

# Genesis 1:1a

## Sermon Title: God's Red Carpet

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## INTRODUCTION

Anyone who lives in western society and is even remotely informed with the ideologies which currently drive many of the popular opinions and conversations around us would readily admit that we are living in truly bewildering times, often confused, and at many times difficult to understand.

Often, this type of observation is what drives many people to probe the big questions related to our human existence, questions such as:

- What is the nature of the universe?
- Why is it the way that it is?
- How did it get to the current state of affairs?
- What is our place as humans in all this?

We should be immensely grateful that the answers to these and many other similar questions are not left to the uncertain hope that one day the atheistic scientific or philosophical communities will come up with what they believe are the right answers.

Rather, the God of all science and reasoning has revealed Himself to us and has provided us with the answers to such questions as these and many more in the Bible, and in more particular the book of Genesis, however apart from saving faith, few in number will accept the truth

In fact, this is confirmed for us in HEB.11:3 “**Through faith** we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God...”

You see then, the unbelieving Atheist is at a tremendous disadvantage in his ability to correctly understand the creation which he himself is part of, due to this lack of divine illumination (faith), which enables as believers to navigate the answers to the

big questions, and do so in such a way that while on the one hand we too analyze all the mathematical data through a consistent observational scientific method, on the other hand we also understand that there is a spiritual dimension to the material world, and that what may appear to skeptics to be “immaterial phenomena” in fact is an important part of our makeup as mankind and the world which surrounds us.

This point can be easily seen as we examine the names and figures that are part of the scientists Hall of Fame, who because of their faith far surpassed their peers and leave many modern-day scientists astonished: Copernicus, Galileo, Johannes Kepler, Sir Francis Bacon and perhaps the most brilliant scientist of all time – Sir. Isaac Newton, etc.

“There are two books laid before us to study, to prevent our falling into error; first, the volume of the Scriptures, which reveal the will of God; then the volume of the Creatures, which express His power.”  
~ Sir Francis Bacon<sup>1</sup>

From this, we understand, that for these great scientific minds, it was of equal important to have faith in the Creator God (as He has revealed Himself in Holy Scripture) and also to allow that to motivate, fuel and guide their study of His Creative Power in the His glorious works. Now we see, in a real and practical way, the truth of HEB.11:3 becomes crystal clear and can never be overstated, for it is vitally important to our progressive, every expanding, exploration of God and His Works.

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) established the “scientific method” stressing experimentation and induction from data rather than mere philosophical deduction in the tradition of Aristotle.

God in many ways invites us to explore these matters. Consider how He has equipped us with both a ‘finely tuned’ habitation, as well as a mind to know Him. And, thus through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, in all humility, we approach the God who framed the worlds. An omni-potent God who can actually be known by us...His creation.

And although He invites us to know Him and to more fully comprehend all His marvelous works, it is with every new step of acquired knowledge...that we realize just how incomprehensible He and His works truly are. <sup>2</sup>

With these considerations in front of us, we as Christians, we as those who have been set free from the rigid claims of the materialistic, anti-spiritual, dogmatics of the modern ‘so-called’ science regime, come to the book of Genesis, the book of beginnings, the book of origins and answers, for all those who are willing to listen.

As its name implies, Genesis (Greek) is of course a book of origins. For, example, in it, we are told the origin of the all things both visible and invisible, here we discover the origin of mankind, we are given an explanation for the current and sinful state of mankind and its effects on the world which we inhabit. We are shown the hope and salvation of fallen mankind through Jesus Christ. And, we discover the beginnings of the Israelites and their unique role in God’s redemptive purposes.

But, we shall soon discover, Genesis is more than an early record of origins and history, it also is rich in theology (namely the theology of God) His nature, essence and persons...additionally it is Covenantal as it provides the foundational framework through

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, the very law of gravity (discovered by a Christian scientist -Sir Isaac Newton) itself is perhaps a perfect example to illustrate this point.

which God as (Creator and Redeemer) chooses to interact with mankind. Still yet Genesis is more than just historical, theological and covenantal. It is the first of the sixty-six books which make up our Christian Bible. In other words, it is Scripture. It is God's own words given to us. It is what the apostle Paul calls "God-breathed (2 Tim.3:16).

And so, our purpose this morning as we begin this very foundational book of the Bible is to remember that this is God's book, this is God's revelation to us as his people and may we recall that when teaching our children, the Baptist Catechism Q#6 "What things are chiefly contained in the Holy Scriptures?" we want to hear them correctly state "The Holy Scriptures chiefly contain what man ought to believe concerning God, and what duty God requireth of man."

And so, it is here in the book of Genesis that we discover the beginning of that answer, and, what we as man ought to believe regarding God's revelation about Himself.

As I mentioned a moment ago, surely, we can't ever know all there is to know concerning an incomprehensible God, this certainly becomes clear when we consider this first verse which is before us this morning, and no matter how small that may make us feel, we none the less find confidence in the fact, that God does reveal and make known to us all which is necessary for life and for godliness.

