

Genesis & A Biblical Worldview

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, May 13, 2012

Introduction

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God

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Creation

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Man

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Sin

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Grace

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Culture

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Purpose

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In the Beginning--God!

The Book of Genesis is the book of beginnings. It's the right place to start in establishing a truly biblical worldview. And if the first book is the book of beginnings, then its first verse is the foundational verse of that book--and, indeed, the foundational verse for our worldview. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).¹ As someone has well-said, if we accept this first verse of the Bible as true, then we will have no problem accepting everything else that the Bible affirms.

I. WHAT DOES THIS FIRST VERSE DECLARE TO US?

- A. It declares to us a "when". The phrase "In the beginning" is the translation of one single Hebrew words *bereshith*. The "beginning" that is spoken of is meant to be understood by us, however, to strictly refer to the created universe--and not of God Himself, Who is eternal. It should be seen in the light of John 1:1-3; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."
- B. It declares to us a "Who". The word that is used is *Elohim*. Even though the intention of this word is to express a singular Being, it is plural in nature. "What is so striking about this great theological truth is that God . . . is introduced simply as the one who existed before anything in our universe. The plural form of the word, a specialized use of the plural to signify his majestic potentialities, adds to the emphasis on his sovereign power."² Colossians 1:16-17 (as does the first three verses of John) tells us that Jesus Christ, in His preincarnate glory, was co-Creator with the Father: "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."
- C. It declares to us a "how". The word "created" is the perfect form of the Hebrew word *bara*; and "is used in Scripture exclusively for the activity of God. . . . Humans may make . . . , form . . . , or build . . . ; to the Hebrew, however, God creates. The verb does not in and of itself mean creation out of nothing; it basically means to produce something new, fresh, and perfect. In this verse the verb refers to the activities of the six days to follow."³
- D. It declares to us a "what". In the original language, the word for "heavens" is a plural noun, "and can be translated either 'heaven' or 'heavens,' depending on the context and on whether it is associated with a singular or plural verb."⁴ Given the context of what follows, it clearly speaks of what we would call "space". "Earth" refers to the matter from which the earth in its present form would later be organized. "At the time of the initial creation, there were no other planets, stars, or other material bodies in the universe; nor did any of them come into being until the fourth day. The earth itself originally had no form to it (Genesis 1:2); so this verse must speak essentially of the creation of the basic elements of matter, which thereafter were to be organized into the structured earth and later into other material bodies."⁵ The combination of these two words--"the heavens and the earth"--signifies the whole of the created universe.⁶

II. WHAT ARE ITS IMPLICATIONS WITH RESPECT TO GOD HIMSELF?

- A. This one verse declares God's existence boldly and clearly. It stands in opposition to a whole host of alternative worldviews; and a moment's reflection would show just how significant that makes this verse to be! If it is true, for example, then *atheism* cannot be true; because it affirms that there is a God. Likewise, various forms of *polytheism* (the belief that there are many gods) cannot be true; since it declares the all-encompassing creative work of but *one* God. Various forms of *pantheism* (the belief that God and the universe are identical; or that all is God) cannot be true; because it declares that God existed *before* all that is made and *is distinct from* it. *Materialism* (the belief that that physical matter is the only reality --such as in Carl Sagan's famous declaration, "The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be") cannot be true, because it declares that the material universe was made *by* God, had a beginning, and is not its own cause. *Philosophic humanism* (the belief that man is the measure of all things) cannot be true, because it declares that God created *all* things--including man.
- B. Note that this verse does not attempt to prove the basic proposition that there is a God. The Bible *does* use arguments for His existence, however. We can even find the basic elements of the classical philosophic arguments for the existence of God in Scripture. For example, the *Cosmological* argument (the argument that the universe is an effect that requires a Cause) can be found in Isaiah 40:26 and Romans 1:20. The *Teleological* argument (the argument that order and design suggests an orderly Designer) can be found in Psalm 19:1-6 and Acts 14:15-17. The *Anthropological* argument (that the moral, intellectual and volitional nature of man requires a Source that is also moral, intellectual and volitional) can be found in Psalm 94:8-11, 139:13-16, Acts 17:24-29 and Romans 2:14-15. But even though these arguments are found in the Bible--and as helpful as they may be--the Bible doesn't depend on them. Its foundational verse simply assumes and asserts God's existence. It therefore gives us the basic "presupposition" of the Bible and of our entire worldview--both by content and by example.

III. HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO ITS DECLARATION?

- A. First and foremost, our response should be to humble ourselves and worship our Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). "Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture" (Psalm 100:1-3). He truly owns exclusive Creator-rights to all that we are and have.
- B. But then, we should make sure to make this declaration the very beginning-point of all our believing and reasoning about the universe around us. And we should defend it as the only proper beginning-point before others. As Paul wrote in Romans 1:18-20; "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 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 . . ."

¹All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

²Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), p. 105.

p. 40.

³Ross, pp. 105-106.

⁴Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987),

⁵Morris, p. 41.

⁶Ross, p. 106.