

# **The Creator of the Cosmos**

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**Genesis 1:1**

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We're going to begin a new preaching series this weekend, and that series is on Genesis: In the Beginning. Genesis: In the Beginning. So with that in mind, I want to invite and encourage you today to open your Bibles with me to the Book of Beginnings, Book of Genesis, chapter number 1. I'll just tell you, yesterday I was trying to be helpful. So I grabbed one of the blue bibles that we pass out, and I thought, "I'm going to let them know the page number that will be on." Only to quickly realize that that page is, of course, number one. So if you're looking for your spot in scripture today, page one is where we will be. As you're turning there, I do think it's important as we begin this new series to spend just a few minutes discussing the value and the significance, particularly of the Old Testament. Especially in our 21st-century world, there are a few myths about the Old Testament that are quite simply erroneous and misplaced assumptions about the first 39 books of the Bible.

Sadly, these aren't just assumptions or made by skeptics or unbelievers, but these are assumptions made by a great many professing Christians as well. For example, some will say that the Old Testament is insignificant. We see God send Jesus in the New Testament, they'll say, "That's the church age. So we really don't need the Old Testament anymore. It's insignificant to us." Some will say that the Old Testament is irrelevant. "The Old Testament is about God's dealings with Israel" they'll say, "so why should we care about that?" Some will claim that it's inconsistent. "The God of the Old Testament was harsh and ruled with an iron fist." They'll say, "But the God of the New Testament is full of grace and compassion. It's just all about love. Therefore, the two don't seem to add up." And then still others will say that the Old Testament is incomprehensible. It's too difficult for us to really understand. Too much confusion. It's too overwhelming. It's filled with a bunch of history, with places and names that we can't even begin to pronounce.

But what we need to recognize if we're here today and hold to any of those misconceptions is that what we're actually saying is something very unhealthy about the nature of God's Word itself. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that all scripture, and keep in mind that it was inspired by God prior to the entire New Testament canon being completed, all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for a reproof, for correction, and for training and righteousness. So that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

So it's not just the New Testament, but it's God's Word in its completeness and totality that has been breathed out by God, which is comprised of both the old and the New Testament, and which is a gift from the hands of our God to us as His people. So we need to make sure as we begin today that our attitude and perspective, particularly on the Old Testament, is in line with

the attitude and perspective of the Lord. There's really no place to see that more clearly demonstrated than in the person of Jesus Christ, who was and is God in the flesh.

So what do we find when we look to Jesus and hear His perspective on the Old Testament? Well Jesus often shared that the Old Testament scriptures actually testify of Him. A familiar place for us is in the Gospel of John, chapter 5. We know the Jews attempted to get over on Jesus by appealing to the authority of Moses. You might recall the way Jesus responded. He said, "If you believed Moses, then you would believe Me. Why? Because Moses wrote of Me." And so as we think about this periodic journey that we will be on through the first 11 chapters of Genesis, not only do we need to recognize the great significance, relevance, and overall consistency of the Old Testament, especially in its relationship to the New, but we also need to do away with the natural tendency that is often true of Christians in our day. That tendency is to look at a particular biblical account or text of scripture and ask ourselves the question, "What does this passage say about me?"

Again, there's nothing wrong with certain secondary considerations, but I think what often happens when we see these type of so-called heroes of the faith, many of which are found in Genesis, men like Abraham, Joseph, or Noah, we tend to fall into one of two extremes. Either we plug ourselves into the biblical account and over spiritualize it, making ourselves the hero of the story and thereby completely missing the point. Or we look at the great achievements and the victories that have been won by the Lord throughout redemptive history using particular people, and we conclude, "I just need to try harder to be like that." Again, there's a place for personal application, but what our primary focus and question needs to be as we walk our way through Genesis 1 through 11 is this, "How does this passage of scripture testify of Christ? How does this passage of scripture help me to better know the character and the attributes of God and who He has called me to be? So not what does this text say about me primarily, but how does it point me to Him?"

