

Before The Beginning

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

The very first verse in the Bible tells us that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. By “beginning” it's referring to the beginning of *our* history – the history of this world and the things that are in it. However, before our history began God already existed! This raises several key questions.

#1. What existed before the beginning?

The Trinity – God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – must have existed before the beginning because He was there to create the world! God isn't 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 1:1-4: “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. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”

The reason mankind exists is because God chose to create us. The reason we continue to exist is because God sustains us by His power. However, God is entirely different! The Lord has life in Himself. He doesn't need someone else to sustain Him because He's 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 tells us that everything was created by God – specifically, by God the Son:

Colossians 1:13-16: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 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:”

Everything that exists was created by Jesus. He is our Creator!

What about the angels? While we know that God is the one who made them, the creation of the heavenly beings isn't 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.”

In six days the Lord made the heavens, the Earth, the sea, and everything that's in the heavens, the Earth, and the sea. That means the angels must have been created at some point during that week.

The creation of one angel in particular is recorded in Ezekiel. There we can find a record of Lucifer, the angel who fell and became Satan:

Ezekiel 28:11-15: “Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 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. 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. 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. 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's actually talking about the devil. The reason we know this is because the human king of Tyrus couldn't possibly have set foot in Eden, because 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 there are times when the Bible refers to demons by the nations they control. For example, in Daniel 10:13 we find another demon who's called the prince of Persia.

Ezekiel 28 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.

The book of 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 38:4-7: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; 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 were created on the very first day of creation, before God created the world.

Unlike God, the angels aren't eternal. They had a beginning and they have a Creator. God has no beginning and has no Creator – which leads us to our next question.

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

God is eternal – He has no beginning and He has no ending. The Bible tells us that God has life in himself (John 5:26) and didn't need anyone to create Him.

This may seem strange but it's 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 which did something that led to its creation. For example, there was a time when the universe didn't exist, and then one day it *did* exist. Therefore the universe must have a cause. Everything that has a beginning must also have a cause.

However, if something did *not* have a beginning then it doesn't need to have a cause. In fact, things that are eternal *can't have causes!* If they had a cause then they would also have a beginning, and if they had a beginning then they wouldn't be eternal! Since God has always existed He doesn't have a cause. Nothing “caused” God to come into existence so God doesn't have a Creator.

All Christians will live forever because God has given us everlasting life (John 3:16). However, we're not eternal like God. Although our life will never end, our lives did have a beginning. There was a point when we came into existence. God, however, doesn't have a beginning. He has always existed and will always exist.

#3. Did God know that people were going to sin before He created the world?

Yes. God knows all things! Nothing escapes Him. He knows 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. For example:

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 we would exist and would need to be saved! Our existence didn't take God by surprise. He knew that all of us would exist before He even created the world!

But there's more:

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 known that mankind would fall into sin and need redemption. This means Jesus 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 didn't catch Him by surprise. When Adam sinned God didn't call an emergency meeting to decide what to do about it. Everything was known in advance.

That doctrine is repeated 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 we would need it. Before mankind sinned God had a plan to redeem us and give us everlasting life! Nor is this the only verse that mentions this. That same idea is taught 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 we see that God's grace was given to us “before the world began” – which is long before we ever existed! God saw our need and moved to meet it before we were even born. In fact, God's grace was given to us *before the world began*. That's an amazing thought!

1 Peter 1:18-20: “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; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,”

Here we see that Christ was offered “before the foundation of the world”. God knew what was going to happen. Before He created us He saw the Fall, our sin, and our desperate need for a Savior. In fact, our names were written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world:

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 of Life when we're saved, but that's 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 of Life will inherit everlasting life (Revelation 20:12-15).

Can someone's name be blotted out of the Book? I've searched the Scriptures and found only one case where this can happen. It's discussed in the last chapter of the Bible:

Revelation 22:18-19: "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: 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."

This verse is terrifying! Those who tamper with the book of Revelation by removing portions of its text will have their name removed from the Book of Life. This verse isn't talking about those who try to interpret the book. It's specifically addressing those who *physically alter its words*.

There are some people who do exactly that. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses have 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've edited it to suit themselves. God takes a *very dim* view of those who edit His Word! He's promised *eternal damnation* to those who dare to edit the book of Revelation. That's something we shouldn't take lightly.

#4. Why did Jesus create the world?

First of all, God didn't 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's nothing we can ever do that would add something to Him or take something away from Him:

Acts 17:24-25: “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; Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;”

Even if God did need something (and the passage above makes it clear that He doesn't), God already owns the entire universe and everything it contains:

Psalm 50:7-12: “Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. 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 isn't a poor person who's hoping we'll give Him a handout! He owns everything in the universe. There's nothing that doesn't belong to Him! As Job said, everything “under the whole

heaven” belongs to God. When we give money to God we're not giving something that we own to Him; instead we're giving to Him what He already owns.

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

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

God hasn't changed one bit since the creation of the world. He's the same being now that He was in the eternity before creation. A billion years from now He won't have changed at all. Creating the world hasn't improved God or made Him more than He was before.

As Acts 17:25 says, God doesn't even need our worship! He delights in it and He commands it, but He doesn't need it. He got along without it quite fine before we were ever created. God wouldn't somehow be lessened if we weren't there to worship Him. He is complete and needs nothing.

This means God didn't create us because He needed something that only we can give. The actual 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 11:34-36: “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 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.”

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 the Westminster Shorter Catechism says, our greatest goal and duty in life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. *This purpose will never change.* Our lives in the world to come may be quite different from what they are now, but our purpose will be the same *for all eternity.*

How does the universe glorify God? That's the question. We know that God existed before He created the world. We know God knew that the Fall would occur and mankind 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 9:22-24: “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: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

These verses are saying that this universe allows certain aspects of God's character to be publicly demonstrated – aspects which were previously kept 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 judgment. Previously there were mighty facets of God's character (such as mercy, forgiveness, grace, longsuffering, and wrath) that

were hidden for all of eternity. God still had those character qualities, but there was no way to demonstrate them. The Lord uses this universe to reveal who He is in a way that otherwise wouldn't have been possible.

This means that the righteous glorify God by giving Him an opportunity to demonstrate His mercy, compassion, and grace. Likewise, the wicked glorify God by giving Him an opportunity to demonstrate His justice, wrath, and hatred of evil. For all of eternity the righteous will glorify God by being “vessels of mercy”, and for all of eternity the wicked will glorify God by being “vessels of wrath”. Therefore both the wicked and the righteous will bring glory to God forever (although in very different ways).

Does this mean God delights in sending people to Hell? Absolutely not! God feels no joy when the wicked perish:

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 we can see, through those who repent He demonstrates His forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love. Through those who do *not* repent He demonstrates His justice and wrath. This means that God demonstrates His character through both groups, and reveals parts of His character that were hidden in the ages before Creation.