

The Evidence of God in Creation

Genesis 1:1

We are beginning in this new year a study in a new book, one that I have not ever done before. As a matter of fact outside of the book of Proverbs I have not done a book study in the Old Testament in my years of ministry. I have preached from Old Testament passages but not through an Old Testament book. Even our study in Proverbs was only topical and then I didn't preach on every topic.

Our study in Genesis will be a bit different as well. I have chosen to go through this book for a couple of reasons. One reason is that the book as the beginning book of the Bible lays the foundation for a number of important doctrines.

The doctrine of God

The doctrine of sin

The doctrine of redemption

The doctrine of grace

The doctrine of marriage

There is another reason I have chosen Genesis, especially the first 11 chapters and that is because there is an attack on the authority of God's Word and the attack is on the opening chapters. The attack isn't just from outside the church, it is also from within – both from its pulpits and from Christian academia, the very ones who should be in strong defense of the authority of Scripture are the ones undermining the validity of these core doctrines and so weakening its authority. The structure crumbles when the foundation is taken away.

For example, there are some scholars, biblical among them, who believe that Genesis 1-11 is an allegory, just a story with a broad life lessons. Adam wasn't real, there was no Garden of Eden or even original sin. The characters and events in the opening chapters are fictitious, merely symbolic figures and actions that convey some truth or generalization about human conduct and experiences that can guide us in life.

I hope you see something fundamentally wrong with that belief. If Adam and Eve didn't exist and their characters merely represent mankind's actions in some way then original sin didn't happen and God's promise of redemption is inconsequential. What then do they do with the genealogies that go back to Adam if Adam wasn't real?

If it's just allegorical, does God even really exist? Have we fabricated Him in order to provide us with some explanation about how things may have come into existence or help shape our moral construct?

Was Noah real? Did a global flood really happen?

If Genesis 1-11 is allegorical and the events are not historical but only providing us with beneficial life lessons essentially we can take it or leave it because it isn't based on fact or truth.

Other scholars discount the historical nature of Genesis 1-11 believing that it is poetic. Because portions of the creation account are found in poetic books of Job, Psalms and Proverbs they assume that the Genesis account must also be poetic.

This adds to the confusion of how to interpret these chapters, especially the opening verses.

If the opening chapters can be considered poetic or allegorical in nature and not historical you can understand then how scientists discount the creation narrative because science is based on fact not fiction. Why try to interpret the data found in geology and nature with a religious book. No the Bible is not scientific, but whenever it does speak of things related to science it is always accurate.

So if what the Bible says isn't really true when it speaks about the creation of the world, how can we know that it is true in any other area? You can see how the authority of Scripture can be undermined. Did the virgin birth or the resurrection really happen or are they just another life lesson? If you don't hold Scripture to be true in one area, how can you really trust it in another area?

In the weeks to come we are going to talk about things like evolution, the gap theory, the long day theory, and theistic evolution. There are some very godly Bible scholars, theologians and pastors who hold to forms theistic evolution or a long day theory, men like C.I. Scofield, Bruce Waltke and Wayne Grudem.

Now I don't want to presume in the least that I am smarter than they are, but there is trouble in River City when we allow science to interpret the Bible. When we allow fallible man with finite knowledge to determine what an infallible, all knowing God said there will be problems. It undermines the authority of God's inerrant Word written by an infallible God.

Lest I arrogantly assume that I know better, I am, as I always do, praying that I will accurately handle God's Word, not presuming that I know it all, especially in this area that mixes theology and science. But there are some reasons why I believe in a literal six day creation that makes perfect sense to me and I hope to you as well. One reason is because God said it. I don't think He meant that there were gaps between the days or that each day was 1,000's of years long or even that He used evolution as the means of our existence.

Let me also say this, however you believe is inconsequential to the core doctrine of salvation. Those of you who have been attending our Sunday evening Creation Matters over the past couple years have heard some of the speakers say and I'll also confirm that nowhere in Scripture does it say "believe on the Lord Jesus and six literal days of creation and you will be saved."

Now that said, there are some reasons why I believe that it's a literal six days and not by these other theories no matter what science says and we'll talk about that as we get to those passages. But let me just say this, for those who believe in theistic evolution which essentially means that God got the process started and then let evolution take over,

there's a problem with that. The biggest problem I see is what they do with God's curse on the earth because of sin. Even in theistic evolution death and disease had to exist before the curse was given to man. And that's just one problem they have to rectify. It comes down to a question of authority in Scripture. Do you believe what it says? If you don't believe what it says in one part how can you trust any other part?