I loved how one Old Testament scholar put it. He said, "Show me a church without a good appreciation of the Old Testament and of biblical theology, and I will show you a church with a weak understanding of the gospel." So with that in mind, it is my hope and goal, as we begin today in the Book of Genesis, that we will approach God's Word with the right mindset and the right focus, and that by God's grace we will grow in our understanding of Him and His character and of His redemptive plan in and through Jesus Christ. As we seek to do just that, I'll ask now that you stand with me for the reading of God's Word from Genesis chapter 1, and we're just going to be reading one verse, verse 1, which is also the verse that begins. Keep in mind all of scripture. So Genesis 1:1, and there God's Word reads, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

You may be seated as we pray together. Father, what a joy and truly a privilege it is to bow at Your feet and to open your Word, genuinely seeking to hear from You in Your Word. I thank You for this group who is gathered together today in Your name, who have their Bibles open and are ready to hear from You. So I pray, Lord, that You would meet us where we are, that You

would do a great work in our midst, that You would come alongside us and give us a greater understanding and ears to hear Your Word and to grasp what it is that You have for us. May our eyes be lifted to see Your splendor, to see the greatness of who You are, that we might understand ourselves rightly. May we be fed by Your Word today. In those areas where it's needed, may we be convicted by Your Word today, and may we be nourished and helped as we come to understand the truth of who You are and who You've called us to be. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

As we begin the sermon series, we're looking today at an introduction to Genesis and the Creator of the Cosmos. An introduction to Genesis and the Creator of the Cosmos. So it really goes without saying, but the Book of Genesis is a profoundly fundamental book to the Christian faith. At the same time, it's also a profoundly fundamental book to the Jewish faith as well. Genesis is part of the Pentateuch, which the Jews call the Torah. That just means the first five books of scripture, and it's known for obvious reasons as the book of beginnings. But as we trace the meaning of that word itself, the most literal interpretation would be origin.

So this Book of Genesis is a book of origins, specifically the origin of human existence, but more broadly the origin of heaven and earth and all that is within them. The genre of Genesis or the type of literature that we find here is historical narrative, which means that the words we find written in Genesis by inspiration of the Holy Spirit are provided to give us an honest and accurate account of the events described there. In terms of authorship, although it never comes right out and explicitly tells us who the author is, we learn from various places in both the Old and New Testament, along with the earliest Jewish tradition, that Moses is the one who God used to write the words found in Genesis. Most scholars believe that he would've wrote this down somewhere between 1400 and 1500 BC.

It is worth noting at this point that the authorship of Moses in Genesis was overwhelmingly affirmed by virtually all biblical scholars for about the first 1,800 years of church history. You might say, "What happened after the first 1,800 years?" Well it wasn't until the era known as the Enlightenment, when an approach known as higher criticism began to creep into the church, that some began to skeptically challenge Mosaic authorship. Keep in mind, these also would've been the same individuals, many of which who would have expressed skepticism of God creating the entire universe in six literal 24-hour periods, that the flood of Noah's day was actually global in nature, and in the most extreme cases, the literal historicity of Adam.

Even today, those seeds of skepticism that were first planted all the way back in the 18th century Enlightenment period have now produced generations of skeptics to the point that in the day and age in which we live, skepticism and faithlessness is pervasive throughout our culture, most surprisingly even among professing Christians. If you've paid any attention to some of the latest polls and answers to surveys by those who profess the name of Christ and you hear their answer to what they believe to be true from scripture, the answers are shocking, to say the least.

As we think about the prevalence of that skepticism, it's important for us to understand that within the Word of God, as we think about all 66 books of holy writ, Genesis has been the

primary target. We want to ask ourselves the question, "Why would that be? Why would Genesis be under the most extreme scrutiny? Why would it have the target on it among all the other books of the Bible?" Well, from a human perspective, it's certainly because some of the greatest of God's miracles are found in Genesis, and therefore it simply requires a God-given faith to believe them. But I would submit to you from a spiritual perspective that it is no doubt part of the enemy's intentional strategic plan. Plan aimed at undermining the Bible's very foundation. For if we allow the foundation of God's design to be undermined, then, like a building, the rest of Christian theology and doctrine begins to crumble.

