

# (Genesis #1) in the Beginning God

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The sermon explores the profound implications of Genesis 1:1, emphasizing God's primacy, independence, and goodness in creation.*

**Duration:** 42:56

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1, Psalm 19:1, Isaiah 40:28, Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:20, Colossians 1:16, Revelation 4:11

**Topics:** "God"

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## Description

The sermon transcript focuses on the opening statement of Genesis 1:1, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' The speaker emphasizes the profound significance of this verse and its practical relevance to our lives. The first aspect discussed is the Bible's introduction to God, highlighting that God is interested in all of creation. The speaker also addresses the issue of global hunger and emphasizes that God cares about all creatures and their well-being. The transcript concludes by emphasizing the direct information about God in this verse and the logical inferences that can be made about His character.

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## Transcript

Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. I suppose it sounds trite and superfluous to say that there is something exquisitely magetic and wonderful about these opening statements of Genesis. Something sublime, something that prepares us and awes our spirits as we enter into the shrine of Holy Scripture.

However, tonight we are inspired as much by my practical considerations as by others. I ask you to turn with me to consider some of the profound significance of this statement because I think there is a word of God here for us as we stand on the threshold of a new year. I think there is a message here which has the most practical significance and relevance to all of us.

Two matters in particular may well repay giving them some thought at this time, and the first is this. I'd like us to look upon what we have in this first verse as the Bible's introduction to God. I don't know whether you've ever thought of it in that way.

The Bible's introduction to our God. Introductions are so important. An introduction doesn't tell you everything.

But generally speaking, if the person introducing another is what he ought to be, or she ought to be, he or she will say the things that are important at that point and relevant. And to me it's a matter of the profoundest significance that when the Holy Spirit of God introduces the Godhead to men in terms of a written statement, this is how the Holy Spirit introduces the Father to us. In the beginning, God.

The Bible's introduction to God. In the beginning, God, and God created the heavens and the earth. Now, there are two aspects of this that I would like to say a word about tonight.

First of all, in this introduction we have a direct piece of information about God. And then arising out of that direct bit of information we have what I think we may speak of as a number of logical and crucial inferences that may be legitimately made, and are made as a matter of fact, in many other places in the Bible. Now let's look first of all at the direct piece of information that we have here.

That in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. This is no time for polemics or for arguing the point. Let's get the main statement here, and let's take it to heart.

Suffice it to say that what is here disclosed as fact is accepted and acted upon by every God-fearing servant of His throughout the whole Bible. There is no dissentient voice within the entirety of Holy Writ. All the writers of Scripture look upon God as the creator of all things.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Directly and indirectly, the Bible tells us that. From the beginning here in Genesis right through to the end in the book of the Revelation.

Now, it is the conviction of biblical writers, therefore, that the creation as such reveals something of God, the God who made it. Because God is the creator, certain other things follow. One thing that follows is this.

The psalmist can sing, The heavens declare the glory of God. And the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day to day utters speech.

Every day is saying something about God. Night unto night shows knowledge, tells us something more about God. The day and the night alike reveal something of the glory and of the majesty of God, says the psalmist.

And there is no voice, there is no language, there is no tongue where the message of day and night are not declared. All pointing to their original creator. In the very beginning, then, it was God who created the heavens and the earth.

Whatever changes and development or degeneration may have taken place, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. But now, that is the direct, specific statement of our text. Evidently, there are some inferences that we can make on the basis of that.

And I want to mention some of them tonight because I'm not so sure that we appreciate as we ought to the vast significance of the fact that God is our creator. Now let me just mention some of these, and then we turn to something else. The first inference is this.

The God who made the heavens and the earth must himself exist. Now that's logic, isn't it? The God who made the heavens and the earth must himself exist. Not in the mind of the writer, but as an entity, as a being, as a person.

Objectively real and capable of doing what is said concerning him right here. A dead God, says David M. Barr in one of his books. A dead God is the creation of men.

