

Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning God Created the heavens and the earth”

'In the Beginning'

Well, it is certainly appropriate that the Book of Beginnings, Genesis, begins with those simple but profound words, **In the beginning**. In all honesty, the preparation for this message has been somewhat tortuous for your pastor this week because we will be dealing with a very profound question and concept that is at the heart of a contented life... And yet I fear the message could seem way too academic.

At bottom, I will be dealing with a question that will be asked at some point by most children: Yet at the same time it is one now being asked and used by many of the skeptics who are aggressively promoting atheism and attacking our faith...

- How we answer that question is important to our children if we want them to be properly grounded in the faith and important to all of us if we want to properly defend the faith.

So what is that question which a child will ask with those inquisitive eyes and innocent voice?

- Who made God?

This is also the question that is now being asked by today's atheists as a challenge to the intelligent design crowd which we will deal with as we move into the creation itself.

- The answer in both cases is the simple but profound statement that no one made God!

This morning we will show how this is clearly what the Bible teaches... but first allow me to deal with the major objections that will be raised by the skeptics who reject God & His revelation.

First and foremost we will be accused of using circular logic, saying that we know God has always existed because God says that He has always existed!

- They think they have found the splinter in our eyes but fail to see the board in their own...
- Today's materialists insist that matter has always existed because they say it has always existed!
- I trust we will come to see how truly large that board can be!

Many of the insights I will be sharing about these early chapters of Genesis are the result of studying the works of Francis Schaeffer for many years and I will often fail to give him proper credit or even realize I should be giving him credit!

- He certainly desires most of the credit for today's sermon!

One of the most important things that he taught me as a young Christian, which I hope to pass along to you, is the fact that when you come to the really BIG and important questions about life, there are really only a handful of actual answers. Let me illustrate this with the question before us: The question that this inquisitive child is really asking...

- What or who has always existed?

You will find that there are only three possible answers:

- 1) Everything came from nothing.
- 2) Everything has always existed as impersonal matter or energy as the materialists would claim.
- 3) Everything was created by a personal God who has always existed, as Christians believe.

Obviously the first choice makes no sense for the real world: IF everything in the beginning was absolutely nothing, then nothing would be what exists today. Thus no one can seriously hold this as their world view. There are many who try to say there is some sort of eternal dualism like the yin and yang or the so-called right and wrong in the Star Wars movies. Still in the end they must appeal to something behind the dualism to establish right or wrong or speak of a “dark side” of the force.

So we are left with choosing between an impersonal or a personal beginning!

- The impersonal beginning is obviously the consensus view of western man today!

And in the end it is the same with the Eastern thinking & religions.

When you go back far enough in the west or in the east, you come to an impersonal source.*[mention the alien dodge]*

And here is the problem of modern man... IF you begin with the impersonal you have no way to describe or account for what Dr. Schaeffer calls the form of the universe or the manishness of man. This is exactly what the Apostle Paul says of those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness in Romans chapter 1:

“what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”

We know that people suppress these great truths in unrighteousness, but at the same time we can and should sympathize with the tension they must live with day in and day out... They have no real basis for understanding or valuing personal relationships, they have no real basis for justice or even a way to give real meaning to any of their culture.

In our modern world, we have now taught several generations that they are nothing more than animals and YET we are always shocked when some act like animals. The inner torture goes even deeper when you consider how we insist that there is no god and that they have no ultimate purpose or meaning.

Listen again to the chilling world view attributed to Bertrand Russell one of the 20th Century’s most famous Humanists:

““That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man’s achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins... Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul’s habitation henceforth be safely built.”

Mr. Russell was admired for his skills in using logic & must be given credit for being brutally honest about the world view with an impersonal beginning...

But even he must in the end talk of a soul’s habitation and safety! *[Borrowed words!]*

Just as the bread and circuses helped to cover up the crumbling civilization that Rome had built on a similar foundation of sand, today we have our entertainment and noise to divert our attention away from the conclusions that Mr. Russell would drive us too.

As Christians, it can be so easy to just join in the fun, but to do so uncritically causes two major problems... Just as Israel was often led astray by the idols & religions of the nations around them, it is not long before the humanism of today undermines our faith... Just think about how the Church often mirrors the world, or even how the Book of Genesis is now treated in many seminaries & churches!

- And secondly if we do not see the despair of modern man properly we will lose our heart for the lost.

We will not desire to be those beautiful feet that Paul says will preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things to a needy world!