**Gen 1:1**

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

**Gen 1:2**

**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.**

## BODY

There has been in the history of literature remarkable first lines which have endured over the centuries, perhaps among the most popular is that of Charles Dickens classic the Tale of Two cities where it begins "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..."

Despite how rememberable that famous line maybe it does not come close to the one we have before us in V.1. This first line functions as **‘God’s Red Carpet’** for it begins to roll out for us a revelation about God that will continue throughout all the Scriptures.

While this verse teaches us in rather plain and simplistic terms, it none the less gives us a profoundly accurate understanding when dealing with the ultimate questions that relate to God. For example, one such question that most of the parents here today have had to deal with while teaching their children the beginning and origin of all things and how that all things find their beginning in God...and then after explaining this truth to them...the children inevitably ask...but Mom, but Dad...where did God come from?

In teaching them about where all things come from, we take them back, and then back more, and yet further back...and eventually the natural question comes up...but where did God come from?

The Bible answers that question for us right at the outset, and it does so by setting before us a proclamation of God’s existence in the very first words of the Bible >> rā·shēth' el·ō·hēm' (In the beginning God).

These are then the two words when translated provide for us that which I want to draw our attention to this morning “In the beginning God”, simply meaning that in the very beginning when everything both visible and invisible began God was already

present...He did not have a beginning, and so God proceeds the beginning by the simple definition of these first few words in the Bible.

And so, we observe that this immediately cuts the legs out of many modern-day heresies, many of which have both existed in ancient times as well as modern times. Atheism for example is given a fatal blow, because from the beginning we are told here that God does in fact exist. And God wants at the outset His creation to know that He is the self-existent one who has always existed and always will exist, and so Atheism is dealt this fatal blow by these very first words of the Bible. Materialism, as it is commonly called, a belief by which holds that material / matter is the fundamental substance in all of nature, and that all things, including mental aspects and consciousness, are results of only material interactions (you don't have a mind, you have a brain), this error too is dealt a death blow by this first line of Scripture because it teaches us that material matter is not eternal, however God as we learn here is in fact eternal and thus is not in any way dependent upon material matter, rather we are to correctly understand He eternally proceeded all matter and in fact is creator and Lord over it. And so, to replace God the creator with material and matter in one's thinking is to make the material world your God and cast you into the gross error of worshiping the creation rather than the creator. Then there is Pantheism which believes that God somehow dwells in the creation itself and is worshiped by and through creation itself, so for example when you meditate and channel your prayer thoughts toward a tree you are connecting and worshiping the living God of the universe. This too is chopped down by these words that clearly demonstrate the heavens and the earth are not God and only that **el·ō·hēm** is God!

**>Here is the point that I don't want you to miss: whenever we get it wrong from the beginning we get everything wrong!**

When it we get it wrong regarding WHO GOD IS and how He reveals Himself to us we get everything else wrong.

I am certain you would agree when I tell you that the great problem of our day is that when people start with a worldview that roots itself in the creation rather than God the Creator and then they attempt; with such a false starting point, work their way up toward the creator resulting in all kinds of heresies which ultimately, end up with a God of our own making.

In contrast to this however, the book of Genesis sets before us the one, true, living God and He is to be worshipped and obeyed for who He is.

During our remaining time together, I would like to highlight just a small portion of the things that are provided for us in these first few words of V.1 and draw some application from them.

- First of all, in the word “rā·shēth” (In the beginning) God reveals Himself to be one who eternally self-existent. It is rather interesting, isn't it, that this is the first of His many attributes that He wishes to reveal us. But what does this mean? It means that His eternal existence is within Himself, in other words there is no-one outside himself that created Him. He is the eternal first cause of all things, however He himself is uncaused. We are to understand that He is NOT like that of the ancient gods whose origins are fixed to creation itself (such as those found in Roman-Greeko mythology, the god of lightening, the god of fire, etc.) No, el·ō·hēm (God) the eternal self-existent God did not originate from, nor is dependent upon anything created.



So, in the book of Genesis we learn from the very first words that God has no beginning. Now, this at first is a rather foreign concept for us to take in, due in part to the fact that we are finite and limited, also due to the fact that our own experience as humans is one that has a beginning. However, this is exactly the point which we are to derive from this verse. God (el·ō·hēm) transcends us, He alone is one who has no beginning and has no end.

Perhaps this quote from **Martin Luther** will aid us at this point: “Even if we should engage in endless speculation and debate, these matters surrounding the eternal existence of God nevertheless remain outside our comprehension. Besides, if we do not fully understand even the things which we see and do, how much less shall we grasp those?”

God elsewhere in Scripture reveals Himself as the self-existent one. His first and chief attribute as God.

**EXODUS 3:14** “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”

**ISA. 43:10-12** “Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. V.11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. V.12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.”

The sense here that is being communicated to us is that God has always existed and that there has never been a moment when He has not existed.