A living God is the creator of men. Or better still, in Goethe's words, he says, If you would create something, you must be something. I rather like that.

If you would create something, then you must be something. Of course you must. An idea cannot create.

God is himself before he can bring anything else into existence. The God who creates must be God, must himself exist. Something else follows from that.

And it has a very real application to life. If God made the world, if God made the earth and the heavens, or the heavens and the earth, then he must himself have existed before the creation. He could not be the creator.

He could not have done these things unless he himself was there first of all. And that means, you see, that God is independent of his creation. We have just sung now, The Lord is King, lift up thy voice, O earth, and all ye heavens rejoice.

We can only sing that because our God is an eternal God. He was there before creation sprang into existence. He himself was there before and is not dependent upon men.

I find this most comforting. You see, if God depended for his existence or his well-being upon me or upon you or upon all of us together, I'm afraid he would suffer an awful lot. If God's good name and God's well-being depended upon his people, I'm afraid he would be in pretty poor shape tonight.

But in the last analysis, God is absolutely independent of the world. He's put his glory in our hands, that's true. But he's not dependent upon us.

He could have other ways of manifesting his glory. He has not chosen to do so. He's put his message, he's put his grace, he's put his gospel into our hands, that is true.

But he's chosen to do that. It's his choice. He himself was there before the cosmos and will be after the cosmos.

He's independent of the whole business. Our God's a big God, you know. He doesn't depend upon men.

You know, if men don't perform his tasks, there are times when God will use very ashes of stone. He's done so. He calls the fish of the sea and lets them do what he requires of them.

You see, he's not dependent upon man, though he has put so much into our hands. But he's not dependent upon us. Now, don't let us then get too arrogant.

It is out of sheer grace that God has entrusted us with the gospel and the light to shine among men and the knowledge of himself to share. A God is independent. The only independent one.

Let us acknowledge the privilege of being his servants and the custodians of his grace in our generation. The other thing that comes to the fore here is this. The independent God who existed before and outside the creation and who created the heavens and the earth must be infinitely wise and powerful.

How much do we think of this? Whether you think of the complex whole or of the intrinsic part of the creation, it matters very little. Wherever you look at God's creation and ponder over what he has done, what he has made, it will inevitably elicit a sense of awe and of wonder. I was reading, actually, when I was preparing for today, I happened to be reading, referenced by a well-known medical writer, to certain parts of the human anatomy.

And he was referring to the human brain in these words. Think, he says, of the human brain. Two fistfuls of pinkish gray tissue wrinkled like a walnut and something of the consistency of porridge.

I don't know whether you like this, but there it is. It's a medical man who's writing. Don't attribute it to me.

Shall I repeat? Two fistfuls of pinkish gray tissue wrinkled like a walnut and something of the consistency of porridge, yet able to store more information than all the libraries and all the computers of the whole world. Isn't it amazing? You and I carry in our skulls a mechanism of this order. Our God must be a very wonderful God.

You know, people are proud of their computers. And perhaps rightly so. And yet you and I have a mechanism of this order, of this capacity, and we've had it from the beginning.

Or take some facts as the following. I pursued this thought, and I came up against a few quotes which I think may be quite apathetic at this point. One writer whom I consulted put it like this, something of the wonder of God's creation.

He said, Perhaps most of us know that, I'm not sure. But this is what he went on to say. If that had been one hundred miles per hour, our days and nights would be ten times longer, and our planet would alternately burn and freeze.

Do you ever think of that? Under such circumstances, vegetation would be utterly impossible. You know, our God must have known something about things, don't you think? And the earth rotates on its axis just at the right speed. He's a wonderful God.

Come on, if the earth were as small as the moon, the power of gravity would be too weak to retain sufficient atmosphere for man's needs. But if it were as large as Jupiter or Saturn or Uranus, extreme gravitation would make human movement almost impossible. We could move.

