

*First Things*  
**Genesis 1:1-3**  
**"In The Beginning"**

**I. THE FACTS ASSERTED AT THE CREATION**

- A. The creation was preceded by God
- B. The creation was produced by God

**II. THE FORCE ACTIVE IN THE CREATION**

- A. The power of God's Word
- B. The priority of God's Word

**III. THE FIGURE ATTRIBUTED WITH THE CREATION**

- A. God as He is fundamentally revealed
- B. God as He is fully revealed

1. Dr. Stephen Hawking is the Lucasian professor of mathematics at Cambridge University, and one of the most highly-respected scientists of our generation.
2. On March 13, 2007, Hawking delivered a lecture on the origin of the universe at the University of California at Berkeley.
3. During that lecture, Hawking discussed the fact that most scientists now agree that the universe is not eternal, and that it had an origin at some point.
4. In offering his explanation for the origin of the universe, Dr. Hawking said:  
  
"...if general relativity is combined with quantum theory, it may be possible to predict how the universe would start. It would initially expand at an ever increasing rate. During this so called inflationary period, the marriage of the two theories predicted that small fluctuations would develop, and lead to the formation of galaxies, stars, and all the other structure in the universe. This is confirmed by observations of small non uniformities in the cosmic microwave background, with exactly the predicted properties. So it seems we are on our way to understanding the origin of the universe, though much more work will be needed."<sup>i</sup>
5. In stark contrast, both in substance and simplicity, the Word of God begins by explaining the origins of the universe this way: "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*"
6. One pastor has noted that, "Genesis is the front door to the rest of the Bible. Genesis 1:1 is the knob that turns the door..."<sup>ii</sup>
7. Though modern science would dismiss this first chapter of Genesis as nothing more than ancient myth, we cannot afford to do so.

8. If we cannot accept what is revealed in the opening chapter of the Bible, we have no reason to believe anything else it has to say in the chapters that follow.

9. The poetry of the Psalms is nothing more than emotional, whimsical fantasy if Genesis 1 is not true. The prophecy of Isaiah is but the delusion of a religious lunatic if Genesis 1 is not true.

10. The Sermon on the Mount is nothing but a bunch of moral drivel if Genesis 1 is not true. The man on the middle cross at Golgotha is nothing but the victim of another Roman execution if Genesis 1 is not true.

11. Life is nothing but random chance, and our future is as uncertain as a dying man's next breath, if Genesis 1 is not true.

12. What the Bible says about the beginning is as important as what it says about the end. We must give heed to what is revealed by the Spirit of God in the Word of God when It says, "*In the beginning...*"

13. Looking at this opening chapter of Scripture, there are some things that we need to recognize and receive as truth from God. First of all, notice with me:

#### **I. THE FACTS ASSERTED AT THE CREATION**

1. The opening chapter of Genesis does not present itself as a mere theory about the origins of the universe.

2. The Bible is not weighing in on an argument between competing formulas and speculations. No, what is revealed here is revealed as objective and divine truth.

3. Whether someone believes it or not, God nonetheless introduces Himself by asserting certain facts about Himself and His work in the beginning.

4. Notice a couple of the facts that God asserts in this text. First of all, we find here that:

##### **A. The creation was preceded by God**

1. The Bible does not open by saying, "At His beginning, God..." No, it says, "*In the beginning, God...*" The idea is that when the beginning began, God was already there.

2. Though our finite minds struggle to comprehend anything without a beginning, the reality is that God cannot be God if there was ever a point when He was *not* God.

3. The Scriptures reveal God as an eternal being; without a beginning or an end. In Isaiah 57:15, God describes Himself as the One who "inhabits eternity".

4. Psalm 90:2 says, *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."*

5. One great theologian of the past put it this way: "We believe what the Bible teaches as facts; that God always is, was, and ever will be, immutably the same; that all things are ever present to his view..."<sup>iii</sup>

6. Genesis 1:1 tells us that the universe had an origin, but its Creator did not. The creation was preceded by God.

7. Not only is that fact asserted at the creation, but consider also that we are told here that:

### **B. The creation was produced by God**

1. The evolutionary model points us to some cosmic event of random chance, a "big bang", or a fluke alignment of forces and matter as the cause for the production of the universe.

2. Completely opposite and irreconcilable with that position is the claim of Scripture that, *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."*

3. The Bible clearly reveals that God's creative will and work are the fountainhead of everything that exists. The universe was not produced by mysterious, unexplained forces. It was produced by God.

4. An African-American preacher of the past described it this way:

"God stepped behind the curtain of nowhere on to the platform of nothing and spoke a world into existence. Now the reason God came from nowhere is because there wasn't anywhere for God to come from.

