is our hope. Because what does it say there?

It says in that chapter in Revelation, there will be no more sorrow. There'll be no more pain. There'll be no more crying, no more murder, no more immorality, no more liars, no more corruption.

Wow. Until then. Until then. As believers in this chaotic world, we can live confidently until that happens.

How do we live confidently? How do you and I live confidently for another year in this whole world where it seems just to be darkness and filthiness and killing and murder and all sorts of stuff?

Believers can live confidently because this is not our final home. This is not our final home. I'm just a passing through.

[33 : 33] I don't know about you. we're moving on. We're moving on and upwards. So your hope is in the resurrection.

Your hope is in the resurrection of Jesus. How are you going to live this year? You don't know what's going to happen in your life. You don't know what you're going to have to face. Good things, bad things, great things, pleasurable things.

you don't know what you're going to face. How are you going to face it? Your hope is in the resurrection of Jesus. Your hope is in the return of Jesus Christ.

It might be this year. He is coming again. He said it. We believe it because we believe us and we're waiting for it and your hope is in the rewards that are in heaven.

So let's live. Let's live this year. Let's live it with eternity stamped on our brow. It's the only sure thing in life.

[34 : 46] You know Switzerland is a beautiful country. I was privileged to go there one time and just like they said it, it was true.

Just like the pictures portrayed it, it was true. I read this story somewhere that a tourist in Switzerland came to a beautiful villa whose garden ran down towards a lake and this tourist came to the wall and looked over into this garden that was manicured perfectly.

everything was exactly right. And next thing, who popped up? It was the gardener. And so the tourist said, I'm just admiring the beautiful garden.

Do you keep it like this? And he said, yes. And he said, is the person here who owns the place?

And they said, no. They said, well, when does he come? How often does he come? Well, I haven't seen him in the last 10 years. He hasn't been here. He comes sometimes, but when he does come, it's only for a short while and then he goes again.

[36 : 08] And so he said, wow, that's amazing and you keep this. You keep this like this every day?

Yes. You keep it like this in case he comes tomorrow? He said, no, I keep it like this in case he comes today.

How must you live your life? How must you face the year of 2017? You face it. You face it as if he's coming today.

Amen? Because he is coming for you. This is the beginning. Begin it with him in the right place, in charge of your life, on the throne of your heart and walk confidently with your God.

And you'll reach the end and you'll be able to say, thank you Lord, you're faithful, you've been faithful again, thank you. Let's pray together.

[37 : 21] Heavenly Father, thank you for your word, help your word to continue to get into our souls. As we leave this place in a moment, we pray that we'll leave here but remember the word.

That we'll leave here but that the word might move in our beings and that we might be kept by your power as we walk in the world through this year.

Take us and however long the year lasts, take us to the end and then into your presence forever and ever. Thank you, Jesus.

Amen. another part. Thank you.