So this will be an interesting study at least in the opening two chapters because there is so much there. I would ask you to pray for me as I plan these messages that I not get lost in the minutia. Hopefully together we will see the importance of these opening chapters as historical evidence for our existence, why we were created and God's plan through the ages. Let's keep in mind that Genesis through Revelation is God's unfolding plan to redeem mankind and the opening chapters are essential to that plan.

There is then no better place to begin to discover that plan, why redemption was necessary and what God was planning to do about it, than in the book of Genesis.

Genesis literally means beginning. It comes from the Hebrew word bereshith, which is the opening word in the text – "in the beginning". In the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the opening word in the Greek is genesis. That word defines what the book is about and becomes the book's very title. It is the beginning of things, of generations, the beginning of history. Unger's Bible dictionary describes the book of Genesis as hanging on a genealogical skeleton marked by the phrase "these are the generations of..." which occurs 10 times throughout the book. You may hear the word toledhoth, which means generation. The word never signifies creation or the act of generations, but always the history of what has been created or begotten. What we see unfolding in each of these toledhoths is the history of that generation. For example when we

read in Genesis 2:4 “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created”

Moses, the author, is providing us with the historicity of creation. It is a genealogy. The 10 generations in Genesis are as follows:

The generations of the heavens and the earth (2:4-4:26)

The generations of Adam (5:1-6:8)

The generations of Noah (6:9-9:29)

The generations of Noah’s sons (10:1-11:9)

The generations of Shem (11:10-11:26)

The generations of Terah (11:27-25:11)

The generations of Ishmael (25:12-18)

The generations of Isaac (25:19-35:29)

The generations of Esau (36:1-37:1)

The generations of Jacob (37:2-50:26)

I have purposely spent the first part of the message giving a little background hopefully to set the stage for what is to come as a way of helping us have some understanding of the book.

Let me add one additional point to make as you open to the first verse of Genesis 1. This verse helps us understand that it’s all about God. The very opening makes that point incredibly clear – “In the beginning God...”

Keeping that in mind I see four evident truths in this opening verse about God in creation.

The person of God in creation is evident

The presence of God in creation is evident

The power of God in creation is evident

The purpose of God in creation is evident

This is probably one of those verses that everyone knows by heart. Let’s say it together.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

I. THE PERSON OF GOD IN CREATION IS EVIDENT

The term “God” used in verse 1 is plural in Hebrew and is the word Elohim. The basic meaning is one of strength or power of effect. It also describes

glory and majesty. The name is used to speak of the One true God in Deuteronomy 6:4 which speaks of Him as one in being but yet with distinct personalities. The plural form of this noun does not mean there are many Gods. It means there is one God with distinct personalities. Where Genesis 1:1-2 reveals two of those personalities – God and Spirit, we read in John 1:1-3 that the Son, Jesus was also evident in creation. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.” We learn in verse 14 that the Word is Jesus. The Father, Son, and Spirit are the three personalities that comprise the One God spoken of in Genesis 1:1, this Elohim.

That there are three distinct personalities is evident in Matthew 28:19-20 where we are told to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

But even clearer passage is Matthew 3:16-17. In this passage Jesus is baptized, He hears the voice of the Father and experiences the Spirit descending on Him in the form of a dove.

All three persons of the Godhead were present at creation.

The opening statement is like BOOM – “in the beginning God.” So we ask about who this God is because we want to know and the Hebrew word tells us about His person and we come to know Him and understand Him by faith.

Moses, who is the author of this book, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to make this declaration about God. The Bible assumes and never argues for His existence. God is someone we believe in by faith. Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please God, for He that comes to God must believe that He is (that He exists) and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

He is not just the opiate of the people as German philosopher Karl Marx taught, which became the

bedrock of shaping Lenin's Communist beliefs.

In spite of what Frederick Nietzsche taught that God does not exist, there is proof to the contrary.

The person of God in creation is evident.

The presence of God in creation is evident.

II. THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN CREATION IS EVIDENT

We see this in the opening words of the verse "In the beginning..."

Colossians 1:17 "He is before all things."

This is an open declaration about the existence of God who was there before all things – that He was there in the beginning, present and active in the creation of the universe and everything in it. However long ago it was that God created the heavens and the earth God was already present, already existing, having no beginning or no ending.