So let us return to that simple question of who made God and consider the Christian answer that must be given to the question of ultimate beginnings. The answer to this profound and fundamental question is given right here in the very first verse of the Scriptures...

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The Bible clearly states in the beginning God and thus our answer is quite simply, no one made God.

- God has always existed and more importantly has always existed as the Triune God revealed to us by Himself in the Scriptures.

Consider this from the great prayer that Jesus lifted up on the night that he was betrayed by His own disciples from John chapter 17 at verse 5: “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”

Jesus speaks of sharing glory with the Father before “in the beginning.” Not only did their glory exist before the beginning, but there was also love...

Later in that same prayer Jesus says in verse 24: “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

We spoke last week about how this Book of Beginnings would teach us the true meaning of many things including love and relationships. Love has true meaning and our relationships in this life have true meaning because they are rooted in the nature and character of God: Who has existed forever, from before the beginning!

Rather than trying to find safety for our soul in the cold dark reality of the silent and dying material universe as Bertrand Russell advocated...

- We are grounded in the safety of knowing the eternal glorious Triune God, who is love!

We must understand this contrast and we must allow the reality of this truth to go all the way down to the core of our being! I believe this is why the Apostle John begins his Gospel account in the same manner as Genesis chapter one:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

John makes it very easy to see Jesus here in Genesis 1:1: In Fact, the force of the Greek used by John might read something like, “in the beginning the Word already was, the Word was already with God and the Word was already God!

- Jesus as the 2nd Person of the Trinity was active in the creation we will study in the coming weeks!

As the Son of God, He has always existed with the Father and the Spirit.

We see the love and relationship of these persons of the Trinity before the beginning at many points in the New Testament...

In Ephesians chapter one the Apostle Paul declares, “3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”

- **Yes, brothers and sisters, we were chosen in Christ before the beginning and that should give us great comfort!**

God knew from before the beginning that the Son’s love would come at a great cost because we read in I Peter 1: “17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you 21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”

Paul writing to Titus also says that our promise of salvation came from before the beginning: “Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, 2 in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.”

- **A promise made before time began, before in the beginning.**

Paul also reminds young Timothy and all of us about this great truth when he says in II Timothy: “8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.”

And so the Book of Beginnings begins by teaching and reminding us that God has no beginning.

Genesis 1:1 clearly teaches that God created time and space, He created history and matter. Because they are created, time has a beginning, heaven has a beginning and the earth has a beginning.

- **Because they were created by an all-powerful, loving Triune God who has always existed, they have meaning and purpose!**

I hope that you can see that this is much more than just an academic discussion of an obscure philosophical question...

- **The devil and the world say that the ultimate reality is impersonal matter & chance.**
- **The Bible declares that in the beginning was the infinite God who is wisdom & love.**

Which you believe will not only likely determine your eternal state, but will become your foundation for all of life. This most profound truth should not only go down to the core of our being, but it should show forth in all that we do and say as Christians...

- **It means that we know there is a purpose to our life and the lives of those we relate too.**

We know love & sacrifice are real and thus all of our relationships have real meaning because they reflect how the Father Son and Holy Spirit have loved and related to each other from all eternity.

We know that we are more than the collective total of the chemicals that make up our bodies...

We know we are NOT part of the machine, the material universe which modern man says is all that exists.

We know that certain things are right and others wrong because they are in accordance with or contrary to the character of God, who is the ultimate reality & ONLY standard of justice.

- **We know that when God judges, there will be justice in the end!**

We know that history is going someplace and that we have a part to play in God's great plans.

Again, the Apostle Paul relates all of this to our Christian walk beautifully in his Epistle to the Church at Ephesus: After telling us we were chosen before the foundation of the world he continues to encourage the Saints: "7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

After this, the Apostle Paul brings forth a prayer for those Saints that we will ponder as we gather at The Table this morning...

I trust that as we continue on in our study of this Book of Beginnings you will see why this foundational truth is so important to our contentment in this life: Only when we understand who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth will we be able to fully rest in His presence.

And of course, if we are serious about going on the offensive that is needed to put today's aggressive atheists in their place, we must begin on the proper foundation!

- **That foundation is the Triune God, who has always existed and that is where we must always begin!**
- **All others are sinking sand!**

As we consider this great truth let us heartily respond with the singing of Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise where we will sing in part: Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days, almighty, victorious Thy great name we praise.

Let us pray...

Communion Meditation: Ephesians 1

"Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."