

## The Beginning 8-13-06

Genesis 1:1-5 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning--the first day.

Next to the resurrection of Christ, there is no more controversial subject than the first verse of the Bible. The resurrection tops the list because in it all of Jesus' claims are verified. (John 14:6; Matthew 16:21) It also holds that spot because if it is true, Genesis 1:1 is true. If Jesus the Christ could declare that He is the Son of God and that He would conquer death and then prove it by doing just that, then when He quoted Genesis as fact, He should certainly know it was indeed factual. Because of the resurrection I can say that Jesus said it and I believe it. If Jesus declared it to be true then I accept it as truth. The only One that ever dared to call Himself Truth declared Genesis Chapter One to be true.

In a discussion about divorce, Jesus asked, "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'" Matthew 19:4 (NIV) He was quoting from this very first chapter of our Bible as the foundation for His answer. He was saying that His answer was correct because it was based on this chapter of sacred Scripture.

I think it is appropriate for me to digress for a moment and tell you why we are going to take time to go through the Old Testament in an exegetical fashion. Many Pastors avoid the Old Testament because it often presents us with some difficult passages. Since the revelation of God was complete in Jesus, why would we turn back to that which was less than complete? Why study the Old Testament, or Covenant, now that the New Covenant is here?

Did you know that out of the 260 chapters in the New Testament, 229 contain not one but at least two citations or specific references to the Old Testament? Almost one-third of the New Testament is quotes or allusions to Old Testament passages! There are only 12 chapters out of the entire New Testament that don't contain a specific reference to the Old Testament. How then are we to know what the writers of the New Testament are referring to if we do not spend time studying the Old Testament?

Another reason we should study the Old Covenant is the fact that there are revelations of God that cannot be found in the New Testament. Because of that, we can learn more about our Savior by studying the Old Covenant texts. And that is why we are here, is it not? To know Christ and to make Him known! Let me assure you that in every sermon from the Old Testament, we will in some way see Christ as we already have in this message. So let us begin.

**Commented [notes1]:** 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** 21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Matt 16:21 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* It is interesting that the Bible makes no attempt to argue the existence of God. Instead, the psalmist writes that it is the fool who has said in his heart that there is no God. (Psalm 14:1) The Rabbi point to the first letter in the Hebrew Bible *Be* as an indication that we can know little or nothing about anything before this verse. The first letter looks like a square with the left side removed. Since Hebrew is read from right to left, that first letter looks like a dead end to those who would want to probe before that initial letter. God revealed Himself to us from the time He began creation. There are very few references to anything prior to that moment.

**Commented [notes3]:** 1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. Psalms 14:1 (NIV)

This beginning of creation should make perfect sense to us. The heavens are space in which all we know of exists. The earth is the matter that was formed into this globe upon which we live. When God began creation, He began by creating space. My mind cannot fathom the lack of space. It is outside our experience. In that space, God placed the earth, a ball of elements. (Psalm 102:25)

**Commented [notes4]:** 25 In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. Psalms 102:25 (NIV)

But who is this God of the Hebrews that is the Creator of space and matter? The Hebrew term is Elohim. It is the plural of the Hebrew word for God (El). There has been a great deal of research to find the origin of the word. Most conclusions are highly debatable. In all but the book Job, the term Elohim is frequently used with descriptions. We could take a month of sermons to describe the many descriptive adjectives applied to God. It seems the dominant thought is that He is all-powerful. One important tool in understanding Scripture is that the first use of the term is often a defining event that forever shapes the usage of the word. If that is the case, we should see the term Elohim as the One who creates or brings things into existence.

Elohim is plural, but the Hebrew language uses the plural form to represent majesty. It is used mostly with singular verbs so we cannot make too much of the fact that it is plural. Looking back from the revelation in the New Testament we can see that God chose a plural word because of His threefold nature. It is doubtful that the Hebrews ever understood this when they used the word.

Nearly every culture has a creation story. It is man's attempt to define his purpose and origin. The difference between the many mythological accounts and the Bible is that we see the Bible as a factual record. Myths have some part of creation as a god or gods, whereas the Genesis account teaches that all things we observe are creation made by a Creator. Myths point to the origins of their gods. The God of the Bible is eternal. It makes perfect sense that space must be created first and then matter. It has long been an accepted fact that something never comes from nothing. Either you believe that matter is eternal or that there is a Creator that is eternal. One or the other must be true. We believe either viewpoint by faith alone. We cannot time travel back to the beginning and observe what took place.

