

Square One – Genesis 1:1

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Our Plan*

1. We've just completed an 8 year odyssey through the Bible; from Genesis to Revelation. Our plan now is to do it all over again.
2. How long it will take us this time, I have no idea.
3. But even if we aren't able to complete it because the Lord comes for us – when He comes, I want to be found faithfully sharing the *whole counsel* of God with you.
4. One Wednesday evenings we're taking a few weeks to do a *broad overview* of the Bible.
5. But this morning, we're going to pull the Bible Cruise Ship out of the harbor and set sail on another Journey through the Word.

B. *The Best Place To Start*

1. The best place to start, they say, is *at the beginning*.
2. So our text this morning is Genesis 1:1: Turn there / PRAY.

II. TEXT

A. V. 1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

1. Actually, we're going to be starting with the *beginning* of the beginning; just the first 4 words of v. 1

In the beginning, God . . .

2. Today's message may very well be one of the most *important* you will *ever hear*.
 - a. now – I realize that's a huge claim & may sound *boastful*;
 - b. but that's not at all the way I mean it.
 - c. notice I said that today's message is IMPORTANT;
 - 1) I didn't say *eloquent* or *exciting*
 - 2) or even well-crafted as a sermon
 - d. I said today's message is "IMPORTANT."
3. It's important because the truth we're going to take a look at is THE *foundation* upon which *all other* truth is built.

B. Presuppositions

1. Rene Descartes is known as the father of modern philosophy.
2. He lived in the early 17th Century and applied the principles of mathematics and science to the field of philosophy.
3. Descartes was concerned that far too much had been *proposed* and *accepted* in the philosophy of his time that was in error.
4. So he decided to start *all over again* and develop a whole new way of discovering truth.
5. His concern was to do away with *all assumptions*, and begin at the *indisputable* starting point.
 - a. you see, everyone has what are called “*presuppositions.*”
 - b. a presupposition is an *assumption* that you take as a *given fact* without needing to prove it.
 - c. but we all know the problem with *assuming* – right?
 - d. we often assume the wrong thing – we jump to conclusions
 - e. we make a *faulty leap of logic* and arrive at a conclusion that *isn't* true.
 - f. Descartes analyzed each and every one of his *presuppositions* and realized that most of them were assumptions he couldn't prove.
6. He asked, what's the *first* thing I *can* know with absolute certainty, that doesn't need to be *proved* as true because it's a self-evident truth.
7. It took him some time but he finally came to the conclusion that his *starting point*, his *square one* was this – *Cogito, ergo sum* = “I think, therefore I am!”
 - a. Descartes realized that the very process of thinking demands mind, and a mind demands a person – therefore, *he* must exist.
 - b. and if *he* existed, then that opened up the possibility for a whole realm of the existence of other persons and things.
 - d. using logic, Descartes went on to deduce the existence of the God of the Bible.
8. But it all began with the single presupposition – “I think, therefore I am!”
9. That was Descartes' starting point – his *square one*.

C. Square One

1. That's fine for Descartes and modern philosophy – but that's not

the starting point of the Bible.

2. The first 4 words of Gen. 1:1 are the starting point -

In the beginning, God . . .

3. You see, while Descartes was correct in his *conclusion* that *he* existed, *his* existence is *not* the starting point.
 - a. for there was a time when Descartes didn't exist.
 - b. Rene Descartes had parents.
 - c. before his conception, he DIDN'T exist.
 - d. did that then mean the rest of reality *failed to exist* just because Descartes wasn't there to think about it?
 - e. Nonsense!
4. Genesis 1:1 gives us the correct starting point, *our* square one -

In the beginning, God . . .

5. *This* is where *we* must begin – this is the foundational truth upon which all the rest of truth is laid.
6. The Bible never seeks to *prove* the existence of God – it's taken as a *given*!
7. This is the *single presupposition* from which all the rest is derived.
8. Remember that a presupposition is a *given truth*.
 - a. it doesn't need to be proved because it's self-evident.
 - b. in the Bible – the existence of God is the single presupposition that frames the rest of reality.
9. The Apostle Paul puts it this way in **Romans 1:18-20**

18 The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse . . .

- a. Paul says there's one undeniable proof for the existence of God – *creation*.
- b. He says this is a fact every man, woman, and child has

- presented to them so that NO One can claim ignorance.
- c. in fact, Paul goes on in the next verses to say that if a person sees the creation and then *denies* the existence of God, their whole ability to think *clearly* is forfeit -
 - d. and their perception of reality becomes so badly distorted they end up making choices that are self-destructive.
10. Look at v. 20 again -

For since [or, because of] the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood [being demonstrated] by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse . . .

- a. everything in the universe owes it's existence to a *prior cause*.
 - 1) we see a baby, we know he/she has parents
 - a) but we know each of those parents also had parents
 - b) and they had many generations of ancestors
 - c) till eventually we go all the way back to the first Mother and Father
 - d) even then, we know Adam & Eve *had to come from somewhere*.
 - 2) we see a wooden chair, we know there was first a tree
 - a) but that tree came from a seed from a previous tree,
 - b) and so forth back to the first tree of that kind
 - c) till we realize that first tree *had to come from somewhere*
 - 3) we go to the beach and see sand, and we realize it's made of silica from quartz rocks
 - a) at one time those rocks came from the stream and river beds that empty into the ocean
 - b) before that they were from the inland mountains
 - c) which rose up by earth forces from the interior of the earth
 - d) where before they cooled into rocks they were molten magma
 - e) but where did the magma come from?
- b. these questions of *regression* are the mental playground of our children
- c. what parent hasn't been interrogated by their young child with

- the “Where did it come from” game?
- 1) they see a cut flower and ask, “Where did this flower come from?”
 - 2) we say, “From a plant.” They ask, “Where did the plant come from?”
 - 3) “A seed.” Then after a couple cycles of plants and seeds, they ask, “Where did the first plant come from?”
 - 4) we say, “God made it.” To which they ask the question we’ve been trying to avoid all along but which we knew they would eventually get to because it’s the same question we asked our parents – “Where did God come from?”
- d. you see, *they’re only articulating* what Paul *reveals* here in Romans 1:20.
- 1) we live in a cause and effect universe where everything that is owes its existence to a prior cause.
 - 2) Now – and here’s the point of all this – precisely BECAUSE we live in a cause and effect universe – we’re driven to the conclusion, there must be something *beyond* our universe that is the *First Cause*.
 - 3) In fact, all logic and reason DEMAND that there is an *Uncaused Cause*;
 - 4) something that owns its own existence – something which always has been.
 - 5) and this Uncaused Cause, this first thing which owns its own existence, has sufficient *power* to bring in to existence *all the rest of creation*.
- e. this is precisely what Romans 1:20 says - that the creation reveals the eternal existence of God and His unlimited power.
11. I know we’ve covered this ground before, but we need to do so once again.
- a. think of it – if there was ever a moment when there was *nothing* – what would there be now?
 - b. nothing! Because nothing can do – nothing!
 - c. nothing is no-thing. So, if there was ever a moment when there was nothing, there would be nothing now.
 - d. the fact that there is *something* now, demands that *ultimately* there must be an eternal Something that owns its own existence and has always been.

- e. and there's our answer to the child's question – "Where did God come from?"
- f. the question makes no sense because the word "God" carries in itself the idea of eternity and self-existence.
- g. it's like the question, - Why is sugar bitter?
 - 1) sugar isn't bitter, it's sweet
 - 2) bitterness isn't a quality of sugar so the question itself is gibberish.
 - 3) such is the query, "Where did God come from?" or "Who created God?"
 - 4) if God owes His existence to some prior cause, then he's not God.
- 12. As I said, the Bible never seeks to *prove* the existence of God – it assumes it because it ought to be universally recognized as a self-evident truth.
- 13. How is it then that there are so many atheists? If this is such an obvious thing, why so many people who can't seem to see it?
- 14. Paul answers that in Romans 1:18 & 19 –

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest IN them, for God has shown *it* to them.

- a. it isn't that those who deny God can't see the proof of His existence, they DO see it.
- b. but they don't want to have to deal with it -
- c. so they try to push it down and dismiss it.
- d. Paul says they "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" meaning they're not driven by *intellectual integrity* but by *moral impurity*.
- e. they deny the existence of God because they have a *vested interest* in Him *not* being there.
- f. if God is real, then they have to answer to Him and they don't want to.
- 15. I love the picture Paul paints with the phrase – they "suppress the truth."
 - a. the word "suppress" means to hold something down that will

- not remain hidden.
- b. it's the nature of the thing to be *revealed* despite one's best efforts to hide it.
 - c. some years ago, we had a cat and I decided one day that I was going to give it a bath
 - 1) so I ran some water in the kitchen sink and grabbed the cat.
 - 2) I put her under the water and was immediately rewarded with several wounds on my arms and face.
 - 3) I got that cat washed but not before paying for it dearly!
 - 4) you can put a cat in water, but it's not going to stay there!
 - d. that's a perfect picture of what Paul is saying here.
 - 1) God's existence is a truth that cannot be kept hidden
 - 2) you can deny it, argue against it, and try to drown out its persistent message but it's not going away.
 - 3) if you don't surrender to it – it's going to cause you great harm!
 - e. [those who deny gravity and try to fly]

D. Coming To God

1. The Bible never seeks to prove the existence of God – it's a given that's stated in the very first words of the Bible

In the beginning, God . . .