...standing on nothing, He took the hammer of His own will, struck the anvil of His omnipotence and sparks flew everywhere. He caught these sparks on the tip of his fingers and flung them out into space, and decked the heavens with stars.

And nobody said a word – and the reason nobody said a word is because there was no one there to say anything. So God Himself said, "That's good."

5. I don't know exactly how it looked and sounded, but I do believe the fact that is asserted by the Word of God about the creation. That is, this creation was produced by God.

6. Looking at this opening chapter of Genesis, we find not only *the facts asserted at the creation*, but consider also with me:

## II. THE FORCE ACTIVE IN THE CREATION

1. Genesis 1 not only reveals to us what happened in the beginning, but reading on this chapter, we are also given some light as to *how* it all happened.
2. We are told that it was God who created the heaven and the earth. While not all the details are given to us here, we do find some indication of how He did it.
3. Look with me at the opening words of verse 3. It says, "*And God said...*" If you look on down through this chapter, you find that phrase appearing a total of nine times.
4. What was the force active in the creation of the world? Listen to what the writer of Hebrews says. Hebrews 11:3 says, "*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed **by the word of God...***(emphasis added)"
5. It was the word of God that brought everything out of nothing. Consider that truth with me, and what it says to us today. First of all, we see here:

### A. The power of God's Word

1. Look back at Genesis 1:1. The word "created" in that verse is a very special word. Whenever you see that verb in the Bible, God is always the subject.
2. Man is never said to have "created" anything in the way God "created" at the beginning.
3. Man can take already existing things, and put them together in a creative way. He can make things, but he cannot create things.
4. God alone has the power to create something out of nothing, and Genesis 1 indicates that all He must do to make it happen is speak the word.
5. Francis Schaeffer describes the magnitude of this truth. He says, "...he created originally out of nothing...There was no mass, no energy particles, before he created. We work through the manifestation of our fingers. He, in contrast, created...merely by his word."
6. He goes on to say, "Here is power beyond all that we can imagine in the human, finite realm. He was able to create and shape merely by his spoken word."<sup>iv</sup>

7. The atomic bomb is nothing but a fire-cracker compared to the force and power behind the creation of the universe.
8. We cannot measure or imagine the level of power that was needed to bring time, space, and the universe into existence, and yet the Bible tells us that all of that power and force were unleashed with nothing more than the Word of God.
9. Never underestimate the power of God's Word. There is nothing to compare to its ability and capability.
10. When we observe the force active in the creation, we are pointed not only to the power of God's Word, but we see also:

### **B. The priority of God's Word**

1. Psalm 33:6 says, *"By the word of the LORD were the heavens made..."* Psalm 148:4-5 says, *"Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created."*
2. The Scriptures repeatedly point to the fact that in the beginning it was the Word of God that brought forth everything that is.
3. There is a principle established for us here that has bearing upon how we relate to God. Our understanding of God and our beliefs about God are not based on speculation, but on revelation – on the fact that God has spoken!
4. Our Bibles begin by revealing to us the priority of the Word of God. Nothing is more significant than the truth that God *has* spoken, along with the truth of *what* God has spoken.
5. One of the best books I have read in the last couple of years is a book by Dr. Al Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. The book deals with preaching, but the title alone speaks volumes. The book is called, *"He Is Not Silent"*.<sup>y</sup>
6. The God of the Bible is invisible, but He is not inaudible. In Genesis 1, God speaks with power, and we are pointed to the priority of God's Word.
7. Throughout the remainder of the Bible, God continues to speak, and His Word contains in it the same creating power it did in the beginning.
8. Think of what His Word has done for you who have believed the gospel. The Apostle Peter says in I Peter 1:23, we have been, *"...born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."*

9. Hold that Bible tightly. Handle that Bible reverently. Heed that Bible carefully. The very power that created the heavens and earth rests inside that leather cover.

10. As we study Genesis 1, we see not only *the facts asserted at the creation*, and *the force active in the creation*, but we see also thirdly:

### III. THE FIGURE ATTRIBUTED WITH THE CREATION

1. Genesis 1 takes us back to the beginning. It tells us *what* happened. There was a creation. It tells us *how* it happened. It was spoken into existence *ex nihilo* - from nothing.

2. While the chapter is largely taken up with the process of creation, including the different days and what was accomplished in each, I would contend that Genesis 1 is not so much about the creation as it is about the Creator.

3. We marvel at the filling of the seas and the forming of the stars. We wonder at how every creature, from the microscopic amoeba to the massive elephant was created in an instant.