Which is more logical, that matter is eternal or that there is a God that is eternal? Because I see that for every event there is a cause, and because I see that there is order and intelligence behind what I observe, I would conclude that belief in an eternal Creator is more logical than to believe matter is eternal. To believe that this world happened by chance is similar to believing that if you blow up a large enough

junkyard enough times eventually you'll end up with a 747 in perfect working order. You and I are much more complicated than a 747, and mutations have proven to be as productive as an explosion. Microbiologists are discovering that the simple single cell that we were supposed to have evolved from is as complicated as a human being. Yet, in the end, because we can't time travel, it still takes faith. Just don't let anybody tell you are ignorant for believing in God by faith alone. If they do, ask them why it is that they believe that matter is eternal? You may get them to start thinking.

On our way to the airport in Anchorage, a Russian taxi driver told us of all the different creation myths. Belief in God comes back to what you think about creation. He told of the Japanese gods that dropped something out of the sky and created the Japan islands. As we got out of the cab, Mariko told him that God loved him, but he responded that he didn't believe in God so he could not make sense of her statement. He claimed to be a pragmatist, but his faith in the eternal existence of matter seems to me to take more faith than my conviction that God created the heavens and the earth with all the amazing order we see in them.

<sup>2</sup> *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.* There are those that believe that between the first and second verse Satan fell. He was once Lucifer, a magnificent angel of God, but he wanted the thrown of God for himself and was cast down from his exalted position. Their reasoning for his fall being between verse one and two is that there was disorder in the earth after God created it. I don't know if that theory is true or not. It is an interesting one. Our text says that the matter God created was without form and function. It may be simply a step in the order of creation. First, God made the material to work with. Until He arranges it, it is formless. It is an interesting phrase, "formless and void". We will see it again next week. In Hebrew it is kind of a jingle, *tohu wabohu*. It was simply matter covered in water.

Then the Spirit of God began to hover over it. The term is used of a bird hovering over her nest. (Isaiah 31:5) We have the first reference to the Spirit of God. He is hovering over the chaos of elements in utter darkness. Many things begin in chaos. Many of our lives began in chaos. Before there is order and purpose things are often in this state formlessness and emptiness. But as the Spirit of God begins to brood over things, there is change.

Here is the first change. <sup>3</sup> *And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.* The sun will come later. This is the creation of photons as wave particles. There is illumination. I imagine God looking into the future and seeing us study the things He made, discovering individual elements and atomic particles and energy waves. Then I can imagine God thinking, "This will be curve ball. They won't be able to figure out if it is a particle or a wave." And so scientists today still try to figure out what was on the mind of God when He said, "Let there be light." Mind you, that is just how I imagine it.

God doesn't need light to see. He is a spirit. (John 4:24) He is aware of all things. He is not making what He needs but what we need. After space and matter came light. Today we understand the complete necessity for light. It fuels all living things. Light

**Commented [notes5]:** 5 Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will 'pass over' it and will rescue it." Isaiah 31:5 (NIV)

**Commented [notes6]:** 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:24 (NIV)

provides the power for all living creatures in one way or another. It is the obvious third ingredient for physical life and that is the direction toward which God is working. He speaks things into existence. The writer of Hebrews tells us that it is by faith that we understand that the universe was framed by the word of God, so that every thing we see came forth from what is not seen. (Hebrews 11:3)

**Commented [notes7]:** By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. Heb 11:3 (NIV)

I want you to notice something in these three verses. In verse one we have God the mighty eternal One. In the second verse we have the Spirit of God. We refer to Him as the Holy Spirit. In the third verse we have the word of God, "God said..." The Apostle John told us that Jesus is the Word of God in human form. (John 1:14) 1,2,3 Father, Spirit, and Son. The Father is the Creator, Almighty God. The Spirit of God is that which goes out and acts in our world to bring order from chaos. The Son is the Word of God, the instrument of Creation. And these three are one.

**Commented [notes8]:** 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NIV)

The Apostle John tells us that the Word was in the beginning. The Word was with God and the Word was God. Without Him, nothing is made that was made. (John 1:1-3) The Apostle Paul tells us that <sup>15</sup> *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* <sup>16</sup> *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.* <sup>17</sup> *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* Colossians 1:15-17 (NIV) God is the Creator and Jesus, the Word, is the instrument of creation. Father, Spirit, and Son are all working together to bring about the creation. We don't have to go very far to find that Jesus is in the center of it all.

**Commented [notes9]:** 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
2 He was with God in the beginning.  
3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. John 1:1-3 (NIV)

Jesus said that He is the Light of world. (John 9:5) When God created light, He did not create Jesus, for Jesus has been a part of the Godhead from eternity. He did however create a type of the Savior. We understand the invisible God through the things He made. (Romans 1:20) Jesus wasn't saying, "I am photons." But He was saying that "I am to you what light is to the world." Consider what light does in our world. It powers photosynthesis that in turn grows our plants and algae which in turn provides our oxygen and our food. All animals depend on the growth of things that depend on sunlight. We drink milk from cows that eat grass that grows because of light. Even predators eat animals that depend on plants that depend on light.

