

Before The Beginning

Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

Genesis 1:1 starts the Bible by saying that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. By “beginning” it is referring to the beginning of *our* history – the history of this world and the things that are in it. Before our history began, however, God already existed. This raises several key questions.

Q1. What existed before the beginning?

A We know that God (by which we mean the Trinity – God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) must have existed before the beginning because He was there to create the world. God is not a part of Creation; He has always existed and will always exist. This can be seen in several passages:

Psalms 90:2: “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”

Revelation 1:8: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him: and without him was not any thing made that was made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”

The reason that mankind exists is because God chose to create us. We continue to exist because God sustains us by His power. God, however, is entirely different. God has life in Himself. He does not need someone else to sustain Him because He is self-existent:

John 5:26: “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;”

The Bible goes on to say that everything was created by God – specifically, by God the Son:

Colossians 1:16: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:”

As you can see, everything that exists was created by Jesus. He is our Creator.

What about the angels? While we know that God made them, the creation of the heavenly beings is not mentioned in the creation account. We do know that everything in this universe was created during the six-day creation week:

Exodus 20:11: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

As we can see, in six days the Lord made the heavens, the Earth, the sea, and everything that is in the heavens, the Earth, and the sea. This sounds pretty definitive, but the heavens it is speaking of is the Universe at large – the giant construct in which we find planets, stars, and galaxies. It is *not* referring to Heaven, the place where the Lord dwells. So, while this verse tells us that everything in this universe was created during the six-day creation week, it does not necessarily include the angels.

We do know that the angels were created and have not always existed. The creation of one angel in particular is recorded in Ezekiel. There we find a record of Lucifer, the angel who fell and became Satan:

Ezekiel 28:11: “Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.
13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.
14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.
15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”

Although this verse seems to be talking about the “king of Tyrus”, it is actually talking about the devil. How do we know this? Well, the human king of Tyrus could not possibly have set foot in Eden, as it was destroyed long before he was born. The only beings who could have been in Eden and yet still be alive thousands of years later are angels, and the only angels that have sinned are fallen angels. This may seem like an odd way to refer to a demon, but the Bible has a habit of referring to demons by the nations that they control. For example, in Daniel 10:13 we see another demon referred to as the prince of Persia.

As we can see, this passage records Satan's early history and makes note of “the day that thou was created”. Satan is a created being, not an eternal one – and this applies to the rest of the angels as well.

While it is possible that the angels were created during the creation week, it is also possible that they are older than that. Job tells us that the angels were present at the creation of the Earth, and shouted for joy when they saw what God was doing:

Job 38:4: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if

thou hast understanding.

5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;

7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

The phrase “sons of God” is a reference to the angels. They shouted for joy when God created the world on the first day of creation, so they must have existed at that time. This means it's possible that the angels also existed “before the beginning” – but they have not *always* existed. They are not eternal, like God. They had a beginning and they have a Creator. God, on the other hand, has no beginning and has no creator – which leads us to our next question.

Q2. How could God have always existed? Didn't someone have to create God?

A. God is eternal – He has no beginning and He has no ending. The Bible is clear that God has life in himself (John 5:26) and did not need anyone to create Him.

This may seem strange, but it's actually perfectly logical. Think of it this way. If something comes into existence then it *must* have had a cause. Why? Because something must have *caused* it to come into existence. There must have been some outside force that took some action that led to its creation. For example, there was a point at which the universe did not exist, and then one day it *did* exist. Therefore, the universe must have a cause. Everything that has a beginning must have a cause; there are no exceptions.

However, if something did not have a beginning then it does not need to have a cause. In fact, things that are eternal *cannot have causes*. After all, if they had a cause then they would have a beginning, and if they had a beginning then they would not be eternal! God has always existed, and therefore God does not have a cause. Nothing “caused” God to come into existence. Therefore, God does not have a creator.

As Christians we will live forever, and have been given everlasting life. However, we are not eternal like God. Our life will never end, but our lives did have a beginning. There was a point at which we came into existence. God, however, did not have a beginning. He has always existed and will always exist.

Q3. Did God know what was going to happen before He created the world?

A. Yes. God knows all things; nothing escapes Him. He sees the past, the present, and the future. He knew exactly what would happen when He created the world. This can be seen in these Scriptures. (These verses touch on many different points of doctrine, but I want to focus on a specific idea – that God knew everything that would happen before He created the world.)

Ephesians 1:4: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:”

If God chose to love us “before the foundation of the world”, then He must have known that we would exist and would need saving. Our existence did not take God by surprise. He knew that each and

every one of us would exist before He created the world!

But there is more to it than that:

Revelation 13:8: “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world.”

If Christ, the Lamb of God, was “slain from the foundation of the world”, then God must have already known that man would fall and need redeeming. What this means is that Jesus already planned to come and die for our sins *before He spoke the world into existence*. He knew exactly how things were going to turn out. The Fall did not catch Him by surprise. When Adam sinned, God did not call an emergency meeting to decide what to do about it. Everything was known long in advance.

