

“In the Beginning, God...” (Part 2) – Genesis 1:1

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.welovethegospel.com.]

Take your Bible and find your way to page 1....Or Genesis 1, if you prefer...

Last week we began a sermon series that aims to take us from Genesis 1 to 11, called “Paradise Lost.” I warned you that we were going to take our time on the opening chapters because they are foundational for understanding the story of Scripture as a whole. The better we can understand the beginning of the story (as the author intended it), the better we will understand the point of the story. So we are going to linger.

For that reason, last Sunday, we considered the first half of the first verse of Genesis. Really we considered just one word from that verse, but it’s the most important word—*God*. As I tell you regulars all the time, the most important question we can ask of any text is: What does it teach us about God? As it turns out, this short and familiar verse has far-reaching implications for our theology proper, that is, for what we believe about God Himself.

Today, we continue that conversation. We are still asking that same question about this same verse. And, truth be told, we will do so again next week, Lord willing, and even after those three weeks, when we move on, we will have barely scratched the surface.

So having calibrated your expectations on our pace, let’s do the most important thing and read the text once more. I know it’s just one verse (and a familiar verse at that), but ask God to give you fresh eyes to see why this verse matters for your life. Take a look at the first verse as I read it...

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

As I mentioned last week, these sermons, in a sentence, aim to show that God is the One, eternal, transcendent, personal Creator of all. To that end, last Sunday, we considered two things from this verse, namely, that...

God Simply Is

God Is Eternal

To these I want to add three truths that are tethered to this opening verse and reinforced in the pages that follow. They are all quite important. And together they distinguish the biblical worldview from most of the competing worldviews in fashion around the world. So in other words, the truths about God we will consider and glean from Genesis 1:1 today are essential to a Christian worldview. Let’s begin with this one...

God Is One

In the beginning, God. Not the gods. One God, not many. This stands in stark contrast to the religious view that dominated the world the first readers inhabited. They had been enslaved in Egypt their whole lifetime, and, indeed, for centuries before that. The Egyptians worshiped many gods. And these gods were identified with natural features in the world at large, like the sun, moon, and the Nile.

But in contrast to this, these Hebrews are being told that theirs is the One true God in existence. More than that, God has recently, before the eyes of these readers, handily and systematically demonstrated His sovereign might over the very things the Egyptians worship and called gods. Now He reveals to those He has delivered that He is the God who created the very objects of Egyptians worshiped. And, in contrast to other creation accounts that we know of from the ancient world, He did so “solely by His powerful word, not in collaboration or conflict with any other deities.”¹

This God who rescued them has revealed Himself to them: “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one*” (Deut 6:4). He is both their Creator and Redeemer, who invites them now to “*love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might*” (6:5). He is the One true God. Not just of Israel, but of all.

We need this message every bit as much today, surrounded, as we are, by militant pluralism, which insists on the acceptance of every belief system as true, and even subtle polytheism, which is accepting of false worship. We must not “retreat” from these truths into either “societal disengagement” or “societal compromise.” Our God “is not one of many, but the unique and only.”² And He is, therefore, worthy of our absolute worship and allegiance, and will settle for nothing less. We’ll come back to that thought...

And yet, as is often pointed out, “even in this first chapter of the Bible there is a hint of complexity to his oneness.”³ They are, as it were, hidden in plain sight. For instance, the word that stands behind the English word “God” is the Hebrew *Elohim*.⁴ Technically this word is in a plural form even though it describes a singular being. That’s weird to us because we don’t do that in English. We use plural forms (perhaps exclusively) for plural things. Not so in Hebrew. In Hebrew, when “a singular object is characterized by a quality to such [a massive] extent” the word can be expressed in the plural to communicate that greatness. So here, in Genesis 1:1, the word *Elohim* expresses the greatness of God—the Godness of God, you might say. In fact, scholars usually refer to this as “the plural of majesty” or the “honorific plural.”⁵ This is often compared to the so-called “royal ‘we’” that characterizes the speech of a king or queen today.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking. You’re thinking, “How then do we know that Genesis is claiming that God is One. I mean, if it’s a plural form, then perhaps Genesis could have been claiming that multiple gods stood behind the creation account.” Quite easily actually. We know it refers to the One true God because the verb it takes in the sentence (“created”) is in singular form. He [singular] created. Elsewhere when the word is used of “gods” (plural) the verb is plural as well (along with other potential modifiers and pronouns). Therefore, it’s actually not ambiguous at all in Hebrew, though it’s easy to understand why native English speakers would think it would be.

