

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH
REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

WHAT EXISTED BEFORE THE BEGINNING?

GENESIS 1:1

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley
www.ReasonTogether.Church

*Bring your questions. Open your Bible.
Let's Reason Together the Word of God.*

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT



WHAT EXISTED BEFORE THE BEGINNING?

Genesis 1:1 KJV

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

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Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Whether you have worshiped with us many times or whether this is your first time with us, I am grateful that you are here.

We are especially honored by our guests today.

We will never ask you to stand, introduce yourself or do anything that might embarrass you.

You are welcome to listen.

You are welcome to ask questions.

You are welcome to open your Bible and reason through the Word of God with us.

That is why we say, "Bring your questions. Open your Bible. Let's Reason Together the Word of God."

After the service, I hope you will join us in the Reason Together Cafe.

The coffee is free and so are the refills on conversations.

If you have keiki with you, our Keiki Kids Center is available for them as well.

Before we begin the study, let me briefly mention giving.

There is a giving box in the back for members of Reason Together Church who want to give as the Lord leads them.

Our guests are never expected to give.

If you are a member of another church, we encourage you to give through your home church.

The Bible teaches that giving should be cheerful and never under compulsion.

Today we are going to begin with the very first words in the Bible.

Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1 says:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Most of us have heard those words many times.

Some of us memorized them as children.

They are so familiar that we can move past them without stopping to consider how much they say.

The Bible opens with four words that change every other word that follows:

"In the beginning God."

That sentence gives us the subject of the entire Bible.

It gives us the source of the universe.

It gives us the One from whom every created thing receives its existence.

But it also raises a question that sounds almost impossible to ask.

What existed before the beginning?

If we asked that question in a room full of people, the most common answer would probably be, "Nothing."

Before the beginning there was nothing.

That answer is close, but it is not complete.

Before the beginning there was no earth.

There were no oceans rolling against the shore.

There were no mountains reaching into the sky.

There were no islands rising from the Pacific.

There was no sun warming the sand of Waikiki.

There was no moon reflecting light across the water.

There were no people, nations, houses, churches, clocks or calendars.

But there was not absolutely nothing.

Before the beginning, there was God.

Genesis 1:1 is not the beginning of God.

It is the beginning of what God created.

The verse does not say, "In the beginning God came into existence."

It says, "In the beginning God created."

When the beginning began, God was already there.

God is not introduced as a product of the universe.

He is introduced as its Creator.

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."

Notice that the psalm does not merely say God existed a very long time ago.

It says, "from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

There was never a moment when God was not God.

There was never a time when God was younger than He is now.

There was never a season when God was learning how to be God.

There was never a power above Him that appointed Him.

There was never an older god who created Him.

God did not inherit the universe from someone else.

He did not discover matter floating in empty space and decide what to do with it.

He created the heaven and the earth.

Isaiah 43:10 records the Lord saying:

"Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me."

Isaiah 44:6 says:

"I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."

Everything we know in ordinary life has a beginning.

Every person has a birthday.

Every building has a day when construction began.

Every book has a moment when the first word was written.

Every journey has a first step.

We naturally assume that if something exists, something else must have caused it to exist.

That is true of created things.

It is not true of God.

If God needed someone else to create Him, that other being would be God.

If God depended upon something outside Himself for existence, He would not be the eternal Creator revealed in Scripture.

The Bible presents God as self-existent.

Everything else depends upon Him.

He depends upon no one.

That gives us our first answer.

Before the beginning, God existed.

But now our question becomes more specific.

When we say God existed, do we mean only the Father?

Did Jesus begin when He was born in Bethlehem?

Did the Holy Spirit come into existence when creation began?

John chapter 1 takes us back to the opening language of Genesis.

John 1:1 says:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

The wording is careful.

In the beginning, the Word was.

The Word did not begin to be.

When creation received its beginning, the Word already was.

John says the Word was with God.

There is fellowship and relationship.

Then John says the Word was God.

There is deity.

John 1:3 continues:

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

That verse places everything into one of two categories.

There are things that were made and there is the One by whom they were made.

Jesus belongs in the second category.

He is not one of the things that was made.

All things that were made were made by Him.

Jesus did not begin in Bethlehem.

Bethlehem was when the eternal Son entered the human world in human flesh.

The baby held by Mary was truly human, but He was not merely human.

The One who lay in the manger was the One through whom the universe had been made.

Before Bethlehem, He was.

Before Abraham, He was.

Before Adam, He was.

Before the earth, He was.

Before the beginning, the Son was with the Father and the Son was God.

In John 17:5 Jesus prayed:

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

Jesus remembered glory with the Father before the world existed.

He did not speak as a created angel hoping to receive a new honor.

He spoke of the glory He had with the Father before the world was.

Then in John 17:24 Jesus said:

"For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Before the world existed, the Father loved the Son.

Before there was a human family, there was perfect fellowship within God.

Before anyone on earth spoke the words, "I love you," love was already real in God.

God did not create humanity because He was lonely.

He did not make angels because heaven felt empty.

He did not need to create someone who could complete Him.

Acts 17 teaches that God is not worshiped as though He needed anything.

God is complete in Himself.

Creation does not fill a deficiency in God.