If we were as near to the sun as Venus, the heat would be so unbearable we could not live. If we were as far away as Mars, we would experience snow and ice every night, even in the warmest regions. If the oceans were half their present dimensions, we would receive only one-fourth of the rainfall we now do.

If they were one-eighth larger, our annual precipitation would increase fourfold, and this earth would become a vast uninhabitable swamp. You know, our God must have had a wonderful mind. People didn't start thinking in the twentieth century.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Can I just give you one other fact? Oh, it's something that's very familiar. Let's just remind ourselves of it.

Water solidifies at thirty-two degrees. Don't we know that? Fahrenheit. And it begins to freeze.

And what a disaster it would be if the seas froze, if all the water froze. It would be disastrous if the oceans were subject to that law, for then the amount of thawing in the polar regions would not balance out, and ice

would accumulate throughout the centuries, and we simply couldn't live here. To prevent such a catastrophe, our God put some salt in the water.

You know the result. Our God must have a mind. Is intelligence here? Doesn't it make you worship? People didn't just begin to think when you and I were born.

God thought it all beforehand. And whatever we discover of the workings of the universe, let us say it with Kepler, we only think his thoughts after him and discover what he knew from eternity. In the beginning, God, he must have been wise.

Pardon me for putting it like that. And one other thing, he must have been infinitely good. Why did God, sufficient in himself, not dependent upon anything or anyone, why did he want to make men and women like you and like me? Why did he want the creation at all? You know, there's only one answer to that.

It's because God is good. Because of his goodness. God wanted to share his mind, and share his heart, and share his joys, and share his character, share his holiness, share his righteousness, share his elevation, even something of his majesty.

Something of it, I say, not all of it. Something of his majesty to man. He wanted to make man lord over his creation so that man could, in one sense, reflect something of the lower lordship of God himself.

Out of his sheer goodness, he wanted us to be something. And that in fellowship, in sharing with himself. I was telling some members of the family earlier on today that I came across a lovely quote.

I don't know whether you read Catholic author, but I have had a lot of blessing from Dr. Fulton Sheen in recent times. Now, I wouldn't follow Catholic writers in everything, but I think this is worth quoting. Why did God make the universe, says Fulton Sheen? God is good.

And being good, he could not, as it were, contain himself. You know, that's the element of goodness. You can't contain yourself if you're good.

You've got to give what you've got. You've got to share. His love is intrinsic in goodness.

God is good, says he. Consequently, this is the bit I like. He told the secret of his goodness to nothingness, and that was creation.

Our God is good. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. So much, then, for the information clearly given and the inferences legitimately made on the basis of this introduction of the Bible to our God, the Bible's introduction.

Now, a few words about some implications of this opening affirmation. What does all this say to us? How is it relevant? Well, how is it not relevant is the question. There never was a more relevant passage or a more relevant word than this.

Now, let's think first and foremost of the picture that we have here of the primacy or of the priority of God. Let's get that. In the beginning, God.

Now, I suggest to you seriously that that is the principle upon which life was meant to be lived here in this world. In the beginning, God. Oh, I know God will be in the end, too.

But in the beginning, God. God is meant to be right at the beginning. He was at the beginning.

Historically, he must be at the beginning of things experientially. If God occupies such primacy in relation to the whole universe, he should occupy a corresponding place in relation to every individual life and its several activities. God should have primacy of place in the working out of our plans.

You see, part of the tragedy with most of us, am I not sharing your experience when I say this? Part of the tragedy is this, that we work out our own plans, and then so often we bring them to the Almighty and we say, now, Lord, please bless this and bless that. I've thought it through. This is what I want.

Now, you put your signature on it and bless it. But you know, that's treating God as if he were our servant. And God is not your servant.

He's not my servant. He's not anybody's servant. God is God.

If God is to be God, he must be at the beginning of the plans. He must be there in their origins. He must have a say.