In His declarative statement to Moses at the burning bush He defined His existence as the "I AM", a term that describes Him as ever present or always existing. Jesus in disclosing His eternal nature to religious leaders who opposed Him said in John 8:58 "Before Abraham was, I AM."

The psalmist states in Psalm 90:2 "Before the mountains were born or You brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God."

That simply means He has no beginning and He has no ending. Before creation began God was there. When creation ceases God will still be there.

In Revelation 4 the scene of heaven is opened to John with an invitation to visit. Visible to him is the throne and surrounding the throne are four living creatures each with unusual characteristics. Who they are, where they come from and what they represent is unclear. Yet, one thing is unmistakable and that is their adoration for the one who sits on

the throne. In verse 8 we read "Day and night they never stop saying: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.'"

God exists endlessly. He is eternal.

Berkhoff defines eternity as "that perfection of God whereby He is elevated above all temporal limits and all succession of moments, and possesses the whole of His existence in one indivisible present."

We cannot help but confine and define time in terms of past, present, and future. From God's perspective being eternal He sees it all as one.

Genesis 21:33 "Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called upon the name of the Lord, the Eternal God."

A comforting thought emerges from this understanding of God's eternal nature and that He will never cease to exist. Any promise He has made He will keep, not only because He keeps His word, but because He will be around for eternity to keep His word.

In a moment we'll see that God wasn't just a casual bystander or observer when the cosmos came into existence in the beginning. It assumes, if I can use the term loosely, that there was a time when there was no time, when there was nothing. The word assumes the start of something. In this case it was the start of the universe – the heavens and the earth. But it also attests to the fact that before the beginning of all things God was there, that He existed before anything and that He had no beginning. No one created God and the more I try to noodle that God has always been in existence the gears of my little brain start to smoke.

So why is it that so many who clearly see the evidence of God's existence in creation deny the reality of an ever present, eternal God who was there in the beginning? Why is that they try to explain the existence of everything we see on the loose threads of a theory like evolution that this all happened by chance millions of years ago?

Romans 1:18-21 provides us with an answer.

The truth about God has been revealed in creation and yet they choose to suppress that truth by their own wickedness. Consequently God has abandoned them to the wickedness of their sins as part of His judgment on them. They know about God because He has revealed Himself to them in creation, yet they choose to deny that truth. So their minds became futile and their hearts darkened. They have denied the presence of God in creation that He was there in the beginning.

No one denies the imprint of Steve Jobs on Apple products.

No one denies the imprint of Henry Ford in his Model T.

No one denies the imprint of Eli Whitney on the cotton gin.

No one denies the imprint of Johannes Gutenberg on the printing press.

These guys no longer exist, yet we see evidence of their work in what they did. So why do people deny the imprint of God on the universe?

Why do they deny His presence before it all began and His presence today and always?

Romans 1 says it's because they deny the truth of what is evident. Romans 1 says that even though they may choose to deny the external evidence of God one thing everyone has is an internal evidence of His person. Romans 1 says it is within them. So why do people decline to see God either without or within? It's because of the inclination to sin and so reject or resist God. That is a natural means by which they suppress the truth. But the good news is that anyone, even if there is only a little spiritual light within them, anyone who seeks after God will find Him:

Jeremiah 29:13 "You will seek me and find me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

There is enough truth around us to see the presence of God. Only the fool has said in His heart that there is no God. He has loved darkness more than

He loves the light.

August Strong has written "The Scriptures...both assume and declare that the knowledge of God is universal. God has inlaid the evidence of that fundamental truth in the very nature of man, so that nowhere is He without a witness."

Because of a disease Helen Keller was left without sight, hearing and speech as a very young girl. Tireless efforts by Anne Sullivan enabled little Helen to communicate through touch. Eventually Miss Sullivan was able to communicate with her student about God. Helen responded that she already knew Him, she just didn't know His name.

God and His presence are knowable. They are evident in creation.

III. THE POWER OF GOD IN CREATION IS EVIDENT

"In the beginning God created..."

The word created in the Hebrew is bara. In the Old Testament this word is only used of divine activity and never of human ability. It is a word that speaks of an instantaneous, miraculous act. In the Latin it is ex nihilo meaning out of nothing. God started with nothing and made everything.