Creation displays His wisdom, power, goodness and glory.

The Father was there before the beginning.

The Son was there before the beginning.

What about the Holy Spirit?

We do not have to travel far into Genesis to find Him.

Genesis 1:2 says:

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

At the opening of creation, the Spirit of God is present and active.

Hebrews 9:14 calls Him "the eternal Spirit."

The Holy Spirit is not a created energy that God turned on when He needed power.

He is not an impersonal force.

He is eternal God.

Therefore, before creation there was not a solitary person longing for fellowship.

There was the one eternal God revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We should be humble when speaking about the Trinity.

We are not claiming that there are three gods.

Scripture teaches that there is one God.

We are not claiming that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three temporary masks worn by one Person.

The Father loves the Son.

The Son speaks to the Father.

The Spirit is sent and acts personally.

The one eternal God has revealed Himself in three Persons.

We will not fully explain the infinite God with a small human illustration.

But we can believe what He has revealed.

Before the beginning, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit existed in perfect eternal fellowship.

Now consider the word "before."

We understand before and after because we live inside time.

There was a time before we came into this room and there will be a time after we leave it.

Yesterday came before today.

Today comes before tomorrow.

We measure time with the movement of the earth, the rising of the sun and the numbers on a clock.

But what if time itself belongs to creation?

What does "before the beginning" mean if there was no created clock ticking one moment after another?

Genesis 1:14 says God placed lights in the firmament for signs, seasons, days and years.

Our ordinary measurements of time depend upon the created order.

God does not depend upon those measurements.

God does not grow old.

God does not forget because too many years have passed.

God never looks at a clock and discovers that He is running late.

God never reaches tomorrow and learns something that caught Him by surprise.

Isaiah 46:9 and 10 says:

"I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done."

We use the phrase "before the beginning" because it allows us to ask the question in words we understand.

But we should not picture God sitting in an empty room for trillions of years, looking at an uncreated watch and waiting for the right day to begin.

There was no room until God made space.

There was no watch until God made the kind of universe in which time could be measured.

God did not wait through an endless number of ordinary days before He created the first day.

He simply is.

This is one reason God revealed His name to Moses as "I AM."

God's existence is not borrowed from the past or dependent upon the future.

He is the eternal God.

This brings us to another question.

Did heaven exist before the beginning?

People often imagine heaven as an eternal place and God as someone who has always lived inside it.

But Genesis 1:1 says God created the heaven and the earth.

Nehemiah 9:6 says:

"Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host."

Heaven belongs to what God made.

The word heaven is used in more than one way in Scripture.

It can describe the sky where birds fly.

It can describe the region of the sun, moon and stars.

It can describe the heavenly realm associated with God's throne and heavenly beings.

That means we must be careful when we ask exactly which heaven is described in a particular verse.

But the larger truth is clear.

Heaven is not another eternal reality standing beside God as His equal.

God made heaven.

God does not exist because heaven gives Him a place to live.

Heaven exists because God gave it existence.

Solomon understood this when he prayed in 1 Kings 8:27:

"Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee."

God is greater than every place He created.

Heaven is His throne, but God is not imprisoned by His throne.

The Creator cannot be reduced to one location inside His creation.

So if someone asks, "Where was God before He created heaven?" the question assumes that God needs a created where in order to exist.

He does not.

God created every where.

Now we come to the part of the question that first drew many of us into this study.

What about the angels?

Were the angels already there when God created the earth?

Did they exist before Genesis 1:1?

When were they created?

The Bible never gives us a simple sentence saying, "On this day God created the angels."

That means we must gather the passages God has given us and be careful not to claim more than those passages say.

First, angels are created beings.

Psalm 148 calls upon the heavens and the angels to praise the Lord.

Verses 2 and 5 say:

"Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts... Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created."

Angels were created.

They may be older than humanity, but they are not eternal.

They may possess power beyond ordinary human power, but they are not God.

They may inhabit a realm we cannot presently see, but they do not exist independently of their Creator.

Colossians 1:16 speaks about Jesus Christ and says:

"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."

Visible things were created through Christ.

Invisible things were created through Christ.

Every throne, dominion, principality and power owes its existence to Christ.

No angel helped create Jesus.

Jesus created the angels.

No angel is Christ's equal.

Every faithful angel worships Him and serves His purpose.

That tells us what angels are.

They are created heavenly beings.

It does not yet tell us exactly when they were created.

For that question, Job chapter 38 provides our clearest doorway.

Job had suffered terribly.

He had questions.

His friends had offered explanations, many of which sounded confident but did not accurately explain what God was doing.

Then God answered Job out of the whirlwind.

God did not begin by explaining every hidden detail of Job's suffering.

He began by reminding Job of the difference between the Creator and the creature.

Job 38:4 says:

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding."

God continued by asking who determined its measurements, who stretched the line upon it and upon what its foundations were fastened.

Then verses 6 and 7 say:

"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?"

When God laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars sang together.

The sons of God shouted for joy.

In Job 1 and Job 2, the expression "sons of God" refers to heavenly beings presenting themselves before the Lord.

Here in Job 38, the poetic lines place the morning stars beside the sons of God as a heavenly assembly celebrating God's work.

They did not lay the foundations.

God did.