This idea is echoed in this verse:

Titus 1:2: “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;”

If God promised us eternal life “before the world began”, then He must have known that we would need it. Before mankind even sinned God had a plan to redeem us and give us everlasting life. Nor is this the only verse that mentions this. That idea is echoed here:

2 Timothy 1:9: “Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,”

Once again, here we see that God's grace was given to us “before the world began” – which would be long before we ever existed. God saw our need and moved to meet it before we were even born – and before our world was even created. God's grace was given to us *before the world began*. That is an amazing thought!

1 Peter 1:18: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,”

Here again we see that Christ was offered “before the foundation of the world”. God knew what would happen: He saw the Fall, our sin, and our desperate need for a savior – all before we had even been created. In fact, our names were written in the Book of Life before the world began:

Revelation 17:8: “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of

the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”

Some people think that our names were written in the Book when we become saved, but that is not the case. Our name was written in the Book of Life “from the foundation of the world” – and all those whose names are written in the Book inherit everlasting life.

Now, can a name be blotted out of the Book? I have searched the Scriptures, and I have only found one case where this can happen. It is found in the last chapter of the Bible:

Revelation 22:18: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

Some people have interpreted this passage to be speaking about just Revelation itself, while others have applied it to the whole Bible. I think it's just speaking about Revelation, since it clearly says “the words of the prophecy of *this* book”. It does not say “any words that God has ever said at any time”, or “any books that God has written”. There are other verses that warn against modifying God's Word in general; there is no need to force this verse to say something that it simply does not say.

What it says is quite chilling. Those who take it upon themselves to *edit* this book – to remove portions of it and change it as they see fit – will have their name removed from the Book of Life. This verse is not speaking about those who try to interpret the book; it address those who *physically alter its words*.

The reason this is so frightening is because there are people who do exactly that. Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, have come out with their own translation of the Bible that removes a great many things – including some things found in the book of Revelation. They don't like what the Bible says so they have edited it to suit themselves. God takes a *very* dim view of those who edit His Word. As you can see, He has promised *eternal damnation* to those who dare to edit the book of Revelation. That is not something that we should take lightly.

Q4. Why did Jesus create the world?

A. First of all, we need to make a few things very clear. God did *not* create the world because He was bored, or because He wanted someone to talk to, or because He needed friends. God is self-sufficient (a property that theologians refer to as His **aseity**). There is absolutely nothing we can do that can add to Him or that can subtract from Him:

Acts 17:24: “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;”

Moreover, even if God did need something (and the passage above makes it clear that He does not), God already owns the entire universe and everything it contains:

Psalm 50:7: "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.

8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.

9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.

10 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine.

12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof."

Job 41:11: "Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine."

God is not a poor person who is hoping that we will give Him a handout. He owns everything; there is nothing that does not belong to Him. As Job said, everything "under the whole heaven" belongs to God. When we give money to God we're not giving *our* possessions to God; we're just giving back to Him what was already His.

On top of that, God is perfect and complete. God is not growing. He never changes:

Malachi 3:6: "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

God has not changed one bit since the creation of the world. He is the same now as He was in the eternity before creation. A billion years from now He will not have changed one iota. Creating the world has not somehow improved God. It has not made Him more than He was before. As Acts 17:25 said, God does not even need our worship. He delights in it and He commands it, but He does not need it. He got along without it quite fine in the ages before we were created. God would not somehow be lessened if we were not there to worship Him. He is complete; He needs nothing.

In other words, God did not create us because He needed something that only we can give. That is *not* the reason. The reason for Creation is straightforward. The universe was created to glorify God:

Revelation 4:11: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Romans 11:34: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

Hebrews 2:10: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

In other words, God created everything for His own pleasure. The universe exists to glory God.

The purpose of life – the purpose of our very existence – is to bring glory and honor to God. As someone once said, our greatest goal and duty in life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. *This purpose will never change.* Our lives in Heaven may be quite different from what they are now, but our purpose in life will be the same, and it will remain so *for all eternity.*

So, then: how does the universe glorify God? We have established that God existed before the world began and that He knew what would happen when He created the world. He knew that the Fall would occur and that men would need salvation, and yet He still chose to create the world. But *why* did He do it? How does God's creation bring Him glory?

The answer is found here:

Romans 9:22: “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:
23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,
24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

What these verses are saying is that the existence of this world, including the existence of evil, allows certain elements of God's character to be demonstrated that would otherwise have remained forever hidden. For example, God's wrath and mercy can only be demonstrated if evil exists. If there was no sin then God would have no way to demonstrate His grace or His judgment. In that case, some mighty facets of God's character (such as mercy, forgiveness, grace, longsuffering, and wrath) would remain hidden for all of eternity. God would still have had those character qualities, but they would never have been demonstrated. God uses the universe to reveal who He is in a way that would have otherwise not been possible.

Does this mean that God wants people to go to Hell? Absolutely not! God makes it quite clear that He feels no joy when the wicked perish, and would much rather see them repent:

Ezekiel 33:11: “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

Ezekiel 18:23: “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?”

As you can see, God wants men to repent – but there are some who do and some who do not. Through those who *do* repent, God demonstrates His forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love, and makes known “the riches of his glory”. Through those who do *not* repent, God demonstrates His justice and wrath and makes His power known. God demonstrates His character through both groups, and reveals parts of His being that were hidden in the ages before Creation.