It’s also easy to understand why some—this side of the Cross of Christ and this side of further biblical revelation on God’s Triune nature—might wonder if the “plurality” embedded in the term for this singular God, *Elohim*, might hint at the doctrine of the Trinity. We know, as the New Testament tells us, that God the Son was instrumental in bringing creation into existence. John tells us, for instance, that “*in the beginning*” it was “*through [the Son of God] that all things were made*” and “*without him nothing was made that has been made*” (John 1:1-3; NIV). Similarly, Paul writes of the Son that it was “*by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together*” (Col. 1:16-17). We also see “*the Spirit of God*” active in verse 2 of Genesis (cf. Job 33:4). So we can’t fully understand what has been revealed about creation without taking into account the doctrine of the Trinity, which states, on the basis of Scripture, that the One true God—the Creator of all—eternally exists in three persons (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) and these persons—fully and completely God—are not identical, though completely equal in attributes, each with the same divine nature. Each active in creation.

Perhaps, in light of the fullness of Biblical revelation, God intended to hint at the unique complexity of His Oneness by calling Himself *Elohim* in Genesis 1:1. And perhaps further hints of this may be detected, not only

in the next verse that mentions the Spirit, but even later in the chapter when, on day six of creation, God said, “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*” (Gen. 1:26). While some of the Jews understood this in terms of a heavenly counsel of God and angels (cf. Job 1), would it not be more likely, knowing what we know now, to see this as an early clue that God is one God in three persons? A Tri-unity? After all, it is not in the image of God *and* the angels that we are said to be created. It is the image of God Himself (1:27; cf. 9:6).

Maybe you are thinking that all this feels a bit like splitting hairs. I can assure you it is not. The doctrine of the Trinity, as it relates to creation, has at least two significant implications for our way of life and thinking. The first is one I have already mentioned. It explains why true worship is always monotheistic, meaning the object of true worship is only ever the One true God. Erik Thoennes (pronounced: “Taw-ness”) captures this well:

“Because there is only one God, idolatry of any kind is evil, foolish, wrong, and harmful. Worship of other ‘gods’ robs the true God of the devotion and glory he alone deserves. Idolatry can take many forms. Idols are not only man-made objects but are *anything* allowed to compete with God for ultimate loyalty. According to Jesus, money can become an idol: ‘You cannot serve God and money’ (Matt. 6:24). Greed, lust, and impurity can also become indicators of idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). Idolatry is foolish, deceptive, and dangerous—and may even involve demonic activity (1 Cor. 10:19–20).

Because there is only one God, he alone should be the ultimate object of the believer’s affections. He alone deserves absolute allegiance and obedience. The Great Commandment that follows the *Shema* is the obvious implication of monotheism: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might’ (Deut. 6:5). The one true God deserves all we are and have. He deserves wholehearted love because nothing compares with him.”⁶

So you see, the fact that there is One God matters a great deal for your life and the design of your life. We can rebel against this truth and its implications, but only to our own detriment.

But the fact that the Creator of all things is the Triune God also informs how we think about the *why* of creation. At the very least, this truth rules out some common assumptions or suggestions as to why God created. He didn’t create because He was bored. He didn’t create because He was lonely. That’s sometimes the impression that people give off when they describe *why* God created. But these suggestions couldn’t be further from the truth. They may flow from the belief that the creator God is one, but not from the belief that He is Triune.

