

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #2

Genesis 1:1

Hebrew:

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ
in beginning he created God the heavens and the earth

Greek Septuagint:

εν αρχη εποιησεν ο θεος τον ουρανον και την γην
In beginning created/made the God the heaven and the earth

English:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” - NASV, NIV
Translates plural “heavens” based on Hebrew Text

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” - KJV
Translates singular “heaven” based on Greek Text

At no point are the Bible and modern science more in conflict than at **Genesis 1:1!** In this one verse, we have the simple, unsophisticated, majestic Divine fact of how the world began - it was created by God! Over against this simple statement are complex mazes of invented theories which try to give some human explanation of how the world began. The Bible is not a science book, it is a book about God. **However, wherever or whenever the Bible addresses a scientific subject, you may be absolutely certain that the Bible is factual and accurate and it does not change its data.**

The question of what one believes about the creation of the world is much more significant than one might think. According to **Hebrews 11:3** this very issue is a specific issue connected to a faith that pleases God (**11:6**). If any person wants to please God, creation is a non-optional doctrine we must believe. The Bible is filled with those who believed and taught that God created the world:

- 1) It was the belief of Moses. **Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:9-11; 31:17**
- 2) It was the belief of Nehemiah. **Nehemiah 9:6**
- 3) It was the belief of David. **Psalm 8; 96:5; 104:2**
- 4) It was the belief of Psalmists. **Psalm 115:15; 121:2; 136:5-6**
- 5) It was the belief of Isaiah. **Isaiah 40:22, 28; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12, 18**
- 6) It was the belief of Jeremiah. **Jeremiah 10:12; 51:15**
- 7) It was the belief of Paul. **Acts 14:15; 17:24**
- 8) It was the belief of Peter. **II Peter 3:5**
- 9) It was the belief of John. **Revelation 4:11; 10:6**

These are just a few who believed the Bible could be trusted on every subject because it is the Word of God coming from a God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

THE MAJESTIC GOD IS THE CREATOR OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.

By virtue of the fact that this verse opens the Bible, this is the first point God wanted communicated about Himself in His Word. The fact of creation is extremely important for this actually makes one accountable to God to acknowledge God's existence (**Romans 1:20**).

REALITY #1 – The time of creation. **Genesis 1:1a**

Verse 1 opens with the Hebrew word “bereshith” which means “in the beginning.” The statement is not referring to the beginning of God, but to the beginning of God's creation.

The Bible is very clear that God is the eternal, everlasting God (**Psalm 90:2**), who always existed, who continually exists and will forever exist (**Revelation 4:8**). The statement “in the beginning” refers to the time when God began to create. In fact, some Jewish commentators actually translated “in the beginning,” “When God began to create”.... (John J. Davis, p. 38). Creation came according to the timing of God, when He decided to create. No date is given when this happened, but it happened when God wanted it to happen (7000 B.C. - 3500 B.C.).

REALITY #2 – The God of creation. **Genesis 1:1b**

It is very clear that the subject that dominates creation is the subject of God. In chapter 1, the noun “God” shows up 32 times in 31 verses. This shows us the dominating theme of creation, of the whole Bible - it is God !

This first name, of many names of Deity used for God, is the name Elohim. This is the particular name for God which dominates Genesis 1. The ending of the word “him” (pronounced in Hebrew “heem”) is a plural ending in Hebrew. Mr. Gesenius, in his Hebrew grammar, states that when a plural noun is used in a singular meaning, it is a plural that is designed to stress excellence and majesty (Gesenius, *Gesenius Hebrew Grammar*, p. 463). This particular word stresses the majestic power of God and should promote respect and reverence for THE ONE who is capable of creating things of majestic, excellence like the heavens and the earth.

The fact that the noun Elohim is plural, plus the fact that the verb “create” is singular does lend itself to the doctrine of the Trinity. As Dr. S. Lewis Johnson said, this does not in itself prove the doctrine of the Trinity, but it does permit it (p. 4). John Calvin clearly saw this point when he wrote: “Moses has it Elohim, a noun of plural number. Whence the inference is drawn, that the three Persons of the Godhead are here noted...” (Calvin, pp. 70-71).

We certainly know from **Genesis 1:3** that the Spirit of God was involved in creation.
We certainly know from **John 1:1-3** that the Son of God was involved in creation.
We certainly know from **Romans 1:20** that the entire Godhead was involved in creation.
What this Trinitarian truth means is that creation did have three eyewitnesses.
Three Divine Persons were there and they can testify as to how the world began.
Since scientific fact requires a witness, creation is a scientific fact based on three Divine Eyewitnesses.

REALITY #3 – The action of creation. **1:1c**

The Hebrew verb “create” (bara) has become a major focal point of theological debate. The issue that is debated is whether or not God created the heavens and the earth “ex nihilo” (out of nothing) or whether God made the heavens and the earth out of some preexisting material.

The verb “bara” (create) is a verb that can either refer to creating something out of nothing or creating something out of some existing materials. For example, we believe the heavens and the earth were created out of nothing, however in **Genesis 1:27**, the same verb bara is used concerning the creation of a man and woman and we know that they were made from something already in existence (**Genesis 2:7, 22**).

If we compare the statement in **Hebrews 11:3** - which says the worlds were prepared by the word of God “so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible,” with **Romans 4:17** which says that God “calls into being that which does not exist,” and if we take into consideration that the word “bara” is exclusively used for the activity of God in creating something new, plus we put this in the context of **Genesis 1** in which the verb bara is first used, we conclude as John Calvin said “...that **the world was made out of nothing**” (Calvin, p. 70).

The first point that God asks men to acknowledge about Him is the fact that He, as the Supreme and Majestic God, created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. These are the true facts about God and creation - it is His Majestic action - He planned it! He timed it! He performed it!

REALITY #4 – The extent of creation. 1:1d

Although the complete extent of God’s creation is the subject of the remaining chapter - it is emphasized here that God created the heavens and the earth - the stress is the entire universe.

The plural “heavens” refers to all the rest of the universe not classified as earth. Every Jew knew there were three heavens: 1) Where the birds fly (**Hosea 2:18**) (our atmosphere); 2) Where the stars and planets are (**Genesis 1:14-18**) (above our atmosphere); 3) Where God’s throne is (**II Corinthians 12:2; Revelation 4:2**). The main point of this verse is that God created it all. He designed space known as the heavens and He designed matter known as the earth.

The noun earth in verse 1 refers to the entire mass of which our planet is composed. It is not referring to dry land, as God will not cause dry land until the third day (**Genesis 1:10**).

The story of how things came into existence is a story that may be summed up in ten English words: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” No statement will ever be as simple, as factual or complete.

The Majestic Triune God created the heavens and the earth - these are the facts. God is the One who created the heavens and earth and He is the One who created us. The heavens and the earth bring glory to God; the question is, do we? Do we bring glory to God in the way we think about this world and the way in which we live in it?