They did not advise God about the measurements.

God asked Job, "Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest?"

The angels were not God's construction crew.

They were the joyful witnesses.

They watched the Creator do what only the Creator could do and they shouted for joy.

That is a magnificent picture.

Before a human voice praised God on earth, heavenly voices celebrated His work.

Before Adam opened his eyes, heavenly beings had already seen enough of God's power to sing. Job 38 therefore gives us a firm conclusion.

Heavenly beings were present when God laid the earth's foundations.

But does that mean angels existed before Genesis 1:1?

Not necessarily.

Genesis 1:1 may describe the opening act of the entire created order, including the heavens.

God could have created the heavenly beings in an early part of His creative work before laying the earth's foundations.

Job tells us that they were present for the foundation of the earth.

Job does not give us a verse number from Genesis and say, "They were created before this sentence."

We should say everything Scripture allows us to say.

We should not say more than Scripture allows us to say.

Here is what we know.

Angels were created by God.

They were created through Christ.

They were present when God laid the foundations of the earth.

They rejoiced over God's creative work.

Here is what we do not know.

We do not know the exact moment when the angels were created.

We do not know precisely where their creation fits into the six days.

We do not know whether Genesis 1:1 includes the creation of their spiritual dwelling or whether the verse serves as a summary that is unfolded afterward.

We do not know how much created time passed between their creation and their song in Job 38.

That is not a weakness in the Bible.

It is a boundary on our curiosity.

The Bible tells us what God determined we needed to know.

Reasoning together does not mean forcing an answer into every blank space.

Sometimes good Biblical reasoning ends with the words, "Scripture does not tell us."

Faith does not require us to pretend certainty where God has not given certainty.

It requires us to trust the One who knows what we do not.

This same restraint is necessary when we ask about Satan's fall.

By Genesis chapter 3, the serpent is already opposing God and deceiving humanity.

Therefore, rebellion had occurred by that point.

But this sermon is not going to build a detailed date for Satan's fall from passages that require their own careful study.

That question deserves a separate Reason Together Study.

For today, it is enough to recognize that no rebellious angel existed eternally beside God.

Satan is not an evil god equal to the good God.

He is a created being who rebelled against his Creator.

His rebellion did not make him eternal, sovereign or equal to God.

Before the beginning, there was not a cosmic struggle between equal forces of good and evil.

There was God.

Everything else was made by Him and remains accountable to Him.

The Biblical account is strikingly different from stories in which gods arise from earlier matter, descend from previous gods or battle equal rivals to gain control of the world.

Genesis does not begin with God struggling to become God.

It begins with God speaking as God.

He does not fight the darkness.

He says, "Let there be light."

He does not ask permission from the waters.

He places boundaries upon them.

He does not negotiate with the sun, moon and stars.

He makes them and assigns their purpose.

The created world is not the remains of a defeated god.

It is the work of the one sovereign Creator.

Now let us ask another question.

If only God is eternal, was anything about us present before creation?

We were not floating somewhere as spirits waiting to receive bodies.

The Bible does not teach that human souls lived eternally before conception.

We are creatures.

We have a beginning.

Yet Scripture says something remarkable about God's knowledge and purpose for us.

Ephesians 1:4 says:

"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."

Second Timothy 1:9 speaks of God's purpose and grace:

"Which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Titus 1:2 speaks of:

"Eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

These verses do not mean that we personally existed beside God before creation.

They mean that God's knowledge and purpose did not begin when we arrived.

We are not eternal, but the God who knows us is eternal.

Our lives began in time, but God's purpose was not invented after our birth.

God did not discover us by accident.

He did not wait to see whether humanity would remain faithful and then begin searching for a plan when Adam fell.

The plan of redemption reaches back before the foundation of the world.

First Peter 1:18 through 20 speaks of our redemption with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Then it says Christ:

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

Before the world was founded, the Father knew the Son would be revealed as the spotless Lamb.

Before there was a garden, God knew there would be a cross.

Before Adam took the forbidden fruit, God knew what redemption would cost.

Before human hands ever formed a nail, the Son was willing to enter creation and bear our sin.

The cross was not God's emergency response to an event He failed to anticipate.

God was not in heaven watching Genesis 3 unfold and saying, "I did not see that coming."

Nothing has ever surprised God.

This does not mean God caused Adam to sin.

Knowledge is not the same as causation.

If I know the sun will rise tomorrow morning, my knowledge does not cause the sun to rise.

God's knowledge is perfect in a way ours can never be, but His foreknowledge does not remove human responsibility.

Adam chose to disobey.

The serpent chose to deceive.

Human beings continue to make real moral choices.

God remains holy and is never the author of sin.

Yet no sinful choice can overthrow His eternal purpose.

Before the beginning, grace was not yet being given to fallen people because fallen people did not yet exist.

But grace was already in the heart and purpose of God.

Before we needed a Savior, God knew we would need one.

Before we called upon Christ, Christ had determined to come for us.

Before we loved Him, He loved us.

That leads to one of the hardest questions in the study.

If God knew humanity would sin, why did He create us?

We should admit that Scripture does not answer every philosophical form of that question.

There are depths in the wisdom and knowledge of God that we cannot fully search.