The God who is should never be thought of as being lonely. He has always been and will forever be God in three persons. So there is a perfect fellowship within God. He is love (1 John 4:16). He didn’t need to create something to be loving. He is love. Perfect love has been expressed by the person of the Godhead for all of eternity. He doesn’t need us. He wasn’t lonely. Perfect relationship exists between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He has perfect fellowship within Himself. So He didn’t create because He was longing for some relationship to complete Him. He has no needs, in fact, so He was under no necessity to create. And this relates to the aseity of God. “When we speak of God’s aseity we mean that God is complete within Himself, dependent on nothing, and that creation adds nothing to Him.”⁷ He is self-sufficient. He is self-existent.

Moses, the author, had God’s self-sufficiency and self-existence impressed upon his mind from the moment He first encountered the Lord. Moses was tending the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro when he spotted a bush that “*was burning, yet it was not consumed*” (Exod. 3:2). Why would God appear to Moses in this way? To communicate something about His nature to Moses. One commentator explains it like this:

“There are no analogies for the being of God in nature, so God presented a supernatural analogy in the bush that burned but was not burned up. Just like the God who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, the blazing fire did not have an evident source and was not dependent on created materials. God’s nature, likewise, is self-existent and self-sufficient.”⁸

Like a fire that burns without fuel and thus without consuming the bush, so God requires nothing to exist. He just is. He is not contingent on anything. He is self-existent and self-sufficient in Himself. And that being the case, there was no internal deficiency or external compulsion that drove Him to create.⁹ He doesn't need us. He was not some lonely, lovesick deity. So whatever the reason for His creating us—a topic we will explore at a later date—it cannot have been because something was lacking within Himself.

But in noting what we have so far—that God simply is, and that God is eternal, and that God is One—we are seeing, at every step, that God is utterly unique. There is no one like Him. Which leads us to the next truth...

God Is Transcendent

What does it mean to speak of God as transcendent? The term transcendent is used to capture the idea that God is both greater than anything in creation and independent of every created thing.¹⁰ He is above, separate, other than, and distinct from all that He has made. As the song of Moses asks, “*Who is like you, O Lord...? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?*” (Exod 15:11). The answer is no one.

As we saw last time—when considering God's eternity—God existed before the stuff of the material world. That's part of the point of verse 1—“*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” The expression, “*heavens and the earth,*” is called a “merism” in literary circles. It's a rhetorical device that joins together two or more things—usually extremes—as a way of summarizing everything in between. So this expression simply means that God created everything (as the rest of Scripture reiterates time and time again).

So right out of the gate these Hebrews are being shown that God, their Creator, is uncreated. There is, therefore, a distinction between the Creator and the creation. One such distinction is what we noted last week—God is eternal, and the stuff of the cosmos is not. God had no beginning. The world did. “The world came into being because God created, God said, God saw, God made a distinction, God called, God made, God put, God blessed, God finished, God made sacred, [and] God stopped,” as we will see a bit later in this chapter.¹¹

But, as D. A. Carson notes, if the eternal “God made everything that is non-God,” then this “means that everything in the universe apart from God is finally dependent upon God.”¹² That must be recognized. It implies that “God stands *outside* of His creation; He is *other* than His creation; He is *above* His creation.”¹³ There is a fundamental distinction between the Creator and the creation.

Perhaps the Creator-creature distinction seems obvious to you, but I assure you it's often forgotten and confused. The first readers of Genesis were told in the second commandment that they must not make an idol in the form of “*anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth*” (Exod. 20:4). Why? Because to do so is to forget this Creator-creation distinction. Indeed, that is the heart of idolatry, as Paul reiterated in Romans 1. He says that “*the wrath of God*” is poured out on the ungodly and unrighteous (Rom. 1:18). Why?