We say an artist has created a masterpiece. The use of the word in no way implies that he started with nothing to create his work of art. He already had previous images in his head from which he used to design his painting. He saw a waterfall or sunset or a busy street café. Images conjured up from previous experiences were the fuel that prompted his inspiration. The artist's masterpiece was not ex nihilo in the same sense it is used about God in creating. The artist did not create the canvas or the paints which were blended to bring just the right hues. He started with something.

God had no canvas, no paints, no prior images from which to design and place His creation. It was out of nothing, which expresses the power behind His

creating.

Throughout Scripture His power in creation is seen. Jeremiah 32:17 “Ah, Sovereign Lord, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You.”

John 1:3 “Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.”

Colossians 1:16-17 “For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

Revelation 4:11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being.”

These verses tell me that things didn't just appear by chance out of the primordial soup when conditions were just right or that God somehow gave it a jump start and then left it to evolve. God planned it. God purposed it. God performed it, all by His power.

Carl Sagan once made the statement that “If God is omnipotent and omniscient, why didn't he start the universe out in the first place so it would come out the way he wants? Why's he constantly repairing and complaining? No, there's one thing the Bible makes clear: The biblical God is a sloppy manufacturer. He's not good at design, he's not good at execution. He'd be out of business, if there was any competition.”

Sagan completely misses the power of God and the grandeur of His creation when he wrote “How is it that hardly any major religion has looked at science and concluded, ‘This is better than we thought! The Universe is much bigger than our prophets said,

grandeur, more subtle, more elegant?’ Instead they say, ‘No, no, no! My god is a little god, and I want him to stay that way.’ A religion, old or new, that stressed the magnificence of the Universe as revealed by modern science might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly tapped by the conventional faiths.”

Long before science remarked about the magnificence of the universe, Scripture declared it.

And then there is Neil deGrasse Tyson who said “The more I learn about the universe, the less convinced I am that there's some sort of benevolent force that has anything to do with it, at all.”

In a couple weeks we'll see that everything God made was very good. He left nothing to chance.

In this one verse God created time (beginning), space (heavens) and matter (earth) and He did so out of nothing and we see elsewhere in Scripture that by the power of His spoken word everything was made.

And because everything is by His creative hand, He is Master and Ruler over it. He is in control of it. 32 times in chapter 1 alone God/Elohim is used to convey His majesty and power in the creative act of bringing the heavens and the earth into existence. We notice His sovereign rule over creation in “Isaiah 40:25-26 “‘To whom will you compare Me? Or who is My equal?’ says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”

Now here's something important I want you to take away from this when you think about the presence and power of God in creation. Because He always was and always will be God and because His power created everything out of nothing, He is an ever present help in time of trouble. The same power in creation is the same power that is at work in you.

Psalm 34:4 “I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears.”

The powerful God of Genesis 1 is with you to help you through your troubles whatever they may be.

Let me close with one more thought from verse 1.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN CREATION IS EVIDENT

“God created the heavens and the earth.”

Again from Colossians 1:17 we are reminded that everything was created by God for God.

In Revelation 4:11 it was by God’s will that everything was created and has its being, not only has existence but purpose.

Isaiah 45:18 “For this is what the Lord says – He who created the heavens, He is God; He who fashioned and made the earth, He founded it; He did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited.”

Psalm 19:1-2 “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.”

The majesty and splendor of heaven declares the even more majestic Creator. They confirm the fact of a Creator.

At Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before His crucifixion the crowd joyfully welcomed the Messiah shouting praise to God. The indignant religious leaders told Jesus to silence His disciples, but He remarked that if they kept their praise silent the very rocks would cry out in worship.

God’s creation is for the purpose of praising Him. Isaiah 43:7 tells us that we were created to give God glory. That is our purpose. That was His purpose in creating the heavens and the earth and all that is in the earth.

Psalm 100:2-3 says that we are to know God, that He made us and we are His. We cannot fulfill our purpose apart from Him. We can’t glorify the Creator God if we do not know Him. Our purpose is to know God who has revealed Himself in creation and in that knowing to glorify Him.

Our opening verse reveals in creation the evidence of the person of God, the presence of God, the power of God and purpose of God.

I want to close by reading a devotional that was sent to me this week by Sheila. It’s from *New Morning Mercies* by David Paul Tripp and sums up Genesis 1:1 nicely and gives us some thoughts to ponder for the week and year ahead.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” – for His glory.

How will you express that in this week?