Romans 11:33 says:

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

But Scripture does reveal several truths.

Creation declares the glory of God.

Humanity was created in the image of God.

God's holiness is revealed in His judgment of sin.

God's mercy is revealed in His patience toward sinners.

God's grace is revealed in the gift of His Son.

God's justice and love meet at the cross.

Evil will not have the final word.

God will judge it, defeat it and bring His creation to the conclusion He has purposed.

Revelation 4:11 says:

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

We were not created because God owed us existence.

We were created by His will and for His glory.

Our value is not found in being the center of the universe.

Our value is found in being made by God, in the image of God and for the purpose of God.

The universe is not ultimately our story with God appearing as a supporting character.

It is God's story and He graciously gives us a place within it.

Colossians 1:16 does not merely say all things were created by Christ.

It says all things were created "for him."

The galaxies are for Him.

The earth is for Him.

The angels are for Him.

Our lives are for Him.

The church is for Him.

History is moving toward Him.

Then Colossians 1:17 says:

"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Christ is before all things.

All things consist by Him.

The word "consist" carries the idea of holding together.

The Creator did not wind up the universe and abandon it.

Every breath we take depends upon His sustaining power.

Every physical law we study operates within the order He established.

Every heartbeat is possible because the Creator continues to uphold His creation.

The One who was there before the beginning is still present now.

That truth is not only about cosmology.

It is pastoral.

It matters when your life feels as though it is coming apart.

Some problems surprise us completely.

The telephone rings and a single sentence changes the direction of the day.

A doctor gives a diagnosis we did not expect.

A relationship breaks.

A job ends.

A plan we carefully constructed collapses.

We say, "I did not see this coming."

God never says that.

The event that surprised you did not surprise Him.

The problem that began yesterday did not arrive before God was prepared.

God existed before your problem began.

His wisdom is older than your confusion.

His power is greater than your limitation.

His grace was purposed before you recognized your need.

You may not know what comes next, but you can trust the God who declares the end from the beginning.

That does not mean every painful event is good.

Sin is not good.

Death is an enemy.

Betrayal hurts.

Sickness brings suffering.

Faith does not require us to rename evil as good.

Faith allows us to say that evil cannot remove God from His throne.

The God who created from nothing can bring hope into a situation where we see nothing hopeful.

The God who spoke light into darkness can speak truth into our confusion.

The God who gave creation a beginning can give us a new beginning.

Philippians 1:6 says:

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

The Creator finishes what He begins.

We often begin projects we do not finish.

We lose strength.

We lose money.

We lose interest.

We discover that the task is more difficult than we expected.

God never begins with insufficient wisdom, insufficient power or incomplete knowledge.

There is no unfinished creation project hidden somewhere because God miscalculated the cost.

There is no soul beyond His ability to save.

There is no promise that time can weaken.

There is no eternal purpose that creation can overthrow.

The God who began a good work in His people will complete it.

Now bring the question back to Jesus Christ.

John 1 tells us that the Word was in the beginning, the Word was with God and the Word was God.

Then John 1:14 says:

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

The eternal Word entered His creation.

The Creator stepped into the world He made.

The One who formed human hands allowed human hands to seize Him.

The One who made the tree allowed men to fashion wood into a cross.

The One who gives breath to every person allowed His breath to leave His body.

The eternal Son truly became man without ceasing to be God.

He lived the sinless life we have not lived.

He fulfilled the righteousness we could not fulfill.

He went to the cross and carried our sins in His own body.

He died.

He was buried.

On the third day, He rose from the dead.

The Creator did not abandon His creation.

He entered it to redeem us.

The plan that existed in the eternal purpose of God became visible in Bethlehem, at Calvary and at the empty tomb.

The question today is not only, "What existed before the beginning?"

The personal question is, "Do I know the God who was there?"

It is possible to know facts about creation without knowing the Creator.

It is possible to believe angels exist without trusting Christ.

It is possible to discuss time, eternity and the universe while remaining separated from God by sin.

Romans 3:23 says:

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

That includes every one of us.

We have sinned in thought, word and action.

We cannot erase our guilt by becoming more religious.

We cannot save ourselves by doing enough good works to outweigh the bad.

Ephesians 2:8 and 9 says:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Salvation is the gift of God.

The eternal Son purchased that gift with His blood.

He offers eternal life to everyone who places faith in Him.

Romans 10:9 says:

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

You do not need to understand every mystery of eternity before you can trust the eternal Son.

You do not need to know the exact moment when angels were created.

You do not need to solve every question about time.

You need to recognize that you are a sinner, that Jesus died for your sins and that He rose again.

You need to stop trusting yourself and place your faith in Christ.

If you have never done that, you can call upon Him today.

I am going to pray a simple prayer.

The words of a prayer do not save you.

Jesus saves the person who genuinely places faith in Him.

You may pray with me from your heart:

Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner.

I believe You died for my sins.

I believe You were buried and rose again.

I cannot save myself.

I place my faith in You.

Forgive me, save me and make me Yours.

Thank You for giving me eternal life.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

If you trusted Christ today, please speak with me after the service.

We want to pray with you, answer your questions and help you begin growing in the Word of God.

Now let us return one final time to the question.

What existed before the beginning?

