

IN THE BEGINNING

Genesis 1:1

INTRODUCTION

Al Mohler – “*An expository ministry is measured by text, not by time.*” → Genesis

We understand that there are competing worldviews. There is the God of the Bible who spoke everything into existence out of nothing or there is some variation of evolution.

Children have no problem understanding a higher being created the world. Because children understand that everything they see was built by someone

→ Enough that Richard Dawkins felt compelled to explain this phenomenon.

Martin Luther – “*A lie is like a snowball: the further you roll it the bigger it becomes.*”

- The lie of evolution is one big snowball
- Says that everything came from nothing.
- Theories of 'Big Bang' – everything exploded into existence from one singularity (which still begs the question...where did that singularity come from?)

Gen 1:1 – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

1:1-2 → Summary Statement

Proposition: 3 Starting Points

1. The **Presupposition**
2. The **Introduction**
3. The **Creation**

1st Starting Point ...

1. The **Presupposition** - everyone of any religion or worldview comes to any dialogue or question with some pre-understanding behind their thinking.

Point – Definition of “Presupposition” Pre + Suppose

- The Bible doesn't try to prove the existence of God.
- The Bible assumes God exists.
- The Bible begins with the established fact that God is.
- The Bible begins with God existing from Eternity Past.

Proof – Gen 1:1a – “In the beginning”

Three words in English are one word in the Hebrew – *bereshith* – means absolute beginning

Hebrew Bible – *bereshith* – “beginning” – when
English Bible – Genesis – “origins” – what

The Book of *bereshith*/Genesis is foundational to all of the Bible

Genesis is the outline: God, Man, Sin, Judgment, Redemption, Atonement, Justification
→ God fills in details in next 65 books

Everyone begins somewhere. Everyone uses circular reasoning.
Question → Which circular reasoning?

There are two worldviews: one with the sovereign God of the Bible as creator and the other with man setting himself up as god.

There are two kinds of wisdom: the wisdom which is from above and that which is from below which is earthly, natural, and demonic.

There are two kinds of knowledge: true and false
the knowledge from God and the knowledge from man.

Which world view? Which God? The God of the Bible?
Or the little god looking back from the mirror?

Prov 26:4 – “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him.”

- when we look at the presupposition that God brings here, there is tremendous application to us - in evangelism, counseling, corporate worship and praise

Ties into Apologetics – Greek word *apologia* – “defense,” “reply to a formal charge,”

- not to be confused with English word apology
- *The Apology of Socrates* – an account of his defense before the court of Athens
- *Apology* – Justin Martyr’s defense of fellow Christians against false charges

It is NOT saying “sorry” → but giving an answer, a reason

1 Pet 3:15 – *magna carta* of apologetic passages

- Command to all Christians
- all believers are charged with doing the work of an evangelist and apologist

Jude 3 - "appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith"

Rom 1:20; 2:1 – *anapologia* – “without excuse”

A biblical apologetic affirms and strengthens the Christian’s faith.

- A biblical apologetic closes the mouth of the unbeliever

Rom 3:19 – “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God;”

- That is the the power of the Spirit - the sword of the Spirit
- Not to win the argument or make them look foolish but that God would use your witness and your words to change their hearts

So How are we to respond?

How are we to present the case for Christianity?

How are we to defend the faith?

Presuppositional Apologetics (Biblical ☺)

→ **Gen 1:1; John 1:1** begins with presupposition that God exists

It is not that God is on trial - Pagan on trial vs. God on trial

It is not a situation that we expect people to believe God because of the evidence but we want people to believe God and the evidence - **Psalm 19:1**

Rom 1:18f – the heart of presuppositionalism

- They already know God!
- Everybody knows God exists.
- We do not need to pile on evidence because the unbeliever already knows the Truth and is suppressing that Truth.

The pagan is not without knowledge (**Ecc1 3:11**), he is a rebel. God has set eternity in their hearts.

So we understand that the ignorance of the unbeliever is an ignorance of rebellious foolishness in the face of the Truth he already has, but is constantly suppressing.

- the unsaved person can count, but he can't give an account
- in other words, the unsaved person has no explanation for why he can count
- the unsaved person say stealing is wrong, but they can't tell you why

What is good? Why is it good? → The unsaved person has no answer.

We know good is good because God says it is good and, in fact, God tells us what specifically is good.

What about **Evidence**?

The unbeliever's problem is NOT a lack of evidence or proof.

There is a much deeper problem → A depraved, dead heart

Faith is not arrived at by reason, evidence, and facts.

Faith is supported by reason, evidence, and facts.

Illustration– Imagine showing a masterpiece of art in a dark room without any light. The masterpiece is still beautiful to behold, but the person has no means to discern the beauty.

In the same way, if we see the evidence but we don't have the light of the Word of God providing evidence without the appropriate presuppositional foundation is like showing the masterpiece of art in a dark room without light. The evidence is there, but the person has no way to understand and appreciate the beauty.

Application – We do not put God on trial and then list evidence for Him. We do not prove Him to the pagan as though the pagan could go outside God to examine Him.

A biblical apologetic puts the pagan on trial and leaves him no place to retreat and no place to dwell in safety.

Presuppositionalism does not eliminate the use of evidence, but we don't give it the lofty place the evidentialist gives it.

We don't tell the pagan to **stop thinking and surrender**.

We tell him to **surrender and start thinking biblically**.