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.” (Romans 1:21-22)

The heart of idolatry is a failure to recognize or live in light of this Creator-creature distinction. If God made everything, then to worship any created thing is to demean God. And God takes it seriously. He takes offense (as He should). His wrath is revealed because people have rejected this distinction. “Thus, the creation

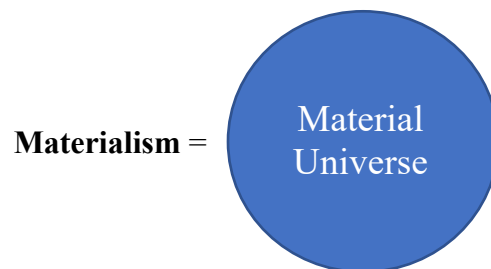
[account] makes God the Creator the focus of our worship and reminds us of our status as creatures.”¹⁴ We must never forget this. We must never forget that He is above, separate, other than, and distinct from all that He has made. In short, He is transcendent.

This both warns us and comforts us. It warns us because, as we saw with God’s Oneness, the transcendent God deserves our worship and obedience. “As Creator of all, God is Lord of all.”¹⁵ We cannot acknowledge Him as Creator and rightly dismiss His right to rule. The logic of the psalmist should be our own:

“For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. ⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. ⁵ The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. ⁶ Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! ⁷ For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts...” (Psalm 95:3-8a)

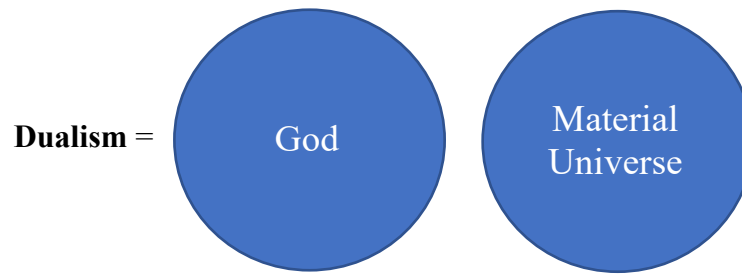
The psalmist grasped the implication of Genesis 1:1. If God made it, then it belongs to Him. If it belongs to Him, then He has authority over it. When we recognize this, we bow the knee before our Maker, and we don’t harden our heart when we hear His voice. The psalmist is showing us, as Graeme Goldsworthy suggests, that “the Christian doctrine of the authority of Scripture has its roots in the Creation.” We listen to the Word of God because the God who created by His Word also created us. Therefore, He has absolute authority over us and what He says must judge the thoughts and hearts of men and women, not the other way around. “God’s Word created what is and must interpret what is.”¹⁶ We created nothing, and are dependent on Him for everything. He is transcendent, not us. He is Creator. He is distinct from His creation.

And this shapes the Christian worldview. Indeed, it distinguishes the biblical worldview not only from competing worldviews in the day of the first readers of Genesis, but in our day as well. Genesis 1:1, in making a clear distinction between the Creator and creation rules out, for instance, materialism, which, as I mentioned last week, believes that nothing exists except for matter and its movements and modifications (a faith claim). But if the material world is all there is, then this means that this worldview has no place for God. Thus materialism, not surprisingly, is the most common philosophy of unbelievers in the West. We could represent it like this (where the shape[s] represent what is):

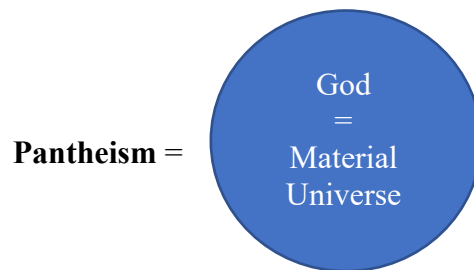


Christians should not embrace materialism because it contradicts Genesis 1:1. However, as Wayne Grudem laments, “Christians today who focus almost the entire effort of their lives on earning more money and acquiring more possessions become ‘practical’ materialists in their activity, because their lives would be not much different if they did not believe in God at all.”¹⁷

The opening verse of Genesis also rules out most dualistic belief systems, which suggest that both God and the material universe (which I am using as shorthand for all that is) are co-eternal.¹⁸