He must be the chief factor in drawing up the plans. Now, as a pastor, I have a principle that I don't like to talk in the pulpit of what people say to me in private, and I won't do it. I don't think I would be telling tales out of school when I say that this to me is the major problem in pastoral work.

People come to ask you for advice when really they've already made up their minds before they ask. Somebody comes and says, shall I marry a certain young lady or a young woman about a young man? And, uh, well, he or she is not a Christian. I am.

But he or she is such a lovable fellow or a lovable girl, and, uh, you know, I'm sure all will go well. Really, they're not after advice at all. What they want is, they want you to sell their conscience by saying that they can do what they have already decided to do.

You see, this is the principle. In the beginning, God. God in charge of your affections.

God thinking through you. God loving through you. God choosing through you.

God in the beginning. And when God is there in the beginning, it is more than probable that God will be there all the way through. But if He's not there at the beginning, it's more than probable He won't get in at all, as He ought to.

Now, it doesn't only go for seeking a life partner. It goes for every other decision in life. You see, this is the principle.

This is the way we ought to live. In the beginning, God. In the beginning of a day.

At the beginning of a week. At the beginning of every major decision in life. Does it come from Him? God should not only be given the place of primacy in formulating our plans and programs, of course, but He should also be given priority in executing such plans and programs.

It's not adequate to let God plan for us. He must be given priority at every turn in working out His own plan for us. You see, here in Genesis, God was there at the beginning, but you turn over to chapter 3 and you find that things have gone wrong.

He was there at the beginning, but He was not there in the working out of His own plan. Man rebelled against Him and said, No, no. The woman was more than in agreement.

And so together, they shut Him out. They stood in the way. They rebelled.

The whole point is, He must be there in the beginning. He must be there all the way through. And this is how life assumes its meaning.

And this is how we come into fellowship with God and come to know Him in His greatness and in His grace. In the beginning, God. The priority and the primacy of God.

As we draw out our plans and as we work them through. In the beginning, God. Not myself.

Not what people offer me. Not even what the firm puts in my hand. God.

The other thing I want to say is, this text speaks to me of the totality of God's interest. And this is something which, I think, the church is learning in a new way in these days. If in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, so that everything is His, then God is interested in the whole business.

In everything. In everybody. God is interested in the cosmos that He has made.

He's interested in the heavens. He's interested in the earth. It speaks of the totality of His creative interest.

If God made it, you can be sure He's interested in it. Now, whether we like it or not, those of us who are generally referred to as evangelicals, rightly or wrongly, have not been known for our wide concerns or the affairs of the universe as such. We have become known in history as folk that are concerned generally with one thing.

And I put it to you in the terms that are commonly used among us. We are concerned about the salvation of souls. Now, I don't want to play down that importance.

It was for the salvation of our immortal souls, but also of our bodies, for there is a resurrection of the body. But it was fundamentally for the salvation of our souls and the provision of our new bodies that God came in the person of His Son, died on the cross for us, is risen again, is ascended, and gave the last commission to the church. Therefore, we can't play down this, and no one wants to do that.

We are meant to go into the whole world and make disciples of all nations to rescue the perishing, care for the dying, save the lost. And if we don't do this, then God have mercy upon us. But that was not the only thing that Jesus of Nazareth did, you know.

It wasn't. I'm not shocking anybody by saying that. You know, He had time to take children up in His arms and bless them.

Isn't that fantastic? Isn't it unbelievable? Here is the incarnate Lord God in man dwelling, and He goes and He takes up a few kiddies in His hands and He looks at them and smiles at them and He blesses the little kiddies. He had time for that. He made them.

They were His creatures. He went about doing good. And if you want to spell that out, He touched a leopard and He healed more leopards than He touched.

He entered a demonic situation where there was a raving madman and He had time to talk to him and talk him through to sanity and spirituality. He would visit a man for lunch and He went to a party with profligates and sat down with them and ate with them and drank with them. I don't know what you'd think of the minister of Knox if he was found in a party with a lot of prostitutes.