Evidentialism – Evidence leads to faith

Presuppositionalism – Faith leads to recognizing evidence

Evidentialism – Faith based on facts

Presuppositionalism – Faith supported by facts

One does not suspend reason to believe, but exchanges false reasoning (the lie) for the truth.

Rom 1:25 – “For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator,”

Of primary importance is to understand what God has revealed of Himself as Creator ... the **creator/creature distinction**

- forgotten our **creaturehood**
- evangelist: direct a creature-worshipper to being a Creator-worshipper
- **Heb 11:6; Rom 1:25**

2nd Starting Point ...

2. The **Introduction**

Point – The first name of God in the Bible

When you introduce someone you say – “Jim, this is George.” One of the first things I learned in Spanish class – Como se llama? “What is your name?”

What's in a name? character, quality, authority → King George, Governor Brewer, Pastor Smith, Father Jones – Miss, Mrs., Ms. – you learn much about a woman by the introduction

- names reveal much about a person
- even more so in ancient times were names associated with something central about the person

In a similar way ...

We know God by **His Qualities** and

We know God by **His Actions** and

We know God by **His Names**

Proof – Gen 1:1b – “God”

Elohim - masculine, plural noun – found 2570 times in the Bible

- from a root found in Arabic meaning “**to fear**”
- brings out the glory and greatness of God
- emphasis on omnipotence and sovereignty, majesty

Elohim is sometimes shortened to *El* – as in Michael (who is like *El*) and Daniel (*El* is my judge)

It leaves room for Plurality/Trinity

[Note: There is no such thing as “plural of majesty” in Hebrew]

The wealth of the awe-inspiring God is not fully revealed in all detail by the OT, not at time of Moses. This name allows for all that God will reveal in the progression of His revelation.

Elohim – is used 35 times in **Gen 1:1-2:4** – *Elohim* is the Creator God

God introducing Himself through His names:

Elohim is **general** name of God concerned with **creation** and **preservation** of the world

YHWH is the **particular** name of God concerned with special **revelation** of Himself

Elohim has to do with His **works**

YHWH has to do with His **essence**

More universal books of the Bible that are dealing more with humanity in general, or with the gentiles, such as Eccl, Dan, Jon, use Elohim almost exclusively

The more theocratic books that are more focused and relating to Israel such as Josh, Judg, Sam, Kings use chiefly YHWH.

Elohim – assumes a **general love** toward all creation as the work of His hands

YHWH – assumes a **particular love** toward His **elect**

Illustration (counter) – In Islam, there are 99 attributes of Allah – all are negative in form, describing what Allah is not, but not describing what he is;

- Allah is an unknowable capricious god

Application – We do not build altars to an unknown god. We are not limited in our understanding of God to what He is not. We can know Him. We can know Him by His names.

Presupposition, Introduction, ...

3rd Starting Point ...

3. The Creation

Point – 3 Qualities of The Creation:

- A. Exclusivity
- B. Totality
- C. Sovereignty

Proof – Gen 1:1c – “created the heavens and the earth.”

1st Quality ...

A. Exclusivity

Point – Creator/creature distinction

Proof – *bara* - used exclusively in Scripture with God as the subject, never of man

God created:

- “the wind” (Amos 4:13) – physical
- “a clean heart” (Psa 51:10) - moves from physical to spiritual
- “new heavens and a new earth” (Isa 65:17)

The way God opens up the Bible for all of us - God came out of Eternity Past.

God created out of nothing.

- *ex nihilo* – Rom 4:17; Heb 11:3; Psa 33:6-9; Amos 4:13

2nd Quality ...

B. Totality

Point – Everything.

- You look down → everything.
- You look up → everything.

Proof – “the heavens and the earth” – *hashamayim wahaeret* – totality

The Hebrew has no word for “the universe”

- Jer 10:16 – “the Maker of all is He”
- Isa 44:24 – “I, the LORD, am the maker of all things,”
- Eccl 11:5 – “God who makes all things”

The heavens – plural. The earth – singular.

Gen 1:3 (light), v.7 (firmament), v.11 (vegetation), v.16 (luminaries), v.21 (birds and sea creatures), v.25 (animals), v.27 (man), v.31 - God look at all He had created and says it is good.

Gen2:3,4; 3:1; 5:1,2; 6:6,7; 7:4; 9:6

Ps 89:11-12; 90:2; 102:25-27; Isa 40:21-22,25-26,28; 42:5;

Isaiah 45:18 - "For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it *and* did not create it a waste place, *but* formed it to be inhabited)"

God as Creator permeates Scripture, from OT to NT → Heb 11:3 – “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible”

3rd Quality ...

C. Sovereignty

Point – God freely acted. There was no external force. He freely willed to do so. God Sovereignly created out of nothing, *ex nihilo*, everything that is.

Application– Omnipotence → Once you have read **Gen 1–11**....

- what is **Exod 14** (parting of the Red Sea)?
- what is Jonah being swallowed by the Great Fish?
- what is Daniel in the Lion’s Den?

Application–If we surrender the straightforward reading and understanding of what God gives us in Genesis 1-11, we surrender a whole lot more than some **incidental** scientific question among good-willed believers. It is a slippery slope.

On the positive side, when we read and take it at face value, we have no problem not because we are smart but because God, in His grace and mercy, has given us faith.

CONCLUSION

Archimedes said, “*Give me a place to stand, and I will move the world. Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world.*”

Well, Christian doctrine provides that place to stand - the Word of God. Unless there is such a place to stand, all progress is an illusion. The very idea of progress implies something fixed.

There is no progress in a kaleidoscope.