2. Hebrews 11:6 says –

Without faith *it is impossible to please [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

3. The person who **comes to God must believe that He is**, that He exists.
 - a. but the faith referred to here isn't a blind leap in the dark.
 - b. in fact, real faith, what the *Bible* means by faith is *never* believing something there's no basis for.
 - c. on the contrary, faith is a *reasoned response* to the *evidence*.
4. Let me absolutely clear on this – The Christian Faith is not built on mystical visions and dreams.
 - a. it's not some moral philosophy developed by a guru who smoked some dandelions.
 - b. it's not a myth, a fairy tale made up by pre-scientific people to

- explain the complexities of life.
- c. nor is it a device invented by those in power to keep the masses under control.
- d. the Christian faith is rooted in *objective evidence* and *historical events* -
- e. the most basic of which is the Creation itself.
- f. if there's a Creation, then there has to be a Creator!
- g. faith in God is a reasonable, and may I say, the ONLY reasonable response to the evidence.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Starting Points

1. What's the application for all this?

In the beginning, God . . .

2. So what? What difference does this make to us?
3. Quite simply it's THE difference!
4. Because you see, in the final analysis, we can only have 1 of 2 starting points: God, or Me.
 - a. either God is real and so the starting and reference point for all things, or
 - b. God isn't real, and that means ultimately, *I'm* the reference point for all things.
5. Let's be clear – if God doesn't exist, then the material universe is all there is and when we die, that's the end of our story; we cease to exist.
 - a. that means this life is all we have.
 - b. and with no God there's no real right and wrong, only personal preference.
 - c. so I can do *whatever* I want, *whenever* I want, *however* I want.
6. BUT, if God is real, as the evidence makes crystal clear – then He's the starting and reference point for all of life.
 - a. our existence takes on a larger meaning than just the here and now.
 - b. we realize that God has some greater purpose and meaning for our lives.
 - c. right & wrong aren't just personal preferences,
 - d. they're expressions of God's own character; they're fixed

- realities that guide us.
- e. if God is real, then there's a *reason* for the Creation and our part in it.

B. Result

1. It doesn't take long in life before you realize that the *presuppositions* a person has are important.
2. People often *end up* in the wrong place because they *start* in the wrong place.
3. When I was in high school, I went on a car rally with some friends.
 - a. it was one of those games where you're given a card with a cryptic clue on it.
 - b. you're supposed to decipher the riddle and drive to wherever the clue directs for the next clue.
 - c. the first team to hit all the checkpoints and complete the route is the winner.
 - d. well, we got the first clue card and thought we had it all figured out so we drove to what we thought for sure was the first checkpoint, only to find nothing there!
 - e. needless to say, we never made it to the end of the route, because our starting point was faulty.
4. If we say we believe in the Bible – then our starting point ought to be its starting point.

In the beginning, God . . .

- a. most of us here this morning would probably agree with that;
[choir]
- b. but the question is – do our daily choices *verify* that our starting point is God, or self?
5. All day long we make choices -
 - a. most of them are so *routine* we're barely conscious of them -
 - b. but they're choices nonetheless.
 - c. and every choice is a reflection of our *value system*, of what we consider of greater moral weight and value.
 - d. the bottom line of every choice is a direct reflection of what we consider to be the ultimate reality –
 - e. you see, it's like that old child's game of "Where did it come from?"

- f. if we analyzed every one of our choices by asking why, we'd come at length to the bedrock presupposition of our lives.
 - g. we do what we do either because of our faith in God or because of our faith in self.
6. The root determines the fruit – is our root sunk deeply into the soil of faith in God, or self?
 7. Listen, the quality of your marriage is a direct reflection of whether God or self shapes your choices.
 - a. how you spend your money and time is a revelation of the same thing.
 - b. what you eat, what you wear, who you hang out with, where you go -
 - c. how you work and how you play, all of this is a manifestation of the central and core idea of your life – God or self.
 8. There are many today who call themselves Christians and say they believe the Bible but their starting and reference point isn't God – it's self.
 9. May it not be so among us.
 10. These first 4 words of the Bible – what difference do they make?
 11. They make all the difference in the world & eternity.