This is why we see the enemy consistently attacking the most basic and fundamental aspects of God's design for humanity. We've seen the way this has unfolded not just in our lifetime but certainly there as well. But really, the past 100 years, we could take a quick survey and think about the attacks that we have seen. So first it was the family, an attempt to refute male headship in the home, and then to justify divorce beginning in the 20th century both morally and legally. That, of course, led to the breakdown of the home, broken families and split parenting, homes absent of male leadership, children being raised in a constant state of uncertainty and inconsistency, impacting their development in significant ways.

Then it was an attempt to redefine the institution and covenant of marriage. Again, both morally and legally. Beginning in the late 20th century and into the early 21st century, there has been a concerted, multifaceted effort waged in our culture against God's design for the family. Now today, it is an attack on the individual, the image-bearer of God. No longer is it just an undermining of God's design for human sexuality, this good gift that he has given to us, but now it is a comprehensive attack on the very concept of gender itself.

We're seeing it right before our eyes, and yet the playbook is exactly the same, through educational institutions, entertainment venues, which now include social media, and through the court system, an all-out attack has been waged on the simple, basic, and biblical idea that in the beginning God created them male and female. As a culture, we are seeing Romans chapter 1 playing out before our very eyes, and yet what we need to understand is that long before we began to witness the effects described in Romans, it began with a rejection of Genesis. So we must understand that this exposition of Genesis is more than just a mere sermon series. Rather, it's a foundational study of the most fundamental truths that are found in the Word of God. The implications of hearing this Word, receiving it, allowing it to shape our minds, our priorities, and our values, and then applying it to our lives, they cannot be overstated. They impact every aspect and sphere of who we are as image-bearers of God.

In addition to the words of Jesus affirming this reality for us, we also have the testimony of the early church echoing this affirmation as well. The early chapters of Genesis, in particular, had arguably a greater influence on the development of Christian theology than did any other part of the Old Testament. We find here in Genesis, in just the first few chapters, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of creation, the fall and the doctrine of original sin, a theology of sacrifice and redemption, a theology of work, the cultural mandate, the ultimate promise of God's salvation

through Christ, who is the seed of the woman who will crush the serpent's head, the sovereignty of God, the suffering of humanity, and so much more. The 5th-century pastor and theologian, Augustine, for this reason, returned to the first chapter of Genesis, expositing and writing down his insights at least on five different occasions throughout his life.

Jonathan Edwards, the 18th-century pastor and theologian, and his writings referenced the Book of Genesis over 1,900 different times. Martin Luther, the 16th-century reformer, spent the last 10 years of his life working on his commentary on Genesis, and he regarded that commentary as one of his most significant achievements. It's because of men like Luther in many respects that the Book of Genesis formed the theological heart behind the Protestant Reformation. The beating rhythm of the reformers was ultimately, as we know, sola scriptura. Upon scripture alone, our faith is found, but a multitude of the truths from Genesis is what served as the theological bedrock and foundation of the core teachings and the rallying cries that came forth from the reformation. Yet as we think about that, the depth and the richness of Genesis, we could go on and on. It's expansive enough to keep the most astute theologians for studying for a lifetime, and yet the beauty of Genesis is that it's also simple enough for a child to understand. It's why in our Sunday school classes, we're teaching them, right, some of the most basic and fundamental truths which come from Genesis.

So as we stand upon the shoulders of those who have gone before us, we're beginning the exposition of Genesis with the words that open the entire canon of scripture, the first words that give content to our human experience. Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." In the original language, these seven Hebrew words come to us not only as the introduction to scripture but as the introduction to the one true and living God Himself. These seven Hebrew words are without a doubt the foundation for everything that is found throughout the rest of scripture. As we unpack this verse today, make no mistake. We are being brought before an exalted platform, if you will, where none other than God and God alone is being shown to be great and glorious as He is.

So within this divine introduction, God could have revealed Himself in any number of ways, and we ask how does He begin to reveal Himself starting in verse 1 and an answer to that question. First and foremost, today we're going to discover the ***eternality of God. The eternality of God.*** We see that as scripture and God's self-revelation begins with the words, in the beginning.