4. The creation itself is amazing, but we must not forget that it is just an expression of the glory of the God who created it.

5. In Genesis 1, we can see a couple of aspects of this God to whom the creation of the universe is attributed. Notice this with me. Firstly, we find here:

#### A. God as He is fundamentally revealed

1. Genesis 1:1 is the first time we are introduced to God. He forfeits His own eternal privacy, and chooses by grace to let us know who He is.

2. The Bible says, "*In the beginning God...*" The name for God here is the Hebrew name, *Elohim*. It is a compound word in a plural form.

3. This particular name for God appears some 2,600 times in the Old Testament. It is what you might call the most basic or general name for God.

4. The name points to God's uniqueness and strength. It indicates that He is *the* God, and that He is mighty in His creating power.

5. I remember reading about a little boy who was working intently on something during Sunday school. The teacher paused in her lesson and asked him, "Billy, what are you doing?"

6. The little boy kept working and said, "I'm drawing a picture of God." The teacher answered, "How are you going to do that? Nobody knows what God looks like." Without looking up from his paper, Billy said, "They will when I get done."

7. As human beings, we don't have the right to paint God the way we think He should appear. We don't get to project our notions of deity upon Him. We must accept what He decides to show us about Himself.

8. Initially, God reveals Himself to us, on a fundamental level, as the Creator, and the only God who existed in eternity past.

9. With that being said, we see in Genesis 1, not only, God as He is fundamentally revealed, but taking into account what we learn of Him later, and then looking back, we can also see, way back at the very beginning:

### **B. God as He is fully revealed**

1. I mentioned a moment ago that this name for God in Genesis 1, *Elohim*, is a plural noun.

2. It is actually translated as "gods" in some places, as a way of describing the false idols of the nations.

3. When this plural noun is used in reference to the one, true God, it points us to the wonderful doctrine of the Trinity.

4. The God of the Bible is revealed to us in the Scriptures as three-in-one. Some call it a tri-unity. As we study His Word, we are introduced to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

5. In God there are three distinct and yet indivisible persons – all of them the one, true God.

6. If we look with discerning eyes, we can see them all present and working at the moment when the universe came into existence.

7. In verse one, we have God the Father. At the close of verse 2, we read, "...*And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*"

8. Where is God the Son, the Lord Jesus, you might ask? Well, His disciple, John, answers that for us. At the very beginning of his gospel he says, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the*

*beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."*

9. Later on, John tells us that this "Word" was "made flesh" in the person of Jesus Christ. The same voice that spoke at the creation, and said, "It is good," is the same voice that cried at Calvary and said, "It is finished!"

10. The point of all this is that if you know Jesus, and His Spirit lives within you, then the eternal God of Genesis 1 is not some strange, unknown deity. He is your Lord and Savior.

1. Someone might be tempted to ask, "If God existed before the creation of the world, what exactly was He doing?"

2. While we are not given a transcript of all that went on before God stepped out of eternity and created history, we do know *something* about what was going on within the Godhead before creation.

3. In Revelation 13:8, we find the Lord Jesus referred to as, "...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Ephesians 1:4 says that God has, "...chosen us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world."

4. Genesis 1:1 begins with "*In the beginning...*" However, *before* the beginning God was already planning to send His Son Jesus to die for those He had to yet to create.

5. As the drama of Scripture opens, we are mindful that God created the world with a plan in mind. He did not set into motion, and let it spin toward an uncertain end.

6. At the beginning God was planning for the day when His Son would be crucified on the cross for the sins of the world. He was looking even beyond that, to a new heaven and new earth, where His Son would be ultimately glorified.

7. In I Peter 4:19, the Apostle Peter encourages us to commit our souls unto God, "...as unto a faithful Creator."

8. Looking at all God was able to do in Genesis 1, we are mindful of what He is able to do today for those who put their trust in Him, and in the gift of His Son Jesus.

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<sup>i</sup> Hawking, Stephen, Origins of the universe: Stephen Hawking's J. Robert Oppenheimer Lecture, *UCBerkeleyNews*, accessed 8/12/10,

[http://berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2007/03/16\\_hawking\\_text.shtml](http://berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2007/03/16_hawking_text.shtml)

<sup>ii</sup> Merritt, James, "If God is the Answer, then What is the Question?", *sermon notes, unpublished*

<sup>iii</sup> Hodge, Charles, Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1982), p. 389-390

<sup>iv</sup> Schaeffer, Francis A., Genesis in Space and Time, (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1972), *Amazon Kindle* edition

<sup>v</sup> Mohler, R. Albert, Jr., He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World, (Moody Publishers, Chicago, 2008)