



In the Beginning, God...

Brownsburg Church of Christ

by Edwin Crozier

February 23, 2014

AM Assembly



Introduction:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Thus begins the greatest story ever written. And what a powerful beginning. This beginning asserts some phenomenal truths that must govern and mold our worldview. Do not misunderstand, I recognize that the mere statement in this verse is not a proof. But for Bible believers, it makes claims we must understand and allow to mold us. I'd like to share them with you.¹

Discussion:

I. Denies atheism.

- A. "In the beginning, God..." perhaps it goes without saying, but this statement denies atheism. Atheism claims there is no God. There is no Creator, no ruler, no sovereign. There is no power greater than us. But **Genesis 1:1** shatters those claims. **Genesis 1:1** says not only that there is a God, but this God is the source of all things. He is the source of the universe. He is the source of life. He is the source of us. We owe our very existence to this Creator. Therefore, we owe our allegiance to this Creator.
- B. Perhaps this is why so many today wish to dispute **Genesis 1:1**. The presence of the divine Creator makes some demands on us. This means there is someone who has authority to command and direct us. This means there is someone who has the power to judge us. This means there is someone who has the prerogative to demand from us. It may be because people want to dispute passages like **Matthew 5:21-48** and **Ephesians 4:17-6:9** in which this Creator God makes demands, gives commands, and offers direction that they want to dispute **Genesis 1:1**. It may be because people want to dispute passages like **John 5:27-29**, **Hebrews 9:27**, and **2 Peter 3:7** that they want to dispute **Genesis 1:1**. We must remove atheism from our worldview not only in ideological sense but also the practical one that allows us to think we are our own god and have the highest authority over our own lives. **Genesis 1:1** denies atheism and claims we must submit to God.
- C. But there is a comforting side to this. **Genesis 1:1** demonstrates there really is a power greater than ourselves out there. And oh, what power! As **Psalms 31:3-5** proclaims, He is powerful enough to be our rock and fortress. We can commit our spirit into His hand. We do not have to walk through this world alone, but we can look to the great Creator of it. What a blessing!

II. Denies polytheism.

- A. "In the beginning, God..." not gods. There is God and there is what is created. There is the powerful God and then there is everything else that must submit to Him no matter how powerful He created them to be. There are not two gods, three gods, a hundred gods. There is one God. As the Shema of the Jews would go on to say in **Deuteronomy 6:4**, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one" (ESV). There are not competing deities that war with each other as pagan idolatry almost always includes. You don't have to worry that Loki is trying to destroy the gods or take over the world. You don't have to worry that Gaea, Mother Earth, the Titans, or other divine beings are trying to rise up, defeat the gods, and destroy the world as we know it. There is God, the one, true and living God. We can say along with Paul in **I Timothy 1:17**: "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."
- B. This denies the dualistic ideas of two divine beings, one dark and one light, one good and one evil. We do not have to worry that there is some other divine being who might bring some reasonable challenge to our good and great God. We know who started all that is, and we know who will bring it to an end. Do not get me wrong. There are enemies of God. There are some too powerful for us (cf. **Ephesians 6:12**). But there are none too powerful for our one God. We do not have to worry, wondering who will win. The one God will!

¹ The outline for this sermon was inspired from the following quote:

"This simple sentence denies *atheism*, for it assumes the Being of God. It denies *polytheism*, and among its various forms, the doctrine of two eternal principles, the one good and the other evil--for it confesses the one eternal Creator. It denies *materialism*, for it asserts the creation of matter. It denies *pantheism*, for it assumes the existence of God before all things, and apart from them. It denies *fatalism*, for it involves the freedom of the Eternal Being" (Cottrell, Jack, What the Bible Says about God the Creator, Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR, 1983, p. 106, quoting Revere F Weidner, Theologia, or The Doctring of God, Revell, New York, 1902, p. 80).