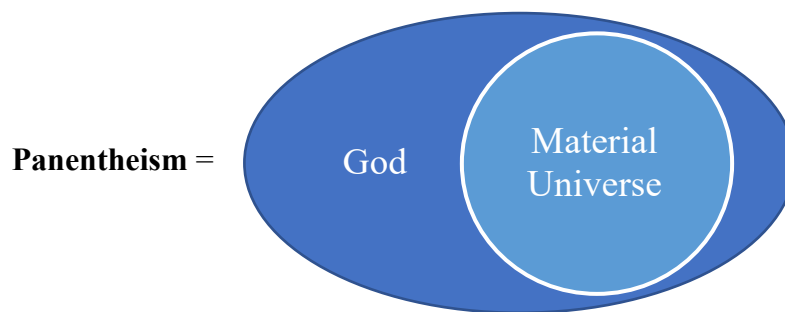


But dualism is incompatible with Genesis 1:1, which clearly states that the material universe had a beginning. The Creation account is also incompatible with pantheism. What is this? Pantheism is the belief that “the universe is made of the same substance as God and is thus divine.”¹⁹ The universe, in other words, is indistinguishable from God.



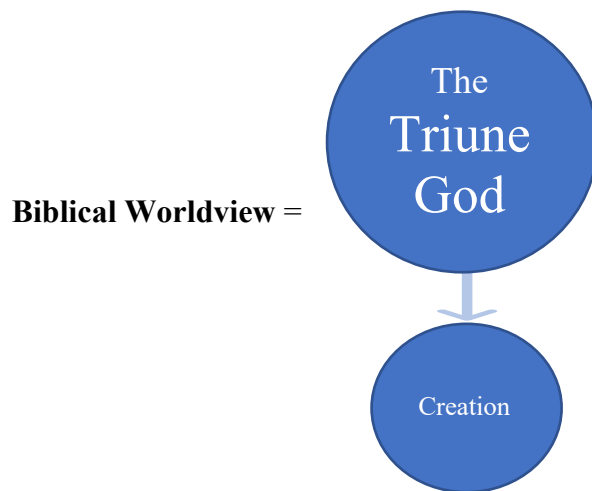
Often this leads many pantheists to conclude that the spirit (or mind) is all there is, rejecting the reality of material, arguing that it is merely an illusion. Hinduism holds to pantheism. The Enlightenment philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) was another famous advocate. It can also be detected in many New Age movements of our day. But it is incompatible with the opening verse of Genesis.

Pantheism can be distinguished from Panentheism (cf. process theology), which believes that God can be distinguished from the universe, but is also in everything that makes up the universe.



In this worldview, God is not sovereign and, in fact, needs the cosmos. The world and God are mutually dependent on one another. There are quite a few theists (i.e., people who believe in a god) from within the scientific community that hold this worldview, including Philip Clayton and Author Peacocke.²⁰ But this too does not square with the teaching of Genesis either, because it forces us to deny God’s transcendence and confuses creation with God (among other things).

So what is the worldview of Genesis 1:1? Of course, a graphic doesn't really capture it, but this will have to do:



[Again, the shapes represent distinctions, not proportions, except to say that God is greater than all He has made]. What this image means to communicate is that God and creation are distinct from one another. God is in every way greater than and far above what He has created (i.e., He is transcendent). And all His creation is dependent on Him, not the reverse. This is the only view that is compatible with the opening verse of Genesis, and the creation account at large. This is the proper way to conceive of God's transcendence.

But remember earlier how I said that God's transcendence also can prove to be a comfort to us? How so? How does it comfort us? Well, Daniel Darling, reflecting on the fact that God transcends His creation, provides one example when he writes,

"I don't know about you, but this gives me comfort in a world gone mad. To know that there is a God who is above the messiness of this world and yet is driving history toward a conclusion. I find it comforting to know something besides me is in charge, that I'm not the master of my fate, the captain of my soul. American religion is funny in that we act like we want a God we can reduce to our size, a God who overlooks our flaws and blesses our indiscretions. We want a God we can shape and shift. But is this really what we want? A God who is limited by our limitations, a God who is subject to our fears and captive to our whims? When we whisper those desperate prayers at night, when we plead with God at the bedside of a loved one, when we pray over our children, we are praying to a God we need to be bigger than we are. A big God, a God I can't understand, a God I see with a holy awe, is a God whom I can trust is managing a world I cannot control, a God who can uphold the universe as I lay my head on my pillow and as I send my children out into the world and as I huddle in the darkness during a violent storm."²¹

The transcendence of God, you see, can be a great comfort to us. And this leads us to the last point I want us to consider today. Not only is the One Creator God transcendent, but also (and this is very good news for us)...