So how can the human mind begin to comprehend a time before time began? How is that possible? Yet it's precisely what the Word of God beckons us to do here as we begin to read this text. Furthermore, the opening of scripture itself in an instant with just two Hebrew words, scripture compels us to realize our own finitude. That is the realization that we are not infinite. We are finite. In this life, we have a beginning and we have an end. We cannot even conceive of a moment before human existence came into being, and yet that is exactly the point.

Just as the Lord declared to Job out of the whirlwind in Job chapter 38, as Job began to utter thoughts concerning his condition, the Lord speaks to him, saying, "Who is this that darkens counsel My words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man, Job. I will question you, and

you make it known to Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have standing. Who determined its measurement, surely you know, or who stretched the line upon it? On where its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

The only suitable response to such questions as these is reverence, and awe, that is what the opening of scripture is beckoning us to do. The same is true for us. The realization that this God who is revealed in scripture is not bound by time, in fact, time itself is a product of His creation. He imagined it, He designed it, and He spoke it into existence. It's incredible to fathom the most brilliant of minds that our world has ever known, developing theories of time over the years, men like Newton and Einstein with all of these theoretical models and these complicated equations that for most of us would make our heads spin. Yet as complex as those theories are, what we need to understand is that they are nothing but play-doh in the hands of our eternal God. This God, who is the beginning of all beginnings but who has, Himself, no beginning, this God whose self-existence stretches back for eternity with no point of origin.

Go ahead. Take just a moment to think back as far as your mind can, to think back to the point, an eternity past when God came into existence, and then very quickly recognize that it's an eternity of eternities before that, that God still existed, and why? Because he has no beginning. Let that just blow your mind for a moment to realize that this God has always been. This God, whose life has infinitely and forever existed, this should cause us to stop everything right here and right now and express absolute adoration to this God when we consider the fact not only that He is infinite and that He is eternal, but that this eternal God, in His grace and mercy, has chosen not because He has to, but because He desires to come down. He has condescended and revealed Himself to us in words. Just think of that.

Though He is the infinite and eternal one, He has a Father with His children on bended knee, if you will, graciously chosen to stoop down to our level and reveal Himself to us in terms that we can begin to understand. Though He is the transcendent one whose mind is infinitely beyond ours, His purposes and thoughts infinitely beyond our own, in His great kindness and mercy, He has reached down as it were to speak our language, to speak of beginnings and endings and of time and of space. Apart from this gracious word, my friend, and the knowledge of Himself that God has delivered to us, please understand that we would still be existing in the darkness of our own ignorance. We would be like blind men and women groping about within the vain imaginations that only we can come up with on our own and yet finding nothing at the end of that journey but hopelessness.

So God has been so kind and so gracious to help us to catch a glimpse of who He is. So may we praise Him today for that revelation. From a grammatical perspective, the word used here for beginning is employed throughout the Old Testament, but it's almost always joined with another word, and it's logical to us. It's the word ending. So much so that the original audience, upon reading or hearing these opening words, would likely have been expecting to hear about this beginning's end. Yet, as we see here in our text, that's not what we find, is it? Instead, we come

face-to-face with the God who is and always has been. Therefore, we find scripture both inherently and emphatically pointing us to the overarching purpose and goal of this beginning's end. What is it? It's the glory of His great name. That is the aim, the end, and the purpose for all that He has done.

So that leads us then next to discover the *majesty of this God. The majesty of this God.* We see that as the text continues with a word translated in our English bibles with just three letters, G-O-D, God. In the Hebrew, this word is Elohim, and it is a name for God that is found in the plural form, no doubt pointing us to the triune nature and the majestic fullness of this God who is being revealed to us. Once again, as we think about just the structure of this verse, because remember, every jot and tittle is intentional and purposeful by the Spirit of God. It is clear that there is one overarching point of emphasis for this opening verse.

There is one entity who is the central and shining point of focus, and that is God. It is Elohim who is being showcased for us to look upon. Notice with me that the Bible in this opening verse does not seek to prove to us the existence of this God. There is no postulation of A through F of why we should believe that this God exists. No, it simply presupposes it. Why? Because God is and always has been. This is why Psalm 14:1 can say that it is the foolish person who says in his heart that there is no God.