- Secondly, we find in this verse something else which God wishes to communicate to us regarding Himself in so much that He is one in substance, essence or nature, yet consists of three Divine Persons (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit). We know this from the particular use of the word **el·ō·hēm** which in the original tongue of Hebrew means “plural” Now, of course the Bible is not self-contradicting, for we know elsewhere God clearly communicates that He alone is to be worshipped and He alone is the One True God. So, then what do we make of this use of a word which is referring to the self-existent God and carries with it a plural reference.

**QUOTE:** Wolfgang Capito<sup>3</sup> “Eloheim is plural in number...thus, the Holy Triad is beautifully inscribed in the word Elohim, and the mystery of (God’s) unity in the word created.

Of course, we would not form our doctrinal position of the Trinity of God on this verse alone, that would be equal to building a house without the use of walls and a roof, in other words it would be incomplete. However, let us take note of the foundation, which our eternal Creator has laid down for us as we seek to know and worship Him in truth and spirit.

The doctrine of the trinity is not you see a fabrication of mere men, nor is it a misunderstanding of the teachings of Christ concerning Himself as the Muslim Imam would seek to convince you of. No, from the very beginning God Himself is communicating His nature to us as one essence in tri-unity among

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<sup>3</sup> Wolfgang Fabricius Capito (1478-1541) was a German Protestant reformer in the Reformed tradition. See his commentary on Genesis 1:1

three distinct persons all of which were involved in the creation of all things.

**John 1:1** also communicates and builds upon this when it says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Of course, the Word here referencing the Lord Jesus.

**Col.1:16** deals with this same trinitarian truth as well, when the inspired Apostle reminds them that is by that Jesus all things are created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible.

And, now coming back to this word **el·ō·hēm** in v.1 we can worship God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with greater appreciation and knowledge of His being.

### **RESTATED:**

God is then first of all – ETERNALY SELF-EXISTANT & God is TRINITARIAN.

- A Third revelation which God wishes for us to understand concerning Himself which is discovered in this verse, is that He is a self-sufficient God. The very reality expressed here, that God in fact existed before all things teaches us that God Himself needs absolutely nothing. God in His eternal rest was not moved to create because He was lonely or bored...no, rather in light of what we just learned regarding His trinitarian nature we are confident that He enjoined within Himself the total and complete fellowship that existed between Father, Son and Spirit – a mystery yes...however one that is set before us here in the very beginning regarding God.

**QUOTE:** Wolfgang Musculus<sup>4</sup> “God was not alone before he made the world: all the things that were to come were already present to him, and the things that did not yet exist were no less in his sight than if the things themselves had been there.

This of course is so, because as the first cause of all things, the eternal self-existent, self-sufficient, triune God decreed all things, and so as Wolfgang is pointing out, it is as if they were a reality to God.

Another reformer, however from the 17<sup>th</sup> century; Hercules Collins<sup>5</sup> also draws the sense of this out when teaching on the Decrees of God.

**QUOTE:** Collins states “His (Christ) being slain in actual time, was (as it were) slain from the decree in eternity, hence is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev.13:8) not so in actuality, but so in God’s decree.”

This revelation of the Self-Sufficiency of God, again, appropriately handles the mistaken false teachings that abound in our day, sadly even among many “churches”. Why in fact, if you go to a liberal church today you’re most likely going to hear this verse taught in such a way that the reason God created mankind was that He himself was lonely and desired nothing more than to express His love to something outside Himself, they portray Him as wanting or needing fellowship from outside Himself. Often it is suggested that the reason He created man was in order that He may be loved and worshipped. The Bible tells us nowhere that God

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<sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563) Another German Protestant reformer in the reformed tradition, who ended his ministry in Switzerland.

<sup>5</sup> Hercules Collins (1646/7 – 1702) English Particular Baptist, believed by many historians to be instrumental in the drafting of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.

NEEDS WORSHIPPERS. Oh yes, He is to be worshipped, oh yes...He commands worship and in fact regulates all religious worship but let us be clear He is not in NEED of ANYTHING.

All this sort of thinking of course, suggests that there was something missing or lacking in God, which is correctly silenced by this text before us. God, we understand here is completely Self-Sufficient - lacking nothing.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, let us leave here today and further meditate on what we have learned from this first portion of verse one regarding these several attributes of God, which will be a continual theme throughout not only the creation record, but also the entire book of Genesis. These are humbling truths. They exalt Him as the Sovereign and humble the pride of men. They immediately begin to show us that we do not possess these attributes, and thus are entirely dependent upon Him as our God!

While they are yes, humbling on one hand, they are also a blessing on the other. For, these specially revealed attributes that are given us teach us that He is mighty, that He is able and no matter the chaos which seems to be raging all around us, at times raging within us...He can be trusted to deliver us, to help us, to bring needed comfort.

Worship then, O children of Zion - the One true and Living God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Approach Him in humility and reverence knowing that He reigns now and forevermore.