Jesus did that, you know. There were not all prostitutes, but there were many there. He cared for them.

They were His creatures, you see. His creatures, His own. He saw a group of people prowling in the sea, afraid, not knowing how to do it.

They were His disciples. He walked on the sea to get to them and He rescued them. He was interested in that kind of thing.

Amazing, is it? No, no, no, no. He was interested in the fact that Peter could pay his debt and when there was no other way of doing it, He told him to go and fish and find a fish with a bit of gold in his mouth. From there, pay your debt, He says, yours and mine.

Mine and thine. Can't you see it? He was interested in a man's debt. All the world is His.

And because all the world is His, He's interested in all the world. Now, I find this shouting at me these days. We're living in a day, for example, in an age when half the world is starving with malnutrition.

And we've just come through a season of the year which makes me, now I'm not judging you good people, I don't know where you've been. And I don't overeat, I don't think. But I feel sometimes like a worm.

We are like platens misusing the whole festival season for an unholy end when our fellow creatures in many parts of the world haven't had a good, decent meal for some of them never. Do you think He doesn't care? There is creatures. There is creatures.

He made them. And though His image in them is marred by sin, there is creatures. Or think of this business of pollution.

Some of us were talking about it this morning. I didn't say anything to the people concerned, but I had this in my mind, in my notes for tonight. We're living in a world that is being inundated by pollution of one kind or another.

Everything is being polluted. The air, the rivers, the lakes, the seas. More important of all, the minds of men are being polluted.

And all the hideous things that modern ingenuity and so-called culture can dish out is being canalized into our homes via the print, via the stage, via the media. And we are becoming morally spineless and incapable of turning the switch off and stopping the time. And so many of us, because of our sheer passivity for no other reason, are guilty of aiding and abetting in this wretched business of this awful pollution that's going on.

He cares. He cares what's going on in the imagination of a child. He cares for the first thoughts of a little one looking at a television screen.

He cares! He cares! Liam Blakelock, in a recent issue of Christianity Today, refers to Pamela Hansworth's book on iniquity in which she refers to a certain Englishman who was in Germany when the Nazis came to

power. And he's gone on record, she refers to him, he's gone on record as describing his experience in Germany in those days. Now that Germany of that day is not the Germany of today.

I'm not casting aspersions upon the nation as such when I say this, but simply making a statement of fact about the Nazi regime and his reaction. He writes of the first occasion when, walking down the street, he saw what the Nazis did to a certain group of Jews. And he says he was sickened.

He just saw it with two eyes, he came right up upon it and he saw it and he felt he wanted to be sick. He ran down the street to get away from it. The next time he felt he should look and see what was going on.

And look he did, for a full minute until he couldn't take any more of it. The third time he stood and watched the whole thing through. The fourth time he stood with a jeering crowd, not just stood to see, but alongside of the jeering crowd who wanted to get rid of the Jews.

And the sight seemed, he says, less revolting. I felt I was now becoming objective. And suddenly my conscience began to prick.

And I realized that this was not a part of life, a social phenomenon for study. On the contrary, it was the breath of hell in my face. I packed up my bags and went home.

He was becoming permissive. You know, my friends, the same thing is happening in far too many of our homes. The first time we look we feel uncomfortable.

The second time we look, well, let's see the thing through. Perhaps it's got something to say. And we don't feel so badly about it.

The third time we can sit down and we can even expect something similar tomorrow or next week. And in no time we've become acclimatized. We've become permissive.

We're taking it all in. There is no objection in the soul. But we're God's creatures.

In the beginning, God. And if God made me in the beginning, God is interested in what's going on in my mind and in my heart and in my imagination. No! These are the implications of the creative activity of God and His relationship to His universe and to man.

If in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, then He has a plan for every man and every woman, every part of His creation. And He has a plan tonight for you and for me. The totality of His interest.