Of course, there is a God. How did you get here? How do you exist today? How is existence and reality something that is true to your experience in this very moment? And deep down inside, no matter how callous or outwardly hardened a person may be or profess to be, their conscience bears witness to the very same reality that Genesis 1:1 declares because it is unescapable. It's unescapable in their heart of hearts, and it will be unescapable for every single one of us on the day when we meet this God face-to-face.

As Paul says in Romans 1, "God's invisible attributes, His eternal power, and His divine nature have been clearly seen since the creation of the world." In other words, creation is proof of a creator. Therefore, no human being will have an excuse, regardless of how smart they think they are. This name for God, Elohim, it's important for us to note here, is used almost 40 times in just the first two chapters of Genesis alone. There's a point of emphasis happening again and again, speaking to the centrality of God and His activities and actions throughout the creation account, points us to the reality that this God is not merely some distant deity. He does not create or set into motion His creation and then just walk off without a thought or care. No, this God is personal and intentional, and relational. In contrast to the idols and the false gods created in the imagination of sinful humanity, we discovered that this infinite God is someone who can be known intimately and relationally. In fact, not only can He be, He desires to be known by His people. This is a God who seeks to know and to be known.

So it's worth asking today in light of that reality, "Do you know this God?" Not just do you know facts about this God, but do you know this God? Do you have a personal, vibrant living relationship with the God who is being introduced in Genesis 1:1? And more importantly, does He know you genuinely and sincerely? Are you in right relationship with this God? Have you

trusted in the only Savior He has delivered to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ? Are you robed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus, and are you walking in His ways daily? If the answer to that question is no, then please understand that that can change today. If there is breath in your lungs, then there is hope for your eternity because of the gospel of Jesus. For the most dreadful thing a person can hear on the day when they meet this God face-to-face is, "Depart from me forever. I never knew you."

So as we consider the weightiness of what it means to know this God, we come to the end of verse 1, where we further discover the *authority of God. The authority of God.* The opening verse of scripture concludes by telling us that this God created the heavens and the earth. Now, up to this point, we've simply begun to see who this God is, but now we begin to see what this God does and, furthermore, what He can do. The Hebrew word for created here is distinct because it's only used in scripture to refer specifically to the creativity of God.

Therefore, packed within this word is the omnipotent power and the omniscient wisdom of God, which is to say, His power and His wisdom is inexhaustible. There's no end to it. It's just as eternal as His very nature and the language, heavens and earth, which are the objects of his creative work, refer to the entire ordered universe. It's the cosmos. Therefore, in the very first verse of scripture, the very opening verse of God's Word, the introduction to the identity of God teaches us that this God not only has the power to create, but that He has created and that He is the sovereign creator over everything that He has made. He is the author, and therefore He has authority.

So let's just think very quickly, surveying what we've seen thus far. First, we've seen that He is without origination in His existence. He is eternal. He is without opposition in His plans and purposes. Therefore, He has no equal, and He is without limitation in His power and authority. That means He is inexhaustible. This is the God who we come face-to-face with at the very beginning of scripture. It's why Isaiah 14:27 proclaims, "For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it?" It's a rhetorical question, "His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" The answer is unequivocally no one. No one is more powerful than this God. No one is greater in authority than this God. No one can stop what this God has planned and purposed to do according to His sovereign will and His good pleasure. "Our Lord is in the heavens, and He does whatever He pleases." scripture says.

Whether it is the greatest of galaxies or the most minute of microscopic molecules, all things visible and invisible, God is the sovereign creator and sustainer of the entire universe. There is not a single element that exists outside of God's sovereign control. He owns it all, and He controls it all.

As one commentator said specifically about this first verse, "We hear Him through the divine revelation, penetrating earth's silence, shining into the primordial darkness, with the sole intent of creating a sphere in which He might display his sovereignty, incomparability, and power. He makes Himself known through these works of His creative will. The heavens are declaring the glory of God, and the skies are proclaiming the work of His hands." When we woke up this



morning and we saw the sun shining and we saw creation doing what it does, we were reminded in that moment that creation is actively proclaiming the creativity of God.

