

## IN THE BEGINNING

Genesis 1:1-25  
Key Verse 1:1

Lesson 1

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

From ancient times people have asked the big questions: Who made the world? Who is man? Who am I? Does my existence have any meaning? Sincere men have sought to find the answers in science and philosophy, but the answers are hidden in inscrutable mystery.

Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." These words point toward the answers to these questions. And we will look for these answers as we study the book of Genesis.

Read Genesis 1:31. "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." This verse tells us how God felt about his creation. It is a concluding statement about the 6 days of creation. God created the world and mankind for his own glory. The first chapter of Genesis reveals three levels of being in God's universe: 1st, God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth; 2nd, man, the climax of God's creation; and 3rd, all the rest of the material and animal world.

The first 3 chapters of Genesis lay a foundation for the study of the whole Bible. As we study chapters 1 and 2, we will focus on several fundamental questions: **First**, who is the God who created the heavens and the earth? **Second**, what is the nature of man and what is the meaning of his existence? And what is the function of the material world that has been given him? **Third**, what is the meaning of the garden of Eden? Lesson 1 deals with this first question: Who is the God who created the heavens and the earth?

### I. God created the heavens and the earth (1:1)

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (I:I) God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He also created all things in heaven and earth. (Isa 44:24; Col 1:16) The author of Genesis wrote from a theistic position. There are two ways of looking at the world. Indeed, there are only two ways of looking at and living in this world. We may look at the world from an atheistic point of view; or we may look at the world as theists.

First, the atheistic view

From the ancient naturalistic philosophers to the modern atheistic existentialists, and atheistic evolutionists, atheists have viewed the world materialistically. There are several problems that arise from this materialistic viewpoint. **First**, there is the problem of the origin of all things. How did the world begin? These days the "big bang" theory is popular, and school textbooks talk about the evolutionary process as if it were the answer to the question of origin. But these theories only hypothesize about the secondary questions of method and process. They do not even address the question of the beginning. Furthermore, they leave unanswered the big question of how a thinking, feeling, rational human being could evolve upward from a lower form of life. Scientists have found nothing like this in the real world--even though some have looked diligently.

**Second**, there is the problem of the meaning of human existence. Pascal said, "Man is a thinking reed." Physically, man is weaker than many animals, but he is the one creature who probes into the meaning of his existence. Man's existence has meaning, and each person must find that meaning, for one's character is formed as that meaning finds expression in his life.

If man's existence is only an accident, his life can have no meaning. If life has no meaning, and the grave is its goal, then "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Such a life is not only tragic, but the influence of such a life on the world is harmful beyond description.

Second, the theistic view.

The theistic position says that God created the heavens and the earth. When we start here, we can find clear answers to the big questions. This is the beginning point of truth. If there is no God, then there is no truth--everything is relative. But there is a Creator, and knowing him is knowing truth. (Jn 8:32; Ro 1:25; Jn 18:37)

The author of Genesis says in 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Here we find the answer to the question of what was in the beginning. The question is not "what" but "who." God was in the beginning. And God created the heavens and the earth. This means that God is the Creator and Possessor of all things (Ge 14:19,22). It means that I did not just happen by random chance. God created the world and me. Just as a watchmaker has a purpose in making a watch, the Creator of all things had a purpose in his creation. And he had a purpose when he made me.

2. God made all things for his own glory (1:2-25)

Verse 2 reads, "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." The rest of Genesis 1 shows how God brought order to the formless chaos, light into the darkness and life and meaning into the emptiness. How does Genesis describe the process of creation? In the text, the words, "God said", coupled with "And it was so" are repeated many times. God said, "Let there be light." "And there was light." (3) Heaven and earth and all things came into being at God's word of command. God created the world by his word. The God of Genesis is a God who speaks. He is a Person; he is intelligent; he wants to communicate with his creatures. His word is an almighty word, a word that has creative, life-giving power.

On the first three days God created the environment; in artistic terms, he created the background: On the first day God created light, and he separated the light from the darkness to make night and day. On the second day he made the sky--the atmosphere of our earth. He separated the waters above from the waters below, and the waters continued to cover the earth. On the third day, he was very busy. He pushed aside the waters and made the dry land appear. Then he commanded the land to produce vegetation. He thus prepared an environment that would sustain the life of animals and man.