God Is Personal

I appreciate what Richard Phillips writes about this:

"Genesis 1:1 not only pulls our thoughts infinitely upwards in contemplating God's transcendence, but also draws our hearts near to a personal God who is *imminent*. The very fact that 'in the beginning, God created,' indicates that he wills to be known and possess a relationship with beings outside of himself. The reason for this is that God is *personal* as well as transcendent."²²

If this doesn't blow your mind in amazement, it can only be because you have either an inflated view of self or an inaccurate view of God.

From the very first verse of the Bible we are given the impression that "God is involved and invested in His creation."²³ He is personal. Could we have personhood if He wasn't? It is difficult to imagine how something impersonal (like matter) could convey personhood, so some believe that "the greatest proof of God's personal nature is our own self-awareness."²⁴ We won't trace that philosophical rabbit today. But we should remember why the first audience of Genesis believed God to be personal. When they read Genesis they were learning that the Creator was none other than the God who took interest in their distress in Egypt. He delivered them from bondage by His grace. Communicated with them. Loved them. Covenanted with them. Sustained them in the wilderness. His transcendence, then, did not negate His personal care.

What a comfort! We too can say with the psalmist,

"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2)

The Creator God is the one who helps us. The Almighty God who spoke the world into existence is the one who hears our prayers. Who then shall we fear? No wonder, the Apostle Paul grounds our salvation hope in God's supremacy over all creation:

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

If the Hebrews with Moses had reason to be assured that the unfathomably great God cared deeply for them personally, how much more do we for whom Christ has come? Their liberation from Egypt was but a shadow of the liberation from sin we are offered freely in Jesus Christ. The lamb slaughtered on that first Passover that they might live was but a shadow of the One whom John the Baptist heralded as "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" (John 1:29). The blood He shed on the cross for us—in our place—was infinitely more precious than that of any lamb in Egypt for it belonged to God's own Son, sent to die that we might live. When they remembered how they walked through the waters of judgment on dry ground and unscathed, how could they deny that God was gracious and merciful toward them? And how can we when we consider the cup of God's judgment poured out on Jesus when He took upon Himself our sin that we who believe might be clothed in His righteousness. If the Creator God of Genesis 1 "*did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?*" (Rom. 8:38-39). Is there any greater proof of God's love than the sending of His very Son to lay down His life in the place of sinners (John 15:13)?

So when these Hebrews read of the Almighty Creator of Genesis 1, they had no reason to doubt that this One, eternal, transcendent Creator was a personal God, for their history demonstrated His personal interest in them, His grace and His mercy. And if that is true for them, then how much more for us, who exist this side of the Cross of Christ to which every one of their experienced graces ultimately pointed?

And this is what makes the Gospel of Jesus Christ so beautiful. It is beautiful because the God at the heart of the Gospel is so beautiful. Though we have rebelled against our Creator—committing cosmic treason, worthy of death—He gave His Son. He gave. And by His Son—His perfect life, His atoning death on the cross, His victorious resurrection—any sinner who would turn from sin (repentance) and to Christ (faith), trusting in Him alone to save, would find Him to be merciful. He forgives the sin of those who come to Christ in faith. He credits Christ's own righteousness to your spiritual accounts so that you are counted as righteous in His sight. He adopts you into His family. He makes us new and gives us enduring hope in life and in death. And now we

live for Him, our Creator and Redeemer. And in our distress we turn to Him, confident of grace and mercy, because He is both Almighty Creator and Personal Redeemer.