Can I say one other word and I'm through? And I must say this or the whole picture is incomplete. In the beginning, God, if that is so, then it speaks of the sufficiency of God. The sufficiency of God.

If the truth involved in the words of our text speak or imply God's primacy and priority over creation, then the totality of His interest in His creation, it all assures us of sufficiency to repair the part or the whole that is wrong. When we take stock of the vast evil that strides the universe tonight and manifests itself on every plane and on all peoples, to me there is no comfort like this. But I can remember and remind myself that the Savior is none less than the Creator.

My Savior is not just the big Bethlehem. Oh, God, save us from minimizing that of shadow over the wonder of it. But my friend, the Savior of the gospel is not just a baby.

Neither is He a mere man. He became man. But listen, the wonder of it is this, that He's the Creator and because He was the Creator He can recreate.

Anybody less than the Creator can't cope with the things in this world today. Human life is in such a tangle. Anybody less than the Creator can't cope with all the moral entanglements that we encounter.

No one less can cope with the situation in the individual life or in social life that the Creator can. If He's the Creator, I have confidence in Him. He can undo the web.

He can untangle the wall. He can get us right back to rock bottom. The Creator can recreate.

The Redeemer, the Savior, whom we proclaim to men then is no inferior being. Have you noticed, by the way, I'm not preaching heresy now. And this is not just my imagination.

This is just the principle of John's gospel. Now, you know in John chapter 1, chapter 2, 3, 4, 5, he's dealing with our Lord saving different kinds of people. But you know chapter, the end of chapter 1 and chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5, they only come after the beginning of chapter 1. That's logic, isn't it? Why am I saying that? For this reason.

This is how it starts and it's all built on this. In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God.

And the Word was God. Then he goes on to say this. This is the remarkable statement.

Without Him was not anything made that was made. He's the maker of it all. He's the creator of it all.

By the word of His mouth, things sprang into being. And because He's the creator, He can recreate. He can come down to Nicodemus.

He can come to the woman at the well. He can come in John chapter 5 and John chapter 6 and on to the woman taken in adultery and go right through the whole thing. He can save to the uttermost because, you see, He's the creator Lord.

And so we come in the end of Peter's second witness into a statement like this. Peter says things are very bad. And they get worse, he says.

One day is coming when the whole universe will be wrapped up in flames. And then he says this. And we, he says, look for new heavens and a new earth.

This is my translation for what it's worth. Wherein righteousness is at home. Righteousness at home? Yeah, at home.

King James Version puts it wherein righteousness dwells. Yes, it dwells there, but it means more than that. Peter meant more than that.

Wherein righteousness is at home. Righteousness is not at home in our world today. Despite the tyranny of sin, despite the way it has mangled civilizations and nations and individuals, there's coming a day, says Peter, when God will have exactly what He planned in the beginning.

A world in which righteousness is at home. Can He bring such a lovely thing out of an unlovely? Yes, He can, says Peter. Because He's the creator, redeemer.

In the beginning, God. And because He was in the beginning, there is no situation, there is no man, there is no woman, there is no family situation, there is no social difficulty, there is no national or international, but that He cannot undo. And in the fullness of the time, He will bring out of this mess exactly what He meant at the beginning.

And He will throw away the reckoning into everlasting life. Our God. My friend, is He your God? Is He your God? Do you know the Lord who was in the beginning? Or is your God that changes with the years? With the fashions of time, you add a little to Him, you take a little away.

Because people don't believe this nowadays. I'll tell you, this God, you may find tonight at the foot of the cross of His Son. And I'll tell you this, there's one way you can't miss Him.

You can't miss Him. Come there in penitence. I don't care who you are.

You just won't miss Him. Because He's looking for you. And He's waiting for you.

And He says, whosoever comes to Me will find Me in My Son. Come then to Him, or if you have come to Him, give Him the place of priority and of lordship in your life. That is His due.

And to His name be the glory forever. Amen.

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