III. Denies materialism.

- A. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." There is the earth and there is the sky, space, the universe. But in addition to that there is something else. There is God. There is God who is of different "stuff" than the earth and the heavens. And yes, "stuff" is a technical term. There is earth and heavens which have a beginning, but there is God which does not. This denies materialism. Materialism claims there is no spirit, nothing spiritual, no divine, there is only matter and energy. **Genesis 1:1** denies this. Not only is there material stuff, there is spiritual stuff, and even divine stuff. There is more to existence than what we can see, taste, touch, and feel. There is more to us than that.
- B. Look around you. This life, this world, this universe is not all there is. This lets us know there is more to life than feeding, clothing, protecting these physical forms. There is more to life than competing for material resources. This reminds us that what happens here is not nearly as important as what will happen in the hereafter. As **Ecclesiastes 12:6** explains, this body made of dust will eventually die, but the spirit will return to God. That moment is what matters. That is the moment we are preparing for. This is why Jesus explains that we need to use our material goods to prepare eternal dwellings (**Luke 16:9**). It is also why Jesus can tell a story teaching us that we would rather be like righteous, impoverished Lazarus than the sinful wealthy man (**Luke 16:19-31**). This is also why Paul was able to be content no matter his circumstances (cf. **Philippians 4:12**). He was looking forward to something greater than all of this. **Genesis 1:1** reminds us not to get distracted by the material pursuits around us, there is more than this material world.

IV. Denies pantheism.

- A. While materialism says all there is matter and energy, pantheism says all there is the spiritual. The extreme forms will tell us that what we perceive as matter is merely an illusion. Pantheism declares there is the divine and it permeates all that is and is made up of all that is. We are each part of the divine universe. Some forms suggest it is fragmented and we are on a journey to be reunited with the divine oneness. A popular form of pantheism is expressed in the Star Wars movies as they talk about The Force moving in and through us, directing us.
- B. **Genesis 1:1** denies pantheism. **Genesis 1:1** presents the existence of God before all things and separate from all created things. Pantheism preaches searching for the divine within us. It proclaims that each of us is a little bit of the divine whole and if we want to know how to connect to the divine, we need to search within us. But **Genesis 1:1** says this just isn't so. If we want to know how to live in a pleasing way to the divine, we don't want to look within, we want to look without, to God and His revelation of Himself (cf. **I Corinthians 2:11-13**). If we want to connect to the divine, we must look for the divine outside of ourselves and invite Him in (**Ephesians 3:14-19**), which is what our entire year is about.

V. Denies fatalism.

- A. Fatalism declares that everything is because it has to be. There is an impersonal force that dominates time, matter, energy, and even spirit. But **Genesis 1:1** denies this. The universe does not exist because it could be no other way. The universe exists because God chose to create it. He was not forced, fated, or predetermined. If He were, then there is something in addition to God, more powerful than God that really did the creating. There is something to which even God must bow His knee. But **Genesis 1:1** asserts that the universe is here because of God and no one or nothing else.
- B. And this speaks to the love of God. The universe is not here because God was fated to put it here. We are not here because God had to put us here. Look around you. This all exists because God wanted it to exist. You exist because God wanted you to exist. God created this world perfectly suited for you to breathe in and out every day because God wanted it to. What love!?! Certainly, later in the story we learn that some things have come into this world because God allowed them to when man sinned. But we know that God's creation was good (**Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31**), and it was good because God wanted to have a good creation. When He decided to put us on this earth, He wanted to put us on a good earth.
- C. Of course, this explains the rest of the story. When man messed up God's creation, God did not destroy man because He did not want to. He wants to save man. God was not fated to send Jesus to die for us. God did that because He wanted to, because He loves us. Again, what love!!!! He did that for you even while you were sinful, weak, and ungodly (cf. **Romans 5:6-8**). Please, see Jesus on the cross and know that happened because God wanted it to, because He loves you.

Conclusion:

You are not fated to love God or not. Please, see God's free will desire to create and love you. Because He has done that first, why don't you decide to love Him too (**I John 4:19**). Can we help you with that?