So I commend Christ to you, as every week, as your only hope in life and death. Trust in Him as Savior. Follow Him as Lord. And if you have, then live in step with the song of those elders in Revelation, who cried out in a new song:

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:11)

And of the Lamb who saved you:

“Worthy are you...for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation....Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and might and honor and glory.” (Revelation 5:9, 12)

And with the those gathered around the throne, we say “Amen!” (Rev. 5:14).

To be continued...

Let’s pray...

¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Old Testament in Seven Sentences: A Small Introduction to a Vast Topic* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019), 15.

² Ian Hamilton, “Creation: The Essential Setting for Proclaiming Christ,” in *Theology for Ministry: How Doctrine Affects Pastoral Life and Practice*, eds. William R. Edwards, John C. A. Ferguson, and Chad Van Dixhoorn (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2022), 54.

³ D. A. Carson, *The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God’s Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 19.

⁴ I don’t want to get us too deep into the weeds of Hebrew grammar, but you might remember me telling you in the past that ancient Hebrew does not have punctuation or capital letters. So if you want to put emphasis on a word or phrase you cannot do the sorts of things we do in English—like inserting an exclamation point (!), or writing something in all CAPITAL letters, or even *italicizing* a word on your computer’s word processor. In Hebrew one must draw attention to words or put stress on concepts in different ways. One way the Hebrew language accomplishes this is by repeating words. We saw an example of this just a few weeks ago from Isaiah 6, where before God’s throne the six-winged seraphim cried out, “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty*” (Isa 6:3; NIV). That repetition is meant to put linguistic stress on the concept of God’s holiness. It is the way these angelic figures call attention to God’s holiness. Other things are “holy,” but God alone is “Holy, Holy, Holy!” Uniquely Holy. Majestic in His holiness.

Another way to accomplish this kind of stress in Hebrew is to present certain words in plural form, which is what we have in the opening verse of Genesis. Remember the word for God used there? *Elohim*. Compare that with the word I mentioned a second ago from Isaiah 6, seraphim. The ending of both of those words—the “eem” sound—signals the plural form. In Isaiah 6, the word is plural because there are multiple angelic figures worshipping before God’s throne. In Genesis 1:1 the word is plural for an entirely different reason, as discussed next in the sermon.

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- ⁵ John D. Currid, *Genesis, Volume*, EPSC (Leyland: EP Books, 2003, 2015), 57-58.
- ⁶ Erik Thoennes, "An Overview of Biblical Doctrine," in *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2513.
- ⁷ Kenneth D. Keathley and Mark F. Rooker, *40 Questions about Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2014), 29.
- ⁸ Richard D. Phillips, *The God of Creation: Truths and Gospel in Genesis 1* (Evangelical Press, 2018), 36.
- ⁹ James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 298-299.
- ¹⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 1526.
- ¹¹ John Goldingay, *Genesis*, BCOTP (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 41-42.
- ¹² Carson, *The God Who Is There*, 19.
- ¹³ Daniel Darling, *The Characters of Creation: The Men, Women, Creatures, and Serpent Present at the Beginning of the World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2022), 12.
- ¹⁴ Tremper Longman III, *Genesis*, SGBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 39.
- ¹⁵ Vaughn Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2002), 29.
- ¹⁶ Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Goldsworthy Trilogy* (Paternoster, 2017, 2022), 58-59.
- ¹⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 344. Some of the figures that I am using are also adaptations from his work (*ibid.*, 344-347).
- ¹⁸ There are various ways this could be conceived, but generally it holds that there are two ultimate forces, generally seen as in conflict with one another. Star Wars would be one example of a dualistic worldview, that pits good and evil as equal "forces" duking it out for supremacy. Many dualistic worldviews prize the spiritual and demonize the material, denying that the universe was created inherently good. This worldview is incompatible with what we find in Genesis 1 for obvious reasons, not least of which God's own assessment of what He created ("it was good") and, as we saw last week, God's creation came into existence at the beginning and thus is not eternal.
- ¹⁹ Keathley and Rooker, *40 Questions about Creation and Evolution*, 37.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ Darling, *The Characters of Creation*, 19-20.
- ²² Phillips, *The God of Creation*, 26-27.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.