

IN THE BEGINNING GOD

Genesis 1:1

INTRODUCTION

- There are many texts in the Bible that are highly offensive to people: verses that condemn sin and demand repentance, that tell us how we must live, that describe the torments of hell, etc.
- But of all the offensive texts in the Bible, it can be argued that Genesis 1:1 is the most offensive:
 - ✓ It assumes God is real
 - ✓ It presents God as preeminent over all things, including man
 - ✓ It presents God as sovereign Lord over the creation
 - ✓ It shows us that we are not gods
 - ✓ It shows us that we are not evolved animals, and therefore are not free to behave like animals
 - ✓ It shows that we are created with a purpose, determined by God, not us
 - ✓ It shows that this material, physical realm is not all there is
 - ✓ It shows us that truth and morality are not relative but absolute, defined by God, not us
 - ✓ It shows us that God has the right to deal with us as he pleases, whether we like it or not
 - ✓ It shows us that God does not need us, but we desperately need him
 - ✓ It declares that the same God who created us will one day judge us according to our works

- ✓ It shows the necessity of fleeing to Jesus Christ for salvation if we are to escape the wrath of God
- This is the opening verse of the Bible, and anyone who knows anything about writing knows how important the opening sentence is
- The opening verse of the Bible is the greatest opening sentence that has ever been penned
- It sums up the message and theme of the Bible
- The Bible's main theme is not man, redemption, heaven or hell, but God
- The message of the Bible can be summed up in one word: God
- From the opening words of the Bible, God declares himself as the Almighty Creator
- This statement presents God as the First, as the Preeminent, and teaches us that in all things, in our lives, our homes, our church, our nation, he must be the First and the Preeminent One
- Only then can we make sense of our existence and our purpose; only then can we understand how we are to live in this world
- Sadly, many people in our society today would not even be able to quote Genesis 1:1

Consider three truths revealed to us of God and his creation in this first verse of the Bible:

I. THE PERPETUITY OF GOD OUTSIDE OF HIS CREATION

A. Only God existed before the creation week

1. The creation marks the beginning of time, space and matter, and only God exists outside of this domain
2. Even the angels did not exist until they were made during the creation week

3. It is difficult for us, as created beings, confined within time and space, to comprehend anything that could exist outside of time and space, but God does

B. God is eternal

1. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Psalm 90:2)
2. "Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting." (Psalm 93:2)
3. "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." (Isaiah 44:6)
4. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy" (Isaiah 57:15)

C. God is *transcendent*

1. He exists outside and independently of his creation
2. He creates and sustains all things in the universe (Hebrews 1:3)
3. The universe exists by him, in him and for him, and he is to receive glory, honour and power from his creation (Revelation 4:11)
4. Being transcendent, God is unknown and unknowable to man unless he chooses to reveal himself to us (Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33-36)

D. God, as Trinity, enjoys eternal fellowship within the Godhead

1. Christ spoke of the glory he had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5)

2. Christ spoke of the love between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world (John 17:24)
 3. The Father, Son and Holy Ghost existed in eternity past in a state of perfect sufficiency and satisfaction
 4. The creation of the universe was not to meet any personal need of God, but rather to display his glory (Revelation 4:11)
- E. Before the creation, God had ordained the redemption of his people through the Son
1. The atoning sacrifice of Christ was “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:18-20; Revelation 13:8)
 2. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2-3)
 3. God “hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4)
 4. His salvation “was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:9-10)
 5. *“But we are not quite ready to leave that pre-creation situation, before the foundations of the earth were laid, when God dwelt alone, the uncreated Being; the Father in love with the Son, and the Son with the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost with the Father and the Son. God is the eternal God, dwelling in a tranquillity that had no beginning and that can have no ending. Now, you may note that I have not used the expression, “the pre-creation void.” Void is a good and useful word. When we do not know what else to say, we call it a void. But before the Creation, God was there and God is not a void. He is the triune God and He is all there is. In His existence before the creation, God was already there busy; busy with eternal mercies, His mind stirring with merciful thoughts and redemptive plans for mankind not yet created.”*
(A W Tozer)