The earth did not exist.

The sun did not exist.

Humanity did not exist.

The angels are created beings and therefore did not exist eternally.

Job shows us that heavenly beings were present when God laid the foundations of the earth, but Scripture does not reveal their exact moment of creation.

Heaven itself exists because God created it.

Time, space, matter and every invisible power depend upon Him.

Before all created things, there was the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Before the fall, God knew.

Before the first human sin, redemption was purposed.

Before Bethlehem, the Son shared glory with the Father.

Before Calvary, Christ was foreordained as the spotless Lamb.

Before you recognized your need, grace was already in the heart of God.

The simplest answer is also the greatest answer.

Before the beginning, there was God.

And everything that exists today owes its beginning, purpose and hope to Him.

As you leave this week, carry that truth with you.

When something unexpected happens, remind yourself that it did not happen before God was there.

When you do not know what comes next, remember that God knows the end from the beginning.

When someone feels that life has no meaning, remind them that we were created through Christ and for Christ.

When guilt says your failure has ruined everything, point to the Lamb who was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

And consider sharing this question with someone:

"What do you think existed before the beginning?"

Listen to their answer.

Then open Genesis 1, Psalm 90, Job 38 and John 1 together.

Do not argue merely to win.

Invite them to reason through the Word of God.

The completed study will be available in the Reason Together Studies Library at www.ReasonTogether.Church.

Let us pray.

Eternal Father, we praise You because You are from everlasting to everlasting.

We praise You for the Son who was with You before the world was and through whom all things were made.

We praise You for the eternal Spirit who gives life and reveals truth.

Thank You for the heavens, the earth and every good thing You have created.

Thank You that our sin did not surprise You and that the cross was not an emergency plan.

Thank You for the precious blood of Christ, for the empty tomb and for the gift of eternal life.

Help us trust You when we cannot see what comes next.

Help us speak truth without claiming knowledge You have not given us.

Help us carry our questions to Scripture and submit our conclusions to Your Word.

Use us this week to help someone else discover the Creator who entered His creation to save us.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY



WHAT EXISTED BEFORE THE BEGINNING?

An Expository Commentary on Genesis 1:1 and Related Texts

Primary Text: Genesis 1:1 KJV

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

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Introduction

The first verse of the Bible is only ten words in the King James Version, yet it establishes the decisive distinction upon which every Biblical doctrine depends. God is the Creator. Heaven and earth are His creation. God does not emerge from the universe, develop with it or receive His authority from it. The universe begins because God acts.

The question “What existed before the beginning?” initially sounds like a question about chronology. It is actually a question about being. We are asking whether anything stands outside the created order and whether anything shares God’s eternal existence. Scripture answers with majestic simplicity. God is eternal. Everything that is not God owes its existence to God.

That conclusion must be stated carefully. The Bible uses phrases such as “before the foundation of the world” because human beings think and speak in temporal sequence. Those phrases reveal God’s priority over creation, His eternal fellowship and His settled purpose. They do not require us to imagine a clock ticking in an empty room before God decided to create. The clock, the room and every measurable feature of the universe belong to the world He made.

1. “In the Beginning”

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

The beginning belongs to creation

Genesis does not begin by explaining where God came from. It begins with God already present and acting. The opening phrase marks the beginning of the created order, not the beginning of the Creator. This is consistent with the rest of Scripture, which speaks of God as “from everlasting to everlasting” and as the One who made all things.

The Hebrew opening, *bereshith*, points to a beginning or first point. The word may identify the beginning of an event, a reign or an ordered sequence. In Genesis 1 it carries the reader to the first horizon of the world being described. However one evaluates the grammatical discussion over whether verse 1 functions as an independent first act, a summary of the chapter or both, the theological emphasis remains stable. God precedes the heavens and the earth and they exist because He created them.

God created

The verb *bara* places the emphasis upon God as the acting Creator. Genesis does not describe Him discovering a universe, negotiating with rival gods or shaping a world that belongs to another power. The verse is not a laboratory description of the physical process. It is a theological declaration of ultimate origin and ownership. Whatever secondary causes God later employs, no cause stands behind Him as His maker.

Genesis 1:1 does not by itself answer every philosophical question about the relation between God and preexisting material. The wider Biblical witness supplies the full conclusion. John 1:3 says that all things were made by the Word and that without Him nothing made was made.

Colossians 1:16 includes visible and invisible things. Hebrews 11:3 says that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Taken together, the texts leave no independent eternal matter alongside God.

The heaven and the earth

The expression “the heaven and the earth” presents the totality of the ordered creation. The Hebrew word translated “heaven” can refer according to context to the sky, the celestial expanse or the spiritual heavenly realm. Genesis 1:1 need not function as a detailed map of every heavenly region in order to declare that the total created order depends upon God.

This prevents an easy but important mistake. Heaven is glorious, but heaven is not God. Heaven is the dwelling associated with God’s throne, but God is not contained by it. Solomon confessed that “the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee” in First Kings 8:27. The Creator does not need a created place in which to exist.

2. God Alone Is Eternal

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

Psalm 90 places God on one side of the Creator-creature distinction and the world on the other. Mountains are ancient from the human perspective, but they were brought forth. The earth was formed. God simply is. His life is not measured from a first moment and it does not move toward extinction. He is God from everlasting to everlasting.