**Commented [notes10]:** 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John 9:5 (NIV)

**Commented [notes11]:** 20 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, so that men are without excuse. Romans 1:20 (NIV)

Light warms our planet, making it habitable. It is light energy that comes from the sun and is converted to heat energy when the light waves strike an object. Light illuminates our world, making it possible to work and move about. Without light we could not see. Jesus said that if you don't want to stumble about, you need to come to Him for light. The psalmist said the Word is a light to our path. (Psalm 119:105) We need Jesus for spiritual food. We need Him for our spiritual warmth. We need Him to be able to see spiritually the dangers of living in a fallen world. Only His light can illuminate the darkness of the world. (John 11:9)

**Commented [notes12]:** 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Psalms 119:105 (NIV)

**Commented [notes13]:** 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. John 11:9 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> *God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God is good. What He does is good. (Psalm 119:68) What He creates is good. It is a necessity for His future intentions and it is a type of Messiah that was to come. That's good. You see, God is very creative. When He does things, He does things with*

**Commented [notes14]:** 68 You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees. Psalms 119:68 (NIV)

multiple purposes and messages. What He does fits into all His plans. His creation speaks of His goodness and majesty.

Is light good? We get a little short of light in the winter and we get depressed. Not enough sunlight and we are lacking vitamin D. I was watching a science special on some aquanauts that were living at 100' under the ocean surface to study coral reefs. They stayed down for a few weeks. Upon their return to the surface, they each commented on how nice it felt to be in the sun. There is a cave in our canyon that is deep enough to take you into total darkness. When you exit the cave the thing that strikes everyone is the beauty of colors that the light brings out. You don't have to be away from it for long to get a new appreciation of it. When was the last time you gave thanks to God for light? And how about for the light of your soul?

He separated the light from the darkness. Remember the sun is not created yet. Space went from darkness to light. Then God made separation of light and darkness. The Apostle Paul picks up on this thought and says that we are children of the light and of the day. We are not of darkness or the night. (1Thessalonians 5:4-5) We are separated for God. That is the meaning of holiness. Physically speaking I'm thankful there is the darkness of night so that I can sleep. Spiritually speaking I'm thankful that God has called me out of the darkness and into His marvelous light. I don't have to wonder around in darkness falling into dangerous situations because I have the light of life, Jesus. I'm thankful that He has separated us unto Himself. He says, "Come out from among them and be separate, and I will be a father to you." (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

<sup>5</sup> God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning--the first day. And so the first day of creation was completed. There is no sun yet, so I can't tell you a day was 24 hours. He does call it an evening and a morning because there was darkness and then light. That is why the Jews today begin the new day in the evening. Creation began with space, matter, and light. Makes perfect sense to me. It doesn't sound like the myths of old, and yet this story predates most myths. It was first recorded by Moses around 3500 years ago. It is rich with spiritual symbolism, and yet it is very practical and relates to what we see.

One last analogy from the Apostle Paul drawn most likely from this first day of creation. *8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.* Ephesians 5:8 (NIV) Those of you who know Christ as the light of life were once in darkness. Now you are light in the Lord. Jesus said that you are the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14) Just as His life illuminated for mankind the love of God, so our life in Christ is to illuminate the love of God to those in darkness. So Paul urges us to live as children of light. As I concluded in the message several weeks ago, the only way we are going to turn people from darkness to light is to live in the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. Live as children of the light. That is the message of the first day of creation. Be a child of this good Creator God who calls you to be separated from the world by living in the light.

If you have never known the light of life, there is no better time than this morning to invite the light into the darkness of your life. Here is the word from Jesus own lips. "I

**Commented [notes15]:** 4 But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.  
5 You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.  
1 Thess 5:4-5 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."  
18 "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."  
2 Cor 6:17-18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden."  
Matt 5:14 (NIV)

*am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* John 8:12 (NIV) Has the Spirit of God been hovering over your soul, waiting to take the raw material that is chaotic and without purpose and shape you into what He has planned from before time began, something of order and direction? Then it can be said of you too that you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

For you who already made that decision, are you living in the light, or have you moved back into darkness? This is God's call to you this morning to LIVE moment by moment as children of the light. Here are His words, "*Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.*" John 3:21 (NIV)

The light that began the creative work of God will one day flood over all that is and darkness will be no more. The last chapter of the Bible tells us of the culmination of the first chapter. <sup>5</sup> *There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.* Revelation 22:5 (NIV) Light is coming! But why wait till then? You can live in it now!