II. THE POWER OF GOD IN FORMING HIS CREATION

A. God made all things from nothing in six days

1. The Hebrew word for “created” is *bara* which emphasizes initiation of something new
 - a. This verb is exclusively used with God as the subject, never man
 - b. The creation of Genesis 1:1 was not a reforming of matter that previously existed, but a bringing into existence of something totally new
 - c. “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” (Hebrews 11:3)
2. Man can manipulate the elements that already exist, but only God can create
3. The name *Elohim* (God) is used 32 times in Genesis 1, and describes the power, glory and majesty of God
4. The almighty, unlimited, inexhaustible power and of God in creating all things in the universe, both living and non-living, from nothing, in six days, is beyond our comprehension – “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.” (Psalm 145:3)
5. Likewise the wisdom of God that conceived and designed all the complexities of the creation is beyond our comprehension – “Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” (Psalm 147:5)

B. Space, matter and time were all created at this moment

1. The “heaven” denotes space, the “earth” denotes matter and the “beginning” denotes time
2. “The heavens and the earth” is a *merism*, a figure of speech where naming two poles includes everything between them

3. The heavens and earth in their original state were unformed and unfilled (v.2)
4. God would, over the course of six days, complete his work of creation
5. Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656) computed the date of creation as 4004 B.C. and this has been accepted as accurate by Christians until liberals in the 19th century, influenced by evolutionary error, began to doubt it

III. THE PURPOSE OF GOD FOR HIS CREATION

- A. The final word of Genesis 1 shows us the centrepiece of God's creation
 1. Starting with the transcendent God, then the creation of the vast universe, the focus narrows to this little planet called Earth
 2. From this point on, the rest of the Scripture is devoted to what takes place on earth
 3. How astonishing that in all the vastness of the universe, God sets his singular focus on earth
 4. For the atheist, the vastness of the universe testifies of the insignificance and purposeless of man
 - a. Bertrand Russell: *"A chance collocation of atoms on a minor speck of interstellar dust."*
 - b. Francis Bacon: *"Man now realises that he is an accident, that he is a completely futile being, that he has to play out the game without reason."*
 - c. Carl Sagan: *"Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves."*

5. In the 8th Psalm, David made a similar estimation of the smallness of mankind, but came to a very different conclusion: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:3-5)
6. Instead of concluding that man is nothing, with no purpose or meaning, David was overcome with humble amazement that God yet regards us, visits us, and exalts us – and in response renders praise unto God: “O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:9)
7. God in his loving providence has continually visited man, sustaining us and caring for us ever since he brought us into being
8. But the greatest expression of his regard for man was in his becoming a Man, taking upon himself human flesh
9. What a miracle of condescending love, that Almighty Creator would deign to enter his creation in the form of weak and frail human flesh!

B. God made the earth and made mankind for a purpose

1. To glorify and worship him (Isaiah 43:7; John 4:23; Acts 17:24-28)
2. To fellowship with him eternally (1 Corinthians 1:9; Revelation 21:3)

CONCLUSION

1. The truth that God is the Creator of all things is clear for all to see (Psalm 19:1-2; Romans 1:20)
2. The atheist rejects God, not because of the lack of evidence, but because he loves his sin (Psalm 14:1; John 3:19-20)
3. The Almighty God whose power made the heaven and earth is the same God who is able to save you from your sins, give you a new heart, and grant you life, joy and peace

4. The truth of Genesis 1:1 that each of us must take to ourselves personally is that God is preeminent and must take primacy in our lives
5. God demands first place, but so does the devil, and there is a battle going on for the “first things”
 - ✓ The first part of our lives (Ecclesiastes 12:1)
 - ✓ The first part of the day (Mark 1:35)
 - ✓ The first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2)
 - ✓ The first of our wealth (Proverbs 3:9-10)
6. Those who would give God first place must “first give their own selves to the Lord” (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)
7. Every problem that we face can be traced to our failure to surrender and submit to God
8. The only way to experience true peace, victory and blessing is to make the words “in the beginning God” as the foundation of your life
9. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33)
10. “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)