The theological word aseity is useful here. It means that God has life in Himself and depends upon nothing outside Himself. The term does not add a new doctrine to Scripture. It summarizes the Biblical presentation of God as the One who gives life to all while receiving existence from none. Acts 17:24-25 says that the Lord of heaven and earth is not worshipped as though He needed anything, since He gives life and breath to all.

Isaiah repeatedly makes the same point in polemical form. No God was formed before the Lord and none will arise after Him. He is the first and the last. He made all things and stretched forth the heavens alone. The language rules out a divine family tree, an older god above Him or a younger god who may replace Him. Biblical monotheism is not merely the preference for one deity among many. It is the confession that there is one uncreated God and every other reality is dependent upon Him.

This also corrects the idea that God needed creation. He was not lonely, incomplete or waiting for the universe to give Him something He lacked. Creation expresses His will, wisdom, goodness and glory. It does not repair a deficiency in His being.

3. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit Before Creation

The eternal Word

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

John intentionally returns the reader to the language of Genesis. Yet he does not say that the Word came into existence in the beginning. When the beginning occurred, the Word already was. The Word was personally “with God” and fully “was God.” John then declares that all things were made by Him. The Son therefore cannot belong to the class of things that came into being through Him.

John 17 takes the reader into the fellowship of the Father and the Son before the world existed. Jesus speaks of the glory He had with the Father “before the world was” and of the Father’s love for Him “before the foundation of the world.” These are not descriptions of a created angel receiving promotion. They reveal divine glory, personal fellowship and eternal love.

Colossians 1:15 calls Christ “the firstborn of every creature,” but the following verses explain the title. All things were created by Him and for Him and He is before all things. In Biblical usage, “firstborn” can identify rank, inheritance and supremacy. The context presents Christ as sovereign over creation, not as its first member.

The eternal Spirit

Genesis 1:2 presents the Spirit of God active at the opening of the creation account. Hebrews 9:14 explicitly calls Him “the eternal Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is not a created energy, a poetic name for nature or an impersonal tool placed between God and matter. He is fully involved in the divine work and belongs to the eternal identity of God.

Eternal fellowship

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit did not begin to relate when creatures appeared. Before creation there was already perfect divine life, love and fellowship. This truth gives a richer answer than the statement that “something” existed before the universe. Before the universe, God existed as He eternally is. Creation adds creatures who receive His goodness, but it does not add a missing perfection to God.

4. Did Time Exist Before Creation?

The word “before” is necessary and truthful, but it can mislead if we make it carry more than Scripture intends. Human language naturally places events in sequence. Scripture says that Christ was loved, glorified and foreordained before the foundation of the world. These statements reveal divine priority and purpose. They do not require a measurable succession of sunrises before the first sunrise.

Genesis 1:14 associates signs, seasons, days and years with the lights God placed in the firmament. This shows that ordinary creaturely time is connected to the ordered universe.

Scripture also distinguishes God's relation to time from ours. Second Peter 3:8 does not provide a conversion formula for prophetic days. It reminds us that the eternal Lord is not confined by our experience of duration.

Christian theologians have differed over whether God should be described as timeless apart from creation or everlasting through an unbounded succession. This study need not turn that philosophical debate into a test of Biblical faithfulness. The safe conclusion is sufficient: God does not depend upon created time and the time human beings measure belongs to the created order.

We should therefore avoid picturing God sitting in darkness for trillions of years. Darkness is a created condition, a room is a created place and years are units within created order. Such an image places God inside an imaginary universe before the universe exists. Scripture instead begins with God as the sovereign source of every condition by which creatures measure location and duration.

5. Heaven Had a Beginning

"Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host." Nehemiah 9:6 KJV

Nehemiah 9:6 directly connects the heavens and their host with God's creative work. Psalm 148 likewise calls angels and heavenly hosts to praise the Lord "for he commanded, and they were created." Colossians 1:16 includes thrones, dominions, principalities and powers among the invisible things created through Christ and for Christ.

The language of God dwelling in heaven is therefore relational and royal, not restrictive. Heaven is His throne because He rules. It is His dwelling because He manifests His presence there. Yet He existed before the dwelling He made and remains greater than it. Asking "Where was God before heaven?" assumes that an infinite Creator requires an external location. Scripture does not share that assumption.

This distinction matters pastorally. People sometimes speak of heaven as though it were the one reality that has always existed alongside God. The intention is usually reverent, but the statement blurs the boundary between Creator and creation. Heaven is everlasting in the sense that God intends His redeemed people to dwell with Him forever. It is not eternal in the uncreated sense that belongs to God alone.

6. Angels Are Creatures

"Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts... for he commanded, and they were created." Psalm 148:2, 5 KJV

Scripture never treats angels as lesser gods who share the Creator's eternal nature. They are powerful spiritual beings, but they are commanded, sent, judged and sustained. Their greatness is

creaturely greatness. Their invisibility does not make them divine and their antiquity does not make them eternal.

Colossians 1:16 is especially important because it deliberately joins the visible and invisible orders. Thrones, dominions, principalities and powers are not exceptions to Christ's creative authority. Whether these terms identify ranks of angelic beings, earthly structures or both, nothing in the invisible realm stands outside the Son's authorship and lordship.