On the next three days he filled the environment with the main actors (see the chart.): On the fourth day, he put the sun, moon and stars to rule the day and night--which he had made on the first day. On the fifth day, he commanded the waters below to teem with fish and water creatures, and the sky above to be filled with all kinds of birds. Then, on the sixth day he created the animals from the dust of the ground. He created each species to reproduce according to its kind. He made wild animals and domestic animals--animals to help man and animals that would come to fear man.

What can we say about this God who created the heavens and the earth? What kind of personality and character does he have, and what was his purpose in creating the world?

**First**, he is God Almighty. The Hebrew word for "God" in chapters 1 and 2 is "Elohim." Elohim means all-powerful, Almighty One. It was by his almighty power that God created the heavens and the earth. He said, "Let there be light." And light blazed out to fill the darkness. He said, "Sun, come into being." And the great, burning sun rose in the heavens. He spoke, "Let there be fish." And the seas became so full of fish that there were enough to be caught and eaten through eternity--with some left over!

Men are so weak that they cannot begin to understand the greatness of God's power. If the sun is a little too warm, we suffer. If the weather gets cold, we shiver. If even small waves roll, we get sea-sick. And the greatness of the ocean overawes us.

How can we comprehend the greatness of God?

In Genesis 17:1 God revealed himself to Abraham as "God Almighty." He revealed himself to Moses as the "I Am Who I Am." (Ex 3:14) God has all power in heaven and on earth. He is supreme above all. So Paul wrote, "for since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made." (Ro 1:20) The Hebrews believed in this Almighty God. This God is the God who created all things. This is the God who made water come out of the rock and gave drink to the thirsty flock of Israel as they grumbled in the desert. (Ex 17:6) God is almighty. The God who created the heavens and the earth is a great God. He is God Almighty. When God raised Jesus Christ from the dead he revealed to all people his power as Creator of the universe. There is no fear in those who believe this great God of almighty power.

**Second**, he is a personal God, God who cares. Beginning with Gen. 2:4, God is referred to as "the LORD God." "Lord" is the English translation of the Hebrew name of God, "YHWH." This is the name God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. It means that God is the Savior; he is the God of love. Exodus 6:2-3 says, "God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD, I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them." Moses, who wrote Genesis, knew that God who planted the garden of Eden was God who loved man.

The source of man's unhappiness and misery is not God--it is his own sin. We read in Genesis 3 that man in his pride took God's word lightly. He was tempted by Satan and fell. Because of his sin and fall, man lost paradise and had to live under curse. God is the one who wants to save man from this curse. God's saving love is the theme that flows through the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. God is all powerful. But his great power does not express itself in crushing and destroying man. His great power expresses itself as saving love. God reveals himself as God who is love. (I John 4:8)

God speaks. God created the world by the word of his mouth. He makes himself known. He wants to communicate with his creatures. So his creative activity is described as "And God said...and it was so." In chapter 1, the phrase, "And God said.."

is repeated 9 times. (3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26,29). It is followed by the words, "and it was so" (or the equivalent) 7 times. Psalm 33:6,9 says, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; their starry host by the breath of his mouth;..For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm." Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." John's Gospel begins with the words, "In the beginning was the Word..." Hebrews 1:1,2 says: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...through whom he made the universe."

**Third**, he is the God of creation. In Genesis chapter 1 the word "God" appears 30 times. God is the protagonist, the actor in creation. He is the Creator. Heaven and earth and all things in heaven and earth are created things. Man is a creature; God is his Creator. He is Lord, Sovereign over his creation. When I believe that God is my Creator, I can know that I am a creature whose existence is not accidental, but was planned, and that I was put here for a purpose. When I believe that God is the Creator and the Sovereign Lord of creation, I can know the truth about where I came from and where I am going. I came from God and I am going back to God. When I believe that God is the Creator, then I must seek him until I know him and possess eternal life in the Eternal God. Faith in God the Creator puts an absolute in my life. The purpose and meaning of my existence is not relative, but absolute, because I am a creature created by the absolute, Eternal God.

**Fourth**, God created all things for his own glory. In chapter 1 we find repeated at the end of each of the days of creation the words, "And God saw that it was good." Here we can see that God created heaven and earth and all things for his own glory. And after he had created all things, last of all he created man. He set man over all creation, to rule over all things. (1:28, 29,30) So we can also say that God created all things for the sake of man, and he created man for the glory of God. So when a man lives for the glory of man--himself or some other person--he cannot find real happiness. But when man lives for the glory of God, he can know true happiness.