So scripture points us to the beginning of time, when God created everything out of nothing. Contrary, my friends, to the secular humanistic wisdom of this world, we need to understand that there is no such thing as a mindless, powerless nothingness, which produces a big bang, which then produces everything. It's ridiculous.

But there is a wise, powerful God who has brought all things into existence at the voice of His sovereign command and according to His purpose. His creation was no accident and no mistake. The creation we see when we look at the multitude of stars on a pitch-black canvas of night or the brilliance of a sunset that looks like it's been painted by the hand of God Himself is indeed the product and self-expression of a God who is demonstrating His glorious creativity.

It's worth noting that there is a play on words for us here in the word creation. In the Hebrew, that word begins with the same three letters as beginning. That points us to the reality that this creative act of God, of which we ourselves are members, is actually part of something new that has never ever existed before. Of course, when we consider the implications of that newness, the brand new, never before existence of our own human experience, of which scripture says that the angels long to look at and see, the question that should begin to bubble to the surface for us is, "Why, why, has God done something altogether new, something that He's never done before? Why has He created the cosmos and all that is within them that we might exist under their sphere? Why are we here? Why is it that when we open our eyes, we see vibrant colors, and we hear sound waves, and we can appreciate music, we can taste and we can feel, and we can smell and experience the reality that we are experiencing right now? Why are we here? What is our purpose?" While that question will be answered more fully as we walk our way together through the Book of Genesis for now, there is a hint found in the fact that this God, Elohim, is both a God who acts and who speaks.

So the last thing we're going to discover today is the ***Word of God. The Word of God.*** Not only do we have this Word of God before us today, but as we fast-forward to the New Testament, we find the Apostle John and his gospel account echoing these words from Genesis 1:1, and there in his gospel, John 1, we find these words, "In the beginning..." But he doesn't say Elohim. He says, "Was the..." What? Word. "Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Unless we would be thinking that John is only speaking of a word that is proclaimed, he goes on to speak of this Word as one who lives using the personal pronoun, He, saying, "He was, in the beginning, with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." And so this is a really masterful way that John, through his spirit-inspired words, weaves together the deity of the Word who is Christ into the creation account. He's introducing it at the beginning of his gospel. John is reverberating the words that we've been looking at today from Genesis 1:1, and in doing so, he's essentially saying, "You remember from all the way back in Genesis that God created the heavens and the earth. So I'm telling you now, my friends, everything in this entire universe has been made through the Logos who is Christ."

In fact, there is not a single thing in the entire created cosmos that was not created by Christ and for Christ. The sun and the moon, the stars and the elements, the plants and the animals, and humanity itself, everything we see in the creation account of Genesis and everything we do not see was created through Christ. This is also Paul's point in Colossians 1:15-16. In speaking of Jesus, he says, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." That He is preeminent, "For 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."

Brothers and sisters, to expand our thinking more completely and to fill our hearts more deeply. Today, what I want to leave us with, with our time together, is a profound reality that we are given from the Book of Ephesians chapter 1, a reality which tells us that before this universe was ever created, before the cosmos were constructed, before the Lord laid the very beginning foundation for the world in which we live, this majestic sovereign God whom we have been introduced to in Genesis 1:1 had predetermined a purpose, a plan, and a people whom He would redeem through this Word who is Christ, all to the praise of His glorious grace.

So as we mark today as the beginning of our journey through Genesis in the months to come, may we be astounded, may we be humbled, and may we seek to live redeemed lives reflecting the glory of this kind, awesome, and gracious God. Pray with me.

Father, You are indeed glorious and worthy to be praised. My prayer is that each of us, having gazed and fixed our eyes upon Your awesomeness, will come away from this time recognizing just how incredible You truly are. In light of that weightiness, I pray that You'll help us to see the amazing nature of the incarnation that You have come in the form of Jesus to live a perfect life that we could not live and to die the death that we deserve to die and that have been raised to life, that we would be declared righteous because of what You've done for us. May we worship You today in spirit and in truth. It's in Christ's name we pray, amen.