This also places Satan in proper perspective. Satan is not an eternal evil principle balancing an eternal good God. He is a creature in rebellion. His power is real but limited. He cannot rival God at the level of being, knowledge or sovereignty. Biblical spiritual warfare is never a contest between equal deities.

7. Job 38 and the Heavenly Witnesses

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Job 38:4, 7 KJV

The purpose of the passage

God answers Job from the whirlwind by exposing the limits of human knowledge. Job was not present when the earth was founded. He did not measure it, stretch the line upon it or set its cornerstone. The questions are not a technical chronology of creation week. They are a summons to humility before the wisdom and sovereignty of the Creator.

Morning stars and sons of God

Job 38:7 uses elevated poetic language. "Morning stars" and "sons of God" function as parallel descriptions of heavenly celebrants. Elsewhere in Job, the "sons of God" present themselves before the Lord. The scene is therefore best understood as heavenly beings rejoicing while God establishes the earth.

Their presence is significant. Angels were not first created after the earth was complete. They witnessed at least part of its foundational formation and answered with worship. The picture is not of assistants helping an inexperienced builder. God alone lays the foundation. The heavenly host sings because creation displays His power and wisdom.

What the passage does not date

Job 38 does not say, "Angels existed before Genesis 1:1." Genesis 1:1 may encompass the creation of the heavenly realm before the earth is described as without form and void. The poetic language of Job also does not identify a numbered day. The passage establishes relative sequence, not a complete calendar. Heavenly beings are present during the earth's foundational work, but the exact moment of their creation remains unrevealed.

This is an important example of disciplined reasoning. We may draw the strong inference Scripture supports while refusing the certainty it does not supply. The firm conclusion is that angels are created. The strong inference is that they were created before the foundational

formation of the earth was complete. The unresolved question is precisely where their creation belongs within the opening sequence of Genesis.

8. Were Angels Present Before Genesis 1:1?

If the question means, “Were angels already eternal companions of God before any creative act?” the answer is no. Angels are creatures. If the question means, “Could angels have been created as part of the heavenly order represented in Genesis 1:1 before the narrative turns to the condition of the earth in verse 2?” the answer is yes, that is a reasonable possibility. If the question asks whether Scripture explicitly gives that sequence, the answer is no.

The distinction between the words of the verse and the realities included within the verse matters. “Before Genesis 1:1” can mean before the creative act it describes or before the later earth-forming events narrated after it. Job 38 supports angelic presence before some aspects of earth formation. It does not move angels outside the created order described by the Bible’s opening declaration.

This resolves the apparent tension without forcing the text. Angels can be older than the completed earth while still being creatures within the beginning. Their song in Job 38 does not challenge Genesis 1:1. It celebrates the God who created both the singers and the world over which they sang.

9. God’s Eternal Knowledge and Purpose

*“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.”
Ephesians 1:4 KJV*

Scripture speaks not only of God’s existence before creation but also of His knowledge, love and redemptive purpose. The Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world. Grace was given in Christ Jesus before the world began. Eternal life was promised before the world began. Christ was foreordained as the spotless Lamb before the foundation of the world.

These purposes are not additional things or beings standing next to God. They belong to His eternal mind and will. God does not learn history as it arrives. Human sin did not surprise Him and the cross was not an emergency repair drafted after Eden. The redemptive mission of the Son stands within God’s eternal purpose.

Foreknowledge must not be confused with moral causation. Scripture presents God as holy and without evil while also presenting His knowledge and purpose as comprehensive. Human beings remain responsible for sin. The study does not need to settle every debate over sovereignty and freedom in order to affirm what the relevant texts clearly say: redemption in Christ was in God’s purpose before the world was founded.

This provides the natural gospel movement of the study. The Word through whom all things were made became flesh. The Creator entered His creation. He bore sin, died, was buried and rose again. The One who stands before the beginning is also the One in whom fallen creatures receive a new beginning.

10. When Did Satan Fall?

By Genesis 3 the serpent is already opposing God and deceiving humanity. Rebellion therefore occurred before the temptation of Eve. Scripture also establishes that Satan is a creature and that evil is not eternal. Beyond those firm points, the chronology becomes difficult.

Isaiah 14 directly addresses the king of Babylon and Ezekiel 28 addresses the prince and king of Tyrus. Their language reaches beyond ordinary royal boasting in ways that have led many interpreters to see a secondary reflection of Satanic pride. Even if that application is accepted, neither passage provides an undisputed date that can be inserted into Genesis 1 or Job 38.

Some interpreters place Satan's rebellion between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Others place it within creation week after the angelic host had rejoiced. Still others emphasize that Scripture does not reveal enough to choose a precise point. The present study should state what is known and reserve the fuller question for its own Reason Together Study. Speculation about Satan must not displace the central truth about God.

11. Other Ancient Writings

Jubilees

The Book of Jubilees is an ancient Jewish retelling and expansion of Genesis. In chapter 2 it places the creation of the heavens, earth, waters and various serving spirits on the first day. Its list includes angels connected with the presence, holiness, winds, clouds and other functions. This is evidence that an early Jewish interpreter understood angelic creation to belong to day one.

Jubilees is historically useful, but it is not a missing line from Genesis. Its additional detail shows how an ancient writer answered a question the canonical text leaves open. It may illustrate an interpretation, but it cannot turn that interpretation into Biblical certainty.

Second Enoch

Second Enoch contains a different placement. Chapter 29 describes heavenly troops formed from fiery substance in connection with the second day and associates the same setting with Satanail's rebellion. The work survives through a complicated textual history, so its wording and development require caution.

The contrast with Jubilees is instructive. Two noncanonical works can preserve different ancient answers. Their disagreement does not weaken Scripture. It reminds us that later writings are witnesses to interpretation rather than authorities capable of completing the Biblical chronology.

First Enoch

First Enoch contains extensive material about the Watchers, heavenly judgment and rebellious angels. It is especially important for understanding later traditions surrounding Genesis 6. It does not, however, give a simple authoritative date for the original creation of all angels. Its value for this study is contextual rather than decisive.

Creation stories from surrounding cultures

The Babylonian Enuma Elish opens with primordial Apsu and Tiamat and describes later gods arising within a genealogy marked by conflict. Hesiod's Theogony begins with Chaos, followed by Earth, Tartarus and Eros, then traces generations of divine beings. In these accounts the gods belong within the developing cosmos and conflict helps shape the ordered world.

Genesis is strikingly different. It gives God no genealogy. It does not place Him inside primordial matter or make creation the reward of His victory over an equal rival. "In the beginning God created." The brevity is theological power. God does not become divine through creation. Creation becomes real through God.

12. Theological Synthesis

What existed before the beginning?

Before the beginning of creation, there was God. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit existed in perfect eternal fellowship. God's knowledge, love and purpose are eternal because they belong to God. They are not created objects existing independently beside Him.

What did not exist eternally?

No physical universe, matter, human being, angelic power or heavenly location shares God's uncreated existence. Heaven and its host were made. Angels were made. Satan is a creature. Time as human beings measure and experience it belongs to the created order. Everything outside of God depends upon God.

What remains unresolved?

Scripture does not identify the exact moment angels were created, the numbered day on which every heavenly rank appeared or the precise point at which Satan rebelled. It also does not give a complete philosophical explanation of God's relation to time. These unanswered questions are invitations to humility, not weaknesses in revelation. God has told us what is necessary to distinguish the Creator from His creation and to trust His eternal purpose in Christ.

13. Pastoral and Teaching Implications

First, the doctrine produces worship. If God alone is eternal, then nothing in creation can rival Him. The oldest star, the highest angel and the deepest mystery remain works of His hand. Wonder should not terminate upon the creature. It should rise to the Creator.

Second, the doctrine produces humility. Job 38 does not invite us to pretend that we stood beside God at creation. It reminds us that we did not. Biblical reasoning is strongest when it distinguishes what the text says, what it supports and what it leaves unrevealed.

Third, the doctrine produces security. God is not surprised by history or threatened by rebellion. Satan is not His equal. Sin did not force God to invent a desperate solution. The gospel unfolds according to an eternal purpose centered in Jesus Christ.

Fourth, the doctrine produces hope. The Creator entered His creation to redeem sinners. The eternal Son took flesh, died for our sins and rose again. The God who gave the universe its beginning can give new life to the person who trusts Christ.

Finally, the doctrine gives the church a clear way to answer the cover question. We need not answer “nothing,” because God was there. We need not answer “angels,” because angels are created and their exact creation date is unrevealed. We may answer with reverence and precision: before the beginning of creation, there was the eternal God.

Conclusion

The Bible takes us behind the existence of the world, but it never takes us behind God. He has no origin to discover, no maker to identify and no rival with whom to share eternity. The Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world. The eternal Spirit was active in creation. Heaven, angels and every visible and invisible power came into being by God’s will.

Job 38 permits us to see the heavenly host rejoicing while God established the earth. It does not permit us to make angels eternal or to date every event with certainty. The proper response to the scene is the response of the scene itself: joyful worship of the Creator.

Genesis 1:1 is therefore not merely the first fact in a chronology. It is the foundational confession of Biblical reality. God is. God creates. Creation belongs to Him. Redemption was purposed in Him. Every beginning finds its source and meaning in the One who has no beginning.

Before the beginning, there was God.

Selected Scripture Index

Creation and God’s eternity: Genesis 1:1-3; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 43:10; Isaiah 44:6, 24; Acts 17:24-25; Revelation 1:8.

The eternal Son and Spirit: Genesis 1:2; John 1:1-3, 14; John 17:5, 24; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-3; Hebrews 9:14.

Heaven and angels as creation: First Kings 8:27; Nehemiah 9:6; Job 1:6; Job 2:1; Job 38:4-7; Psalm 148:1-5; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:5-7.

God’s eternal purpose and the gospel: Isaiah 46:9-10; Ephesians 1:4-7; Second Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; First Peter 1:18-20; First Corinthians 15:3-4.

Comparative ancient texts: Jubilees 2; Second Enoch 29; First Enoch; Enuma Elish, Tablet I; Hesiod, Theogony, lines 116 and following. These texts are included for historical comparison and not as doctrinal authority.